

**Alaska Fire Service  
Individual Development Plan ( IDP)  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. What is an IDP?** An Individual Development Plan ( IDP) is a form designed to help you plan and monitor your career development. Filling out an IDP helps you and your supervisor identify your career goals and the development opportunities available to meet them. There may be other IDP versions available in your office. However, the central idea is the same, to assist you in career development.

An IDP is a living document. You should regularly update your IDP and track your progress towards your career goals. You should also periodically reexamine your goals and the developmental activities you have chosen to reach them.

**2. Is an IDP mandatory?** An IDP is not mandatory however, all employees can benefit from having and using an IDP and are encouraged to develop one.

**3. Is my IDP used in rating my performance? Am I rated against my IDP?** No, the IDP is not part of your performance rating; it is for developmental purposes only.

**4. How will the information on my IDP be used by AFS Training?** This information will also help identify trends and plan future course development accordingly. Unless you are in a specific program that requires tracking this data by participant name, reports generated will not include the names of individual participants.

**5. How often should I review/update my IDP?** You should monitor your progress through your IDP on an ongoing basis. But every 6 to 12 months is a good time frame for updating. This time frame is short enough to keep you focused on your short term goals, but gives you adequate time to work on some of your long term developmental activities as well.

**6. Is this a long term (entire career) plan, or a short term (few years) plan?** The IDP serves primarily as a short term plan. You can use it, however to provide a way of measuring progress towards your larger and more long range career plans.

**7. How can my supervisor help with my IDP?** Your supervisor is one of the most important links in your development process. The supervisor can play the role of coach, advocate, or objective observer. He/she can help you explore options or directions you might not otherwise consider in pursuit of your developmental goals. Supervisors are also an excellent source of feedback about current skills and opportunities to develop them.

**8. What are different sources to consider when developing an IDP (classes, job opportunities, and other sources)?** Consider all sources of development activities:

- Agency Training (Formal training courses are available from the DOI University ([doilearn.doi.gov](http://doilearn.doi.gov)); National Training Center at [www.blm.gov/ntc](http://www.blm.gov/ntc) ; National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) at <http://training.fws.gov> , the Graduate School – USDA at <http://www.grad.usda.gov> , and commercial vendors.
- DOI Learn, National Training Center, etc.
- Fire Training (Leadership, Skills, Incident Command System, Prescribed Fire courses - [www.nationalfiretraining.net](http://www.nationalfiretraining.net))
- Education (Colleges, Universities, Technical Fire Management (TFM), etc.)
- Incident Assignments (Gain more experience in an existing qualification or completion of a Position Task Book for an additional qualification – perhaps in a different discipline! Get added to the Allocation of Forces)
- Aviation Training ([www.iat.gov/](http://www.iat.gov/))
- Mentoring (Identifying and asking a role model to provide guidance)
- Directed Reading and other Self-Study ([www.fireleadership.gov](http://www.fireleadership.gov)):
- Details (temporary assignments or projects with new or increased responsibility)
- Staff rides, simulations, etc.

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- Outside Activities (Toastmasters International, Little League Coach, Big Sisters/Big Brothers program, etc.)
- Other developmental activities including online courses (some are free), volunteer opportunities, book clubs, associations, and seminars are just a few of the options you can try. NTC has a list of ideas for development opportunities you can get to from the Leadership Excellence home page at [www.ntc.blm.gov/leadership](http://www.ntc.blm.gov/leadership). The classroom is not the only place for effective learning. Be sure to consider various experiences and activities as sources of training and development.

**9. Who can help me?** Mentors, supervisors, coworkers, friends, professional organizations, your local training officer, and a host of others form a support network for your professional development.

**10. Why is feedback important?** Feedback is essential for:

**Professional Success** - To perform at the highest possible level, you must have a way of relating your efforts to your work environment. Getting feedback provides this mechanism.

**Growth** - Life is about growth, growth is about interaction with your environment, and interaction is about feedback. Feedback can help direct your self improvement efforts and provide a road map for your professional development.

**Keeping Your Competitive Edge** - Your value to an organization (now and in the future) depends heavily on how you are perceived. Having and responding to this information raises your value to any organization.

**Reality Check** - Feedback helps you discover what co-workers already know - how your efforts are affecting your team's mission and success.

**Balance** - Good feedback helps you balance your perspective with your supervisors and others in a non-hostile environment. It can provide relevant and helpful information in a productive format.

**Maintaining Good Work Relationships** - Seeking and using honest feedback lets peers, customers, supervisors, and employees know you care about how your actions, decisions, and attitudes affect them. It is difficult for us to see ourselves as others see us, yet their view of us can provide valuable information for improving our skills and our effectiveness. The format of this feedback can be as informal as asking what someone thinks about your work on a project, to using a highly formalized 360-degree assessment instrument, like the Leadership Effectiveness Inventory.

**11. When should I do my first IDP?** New BLM employees should develop an IDP as part of their orientation process within their first year. All other employees can develop an IDP at any time.

**12. How do I initiate an IDP?** Start thinking about your career goals and how you would like to develop over the next 3-5 years. Write down your ideas on how you might accomplish some of this development. Then make an appointment with your supervisor to discuss your ideas.

**13. Should I develop a new IDP if I switch supervisors?** Not necessarily. You may not need to develop a new IDP. Share your current IDP with your new supervisor. Discuss your goals and your progress towards them. Together, decide which, if any, items need to change.