

Creating Your Development Plan

Northwestern Performance Excellence Annual Plan

Development plans offer you the opportunity to identify ways to grow that will strengthen performance in your current role, explore longer-term interests, grow your career and gain greater job fulfillment. Supervisors play a critical role in development, offering suggestions and supporting your development activities.

A conversation about development should be part of discussions with your supervisor at the beginning of the performance year. Once you and your supervisor have agreed, enter your plan in myHR Learn. Then, document and track your progress throughout the year. Achievement of development goals is not included in your Performance Excellence rating but is critical to your ongoing growth and performance.

Before you start your development plan, have a conversation with your supervisor about:

- Where your growth would support the department, school or unit, or the University as a whole.
- Development areas on which you would like to focus.
- Your supervisor's thoughts about how to pursue your interests.

Questions to Ask

When making your development plan, ask yourself:

- What can I do to get better in my current role?
 - What improvements can I make that will expand my knowledge, skills and capabilities?
 - What strengths can I build on to expand my contributions?
 - Can I choose a development goal that supports a department goal that is interesting me?
 - Can I gain new skills, or new knowledge through interaction with new communities?
 - Are there current skills that can be brought to a new level of competency?
- Where do I want to go in my career at Northwestern?
 - What are the opportunities in my current career path (see Job Families on the HR website)?
 - Am I interested in changing my path?
 - What are some initial steps to help me get where I want to go?
 - Can I speak with someone who knows about the work in the area in which I'm interested?
- How do I gain greater fulfillment in my work at Northwestern?
 - What's available to help me get the most out of my Northwestern experience?
 - How can my supervisor help me be successful?
 - Are there other informal mentors or advisors who could help me with specific knowledge or support?

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There are several approaches you might take to create your development plan. The right approach is the one you and your supervisor agree upon. Some options to consider:

1. Creating a personal mission statement to identify short and longer-term aspirations.
2. Identifying one or two development goals that tie to your performance goals and will help you attain them. Follow the SIMple goal format to set your development goals (Specific, Important, Meaningful). Use outcome based statements to describe your development goals.
3. Writing an individual development plan that outlines your vision and the steps you will take to get there.
4. However you frame your development plan, discuss resource requirements with your supervisor (such as budget and time away from current role).

Ready to login?

learn.northwestern.edu

Access additional tools and resources:

perform.northwestern.edu

Help: For policy and process questions, contact your unit's HR Administrator.

For technical support: 847-491-4357 (1-HELP) or

consultant@northwestern.edu

When writing your development plan, consider on-the-job experiences, coaching and feedback, and more formal educational opportunities.

On the job:

- Hands-on experiences such as projects, stretch assignments, and serving on teams/committees.
- Identify a special assignment or project that will help meet a “mission critical” department objective.
- Volunteer to serve on a cross-functional team where you will interact with others outside your department.

Education:

- Attend on-campus seminars or activities.
- Explore career paths in your current job family and the skills you need to progress to the next level.
- Identify more formal education events (e.g., seminars, conferences, and workshops available in [myHR Learn](#)).
- Pursue formal coursework, completing a certificate program or achieving a bachelor’s or advanced degree. Discuss the many opportunities and benefits available to you with your supervisor or HR Business Partner.

Development Plan Examples

Development Goal	Development Actions
Improve my ability to manage my time and tasks to increase efficiency at regular activities such as reading and responding to email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully complete the myHR Learn class on <i>Getting Things Done</i>. • Talk to three peers who also took the course about their progress and key learnings that I can use in my daily work. • Apply new skills in my daily work. • Review progress with my supervisor and track in myHR Learn. • Ask my supervisor to create a stretch objective that will help me strengthen my newly acquired skills.
Improve my project management and collaboration skills by working on an initiative to achieve a key department goal that was identified by my supervisor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a kick-off meeting with my supervisor and team members if appropriate to orient the group and ensure common understanding of our objective. • Develop/maintain a project plan with timeline and success/completion measures. • Identify a mentor who can serve as an informal guide during the project. • Schedule regular status meetings with my supervisor to track progress. • Deliver a final report on the project.
Broaden my understanding of cross-cultural perspectives and share my learning with my team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend on-campus seminars on cross-cultural perspectives and identify on-demand learning opportunities on Lynda.com. • Volunteer to work on a NUSAC project for greater understanding and appreciation of richness of the Northwestern community. • Give a presentation to my team on my new learning and document in myHR Learn.