

## Kathy's Quick Guide to IDPs

(modified from Stanford Biosciences IDPs and UCSB IDPs)

See also myIDP: <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>

### What is an IDP?

An individual development plan (IDP) is a tool to assist students, postdocs, and employees in career and personal development. Used extensively in the private sector and in government, the main purpose of an IDP is to help employees reach short and long-term career goals, as well as improve current job performance. In the context of graduate school and postdoctoral positions, the IDP can often serve as an evolving roadmap that helps advisors gauge progress and identify specific needs. However, an IDP is *not* a performance evaluation tool or a one-time activity. It should be looked at like a partnership between the student and advisor. It involves preparation and continuous feedback.

### Why do an IDP?

**Students:** Graduate school is about training you to ask and address new questions and discover your passion. Having honest and open discussions with your advisor is an important part of your training. As a grad student, you own your education. That means not only being responsible for your dissertation, but also actively getting the training you need and seeking guidance from your mentors, who will support you as partners in your training.

**Advisors:** We all want our students to be successful and IDPs are a great way to identify what your student may need in order to be a positive, productive member of your research team. IDPs can serve as a progress checklist that lets you assess outcomes in the short and long term and help students recognize where to focus their efforts. Sometimes, it can be helpful to discuss a student's IDP in a committee meeting so that others can weigh in with advice.

### Keys to a positive mentoring relationship –

**Think intentionally about training** You will find it helpful to think through what you want to get out of your training and how your advisors and other sources of support can help you achieve your goals.

**Have open and direct dialogue** Starting off with strong, supportive communication is a fundamental part of getting continual advice that will help guide you throughout your life.

**Establish clear expectations/steps** The IDP covers topics that students have found essential to discuss with their mentors. If you have additional questions or objectives related to your training, these meetings are a great time to bring them up and set action steps.