Introduction

An integral part of the performance review process is the Professional Development Plan (PDP). The Plan identifies your strengths and areas of development as they relate to your professional goals and aspirations. Creating a Professional Development Plan will help you develop strategies to maximize your opportunities for meaningful work in the future.

Since your career encompasses all your work experiences, your goals could include development needed to fulfill your current role, and/or development needed to move into future roles. Use this plan for both scenarios. When setting your professional development goals, focus first on your current role. Any development you require to meet your current performance targets or competencies should take priority for development planning (i.e. any performance management rating less than 3). Once you are meeting your current role expectations, you can begin development planning for future professional goals.

The Plan is designed to be self-directed. With support from your manager and the organization, you will determine your long and short-term professional goals, assess your developmental needs, create your development plan to reach your goals and follow through with your plan.

The Professional Development Plan includes materials to help you think about, plan for and articulate your professional development. Engaging in this process will help ensure you have the knowledge, skills, competencies and abilities you need to successfully achieve your professional goal.

Before you begin….

Revisit your most recent performance review to identify your professional interests and training requirements. This information may be copied onto the Professional Development Plan if applicable.

How to use the Professional Development Planning resources:

1. **The PDP Instruction Guide**: Will help you complete the Professional Development Plan and address questions you may have.
2. **Professional Development Plan**: Use this form to capture your action plan for professional development, including: status in your current role and your long term professional goal; your development goal(s); steps to achieve that goal(s); timeframes; and how to tell when you’ve succeeded.

Share your completed Professional Development Plan with your manager to help him/her understand your goals and plans and identify opportunities to incorporate your professional goals into your performance management plan. Your manager may wish to use a copy of your plan when s/he has Talent Review Meetings for your division/department.
Purpose of this step

This information provides a context for where you should focus your professional development. Your status in your current role and your professional goals will form the foundation for setting your development goals.

The link to Performance Management

Review your ratings, actual results compared to targets and competencies (if applicable). Summarize that information into a few sentences and write it in the space provided in Performance Assessment section of the Professional Development Plan form, as applicable.

How to determine your professional goal, strengths, and areas for development

Review your professional interests and abilities, which will help determine your professional goal. Think about both what you want your career to look like in the near future as well as your long-term goal.

Your short-term goal should be achievable in the next one to three years. The successful achievement of your short-term goal should lead to your long-term goal, which may take more than three years to complete.

Strengths and areas for development

Review your past performance and professional goals to identify strengths and areas for development. To identify areas of strength, consider what knowledge, skills, and competencies you have excelled in that support your professional aspirations.

To identify areas for development, consider what knowledge, skills, and competencies you have struggled with during your career. It is helpful to think in terms of areas that require development to sustain where you want to be or support what you want to be doing.

To help identify both of these think about feedback. Feedback-type information may include: professional assessments; 360 assessments; personality type indicators such as Myers-Briggs, DISC, or True Colors to name a few; client feedback such as letters of acknowledgement; awards or formal recognition; or leadership competency assessments you have received (from peers, clients, direct reports, managers, etc.) regarding your abilities and performance.

What is it telling you? How do you interpret this information? What common themes do you see? Is there an area of critical need that stands out? Who can validate this for you? Based on this information, decide on your developmental areas. It could be a competency or skill that needs development.

Based on your past performance, strengths and professional goal(s), prioritize your areas for development.

What next?

Add this information to Professional Goal, Strengths and Areas for Development sections of the first page of the Professional Development Plan.

Additional Resources

Performance Management Resources:
http://novascotia.ca/psc/hrCentre/resources/ode/performanceManagement/performanceManagement_employeeType.asp
Step 2 – Set Your Development Goals

**Purpose of this step**
Goal setting helps you determine your priorities, get organized, make big decisions, and realize your dreams. Goal setting gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation. It focuses your acquisition of knowledge and helps you to organize your resources. Ultimately, this step will help you clarify and understand the direction of your professional development.

**The link to Performance Management**
Your Performance Management Plan/targets or objectives are one source for identifying developmental goals. At the same time, look for opportunities to incorporate your development goals into your Performance Management Plan.

**How to set a goal**
Now that you’ve identified your developmental needs, choose your specific goal(s). Don’t focus on too many developmental goals at once. An effective plan should focus on **two or three** goals.

Consider both your short-term goals (one to three years) and long-term (three or more years) goals. Short-term goals may be directly related to your current job or to a position to which you aspire. Also consider organizational goals, government’s direction, the department’s business plan and the team or group objectives.

Development planning is not always about career advancement, it is also about making the most of your current role and developing yourself to be the best you can be doing what you enjoy.

Note: Training is an action step to achieve a goal.

**How to write a goal**
Write **SMART** Goals – **Specific**, **Measureable**, **Action-orientated**, **Relevant**, and **Time Bound**

The goal should be **specific** enough so that you know exactly what you’re striving for, **measurable** so you can tell exactly when the goal has been reached, **action-oriented** to indicate an activity that will produce results, **relevant** in that it is practical and can be achieved, and **time** (and resources) constrained meaning that it has a definite deadline for completion and realizes limited availability of resources.

Be as specific as possible and indicate what behaviours exemplify success in this area.

**What next?**
Add this information to the **Development Goal** section of the Professional Development Plan.

**Additional Resources**
**Competency Dictionary**
http://novascotia.ca/psc/hrCentre/resources/ode/competencies.asp#CompetencyDictionary
Step 3 – Write the Action Steps

Purpose of this step
Once you have a well-formed goal, you need some direction to follow to achieve this goal. The creation of Action Steps gives you a list of the important things that need to be done to achieve the goal. It’s an action plan that allows you to track your progress towards the goal. This is where you detail your project plan for your own development.

The link to Performance Management
Your Performance Management form or appraisal may be a source of action steps.

How to determine action steps
An Action Step should have three main parts:
Action – what action will be taken?
Context – when, and where, will it take place?
Results – what will be the result of this action?

Types of developmental activities or actions that can be used to build skills and competencies include:
- Practical on-the-job experience (joining a committee or project team)
- Coaching/mentoring sessions
- Special assignments (cross-functional team, task-force, project)
- Increased responsibility
- Self-directed study or reading
- Term or temporary assignments
- Acting roles
- Training
- Job transition – change in work, people, location, scope

Step 3 Example
“Attend monthly meetings with Ms. Jones, our company’s key presenter, and accompany her in 3 situations when a major presentation/meeting is taking place.”

“Make at least 3 presentations or chair 3 meetings with her in attendance and receive feedback.”

What else should I consider when completing this section?
To help ensure that your professional development goals are not sidetracked, it is helpful to consider the obstacles you may encounter in reaching your goals and identify possible ways to overcome these obstacles. Operational needs must be considered when planning for development which may or may not support all of your targets or timelines.

Identifying what resources are available to you will help to increase the probability of successfully achieving your development goals. Think about the types of resources you might need and where they will come from. There are usually a
number of potential solutions for overcoming a barrier, such as:

If you cannot take on additional developmental assignments due to existing workload, a potential solution would be cross-training with another team member.

If your budget for training courses is limited, potential low cost solutions may include online learning or reading a book.

If you think your manager may not be supportive of your development, a potential solution would be to choose developmental activities that will directly benefit your manager and your department, such as taking on a project that is under-resourced or in trouble, or a task from your manager’s workload.

Other resources that may be available as part of your solution may include:

- Motivational support and/or coaching from a mentor
- Assistance from your department HR Consultant or HR Development Consultant
- Time to work on your development
- Feedback and advice from those who are skilled in the areas you are seeking to develop

What next?

Add this information to the **Action Steps** section of the Professional Development Plan.

Additional Resources

Development Resource Guide:
http://novascotia.ca/psc/hrCentre/resources/ode/competencies.asp

Corporate Training and Development Programs as listed in LearnNet and the Corporate PSC calendar:
https://learnnet.learnflex.net/include/login.asp?url=/users/index.asp

Competency Assessment Questionnaire:
http://novascotia.ca/psc/hrCentre/resources/ode/competencies.asp
Step 4 – Evaluating Your Progress

Purpose of this step

By evaluating your progress, you will be able to establish when you are successful in meeting your training and professional development goals.

The link to Performance Management

Your developmental goals and high-level action steps should be recorded in your Performance Management Plan for evaluation, especially those related to training for your current role.

How to… evaluate

Evaluation is closely tied to goal setting. By setting S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, action-orientated, relevant, and time-bound) goals, you will ensure that their achievement can be evaluated. If you do not think you will be able to evaluate a goal, it probably isn’t meeting one of the S.M.A.R.T. guidelines.

In addition to your own self-evaluation, you should have another source for evaluation. In most cases, this person would be your manager. However, in some cases, you may wish to have a ‘mentor’ provide you with additional evaluation feedback on one or more of your goals. Another evaluation criteria may be the target date you set for your action step(s).

Keep in mind that your Professional Development Plan is not a one-time activity, rather a document that records an evolving process. It may need to be revised as the year progresses, if you experience changes in your role or responsibilities, or if significant changes to your objectives are required. Regular review and tailoring of your plan is necessary to make your development as effective as possible.

The performance management process at the beginning of the year (goal setting), and at the mid-year and year-end reviews should be used to formally revisit your professional development plan. This will help to identify opportunities where your career goals can be aligned with your performance management objectives.

What next?

Add this information to the Evaluation section of the Professional Development Plan.