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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

Office of
Human Resources
Management

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TO: Mission Area Human Resources Directors
USDA Training Officers

FROM: Karen A. Messmore 
Director
Office of Human Resource Management(OHRM)

SUBJECT: Departmental Regulation on Creating Individual Development Plans
(IDPs)

During the Cultural Transformation listening sessions, one of the most frequent requests shared by employees was that their supervisor work with them to create an IDP. The IDP represents a commitment that the organization makes to growing and developing employees. It demonstrates that employees are valued. Although many of you have IDP policies and IDPs are used in USDA, this feedback showed us that more needs to be done to create the culture of inclusion, diversity and high performance that we are striving to achieve. Earlier, with your input, OHRM drafted a Departmental Regulation (DR) on creating IDPs. The DR has been issued and is posted on the USDA web site at <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-410.pdf>. Please be aware that some Agencies will need to engage with their labor unions to implement the DR.

As you know, IDPs are an important part of succession planning in that they help employees develop skills that will be needed both now and in the future. As part of long-term career planning, employees, supervisors and training managers can use IDPs to out-line training, and more importantly, create activities that will lead to a more engaged, effective, and skilled workforce.

OHRM has established a web site that provides guidance and tools for the creation and use of IDPs. That site is at: <http://www.idp.usda.gov/>. The process of creating IDPs is a shared responsibility between supervisors and employees. Employees are responsible for working with their supervisor to create and maintain an IDP and for taking responsibility for identifying opportunities for self development and improvement on a continual basis. The Regulation specifies that supervisors are responsible for ensuring employees have an IDP and that the IDP remains current; providing feedback to employees about job strengths and areas for improvement; and supporting employee training and development, providing training opportunities and funding if related to the Department's mission and ensuring funds are available.

The use of AgLearn for developing and maintaining IDPs is encouraged because it provides an effective way for Agencies to track the number of IDPs in progress and it is linked to the employee's training record. The online class called, "AgLearn IDP

Course,” is a helpful resource for persons who want to learn how to create an IDP using the AgLearn tool.

Because of the importance of IDPs, the following accountability measures are being implemented.

A goal is established that eighty (80) percent of eligible USDA employees will have an IDP by September 1, 2011.

Agencies must provide training to employees and supervisors on creating IDPs by May 31, 2011. This training can be done by Agencies, or Agencies may use the training provided by the USDA Virtual University.

Agencies will incorporate an overview regarding IDPs into all new employee onboarding programs and new supervisor training.

Mission Area and Staff Organization Human Resource Directors will track the number of IDPs that are completed. In cases where less than 80 percent of eligible employees have IDPs, a plan will be developed to determine the underlying reasons for this and an action plan to reach the goal. This information will be reported to OHRM bi-annually. The first report is due on March 31, 2011.

Thank you for ensuring that supervisors are aware of the policy and that they are implementing it to provide successful career development for USDA employees.