IDP Brief – Managing IDPs in GIPSA

1) **What are the legal requirements for the IDP in GIPSA?**

Departmental Directive 4040-410 not only establishes guidance for IDPs but promotes the use of IDPs as a positive way to develop effective and engaged employees. In that context, every Federal employee should have an IDP. If an employee declines an IDP, the supervisor should note on the IDP -- No further development desired/required at this time.

Departmental Directive GIPSA 4040-410…USDA:
http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR4040-410.pdf

Supporting Guidelines:
http://www.idp.usda.gov/

5 CFR § 410.201 Responsibilities of the head of an agency. (IDPs provide documentation for supporting training management in the agency)
Agency employee development plans and programs should be designed to build or support an agency workforce capable of achieving agency mission and performance goals and facilitating continuous improvement of employee and organizational performance.

5 CFR § 410.303 Employee responsibilities.
Employees are responsible for self-development, for successfully completing and applying authorized training, and for fulfilling continued service agreements. In addition, they share with their agencies the responsibility to identify training needed to improve individual and organizational performance and identify methods to meet those needs, effectively and efficiently.

2) **Is the IDP related to the Performance Elements and can it be discussed during performance reviews?**

While IDPs are independent of an employee's performance plan they may be discussed with the employee during performance counseling sessions since training and individual development are closely aligned with performance.

3) **Is an IDP a contract?**

No, it is not a contract. It is a plan and can be changed anytime. The intent is to develop the employee. According to Departmental Directive 4040-410, section (4) states that an IDP is: "A written plan for scheduling and managing an employee's development."

4) **What is a Competency?**

It is a cluster of related knowledge, skills, and other attributes that affect a major part of one's job that correlates with performance on the job, that can be measured against well-accepted standards, and that can be improved via training and development. There are 28 competencies. This can be found on the InGIPSA Training Site under Supervisory/Management Training in "OPM Competency Definitions." or look at the link below which is for executives. This is also the basis for competency identification for employees.

http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-core-qualifications/

5) **As a supervisor, what are some of the constraints to consider when developing an IDP or employee training plan?**

When a supervisor discusses employee development with staff he or she will need to carefully weigh identified training needs and resources. To support or approve employee training a supervisor or manager will need to also consider supporting mechanisms or reasons for the training. Activities would be considered within the context of: a. Mission; b. Budget; c. Workload; d. Travel; e. Staffing; f. Time constraints and e. other constraints.

6) **What are the definitions of different types of development?**

a. On-the-Job-Training. Structured on-the-job-training is the most frequently used method of individualized learning.
b. Formal Classroom Training. This training may take place away from your work site or at worksite.
c. Self-Development. When an employee aspires to a new career and his/her developmental needs cannot be directly related to present or anticipated work assignments, or resources are not available, the employee may undertake self-development activities (which the employee may pay for or complete on their own time):
(1) Taking evening or weekend courses at local schools.
(2) Watching educational or training videotapes.
(3) Using correspondence and other self-study courses.
(4) Reading books and other publications or journals.
(5) Using PC tutorials or computer assisted training programs.
d. Developmental Activities. One of the best ways to train for added responsibilities or higher job opportunities is through developmental activities. With the support and assistance of the supervisor, the employee's present job can be restructured or arrangements made to have the employee temporarily transferred to another area to learn firsthand the necessary technical and managerial competencies required for effective performance in that job. Examples of developmental activities include the following list:
Other Methods:

(1) Shadowing: Providing the opportunity to observe a well qualified, journeyman level employee perform a particular skill. Immediately after the shadowing period, the employee needs to have the opportunity to perform the same skill and be given feedback on that performance.

(2) Detail/Rotational Assignments: Short-term assignment particularly appropriate for important skills that make up a small portion of an individual's job, but can lead to full-time work in that field.

(3) Task Force Assignments: This is particularly effective if the employee has an opportunity to work with well qualified people who will provide feedback to the learner on his/her performance and participation in the group.

(4) Volunteeer activities: volunteer for tasks both at work and in the community, and other activities

7) **How many skill areas should an employee focus on in a year?**

Recommended: The best way to ensure development is to clearly identify 1-3 areas on which to focus one's improvement.

8) **What is the IDP process in GIPSA and why are IDPs requested in July and August?**

In support of the Departmental Directive 4040-410 and in support of USDA's Cultural Transformation, GIPSA sets an annual goal of 100 percent participation by Federal full-time and part-time employees in the IDP process. This means that GIPSA requires all employees to either submit an IDP with their developmental or training needs or they may check the box stating -- No further development desired/required at this time. The IDP documents that all were given the opportunity to discuss their development. The IDP is then signed both the employee and the supervisor.

Each office is requested to identify a local contact to collect IDPs and document completion and training needs. They may set an **internal office or staff deadline** to allow them to compile their office's consolidated plans before this final date. Suggested date would be several weeks before the agency due

IDP Documents are on the training website and include: **A)** All employee memo, **B)** IDP Form, **C)** Poster, **D)** Brochure, **E)** Consolidated workplans (Excel and Word), and **F)** One page IDP samples for supervisors and employees. Also USDA's guide is at:http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR4040-410.pdf .

There is a summary of this guide which is attached to the Directive. Find all this information and more by clicking on the Training Resources site on inGIPSA. Scroll over to the left-hand column and under "Employee Resources" Column click on "Training" and scroll down to IDPs. **Why does GIPSA have an early due date for all its IDPs, usually July or August?**

The Federal fiscal year (FY) starts October 1. Having an earlier due date allows for offices to plan their budget.

9) **Why has GIPSA traditionally done the IDP by paper instead of AgLearn?**

Traditionally, IDPs have been done on paper due to the fact that there is no private confidential computer in the field that allows employees to fill out the form. However, recently it appears that most offices now have the technology availability to provide confidentiality. Until recently the IDP documents did not generate a compiled report of employee needs. Further, administrators could not view IDPs from the administrative side as it was only viewed by the employee and the supervisor due to privacy concerns. Currently, the training office is exploring the new reporting features of the IDP in AgLearn that may give us reason to implement the IDP in AgLearn.

10) **Does an Agency pay for certifications?**

For an agency to pay for a certification or degree it must be a requirement of the employee's job and specified in the Position Description or a job series and merit principles apply.

a) There is a 2004 GAO decision that implies payment is available only to certifications mandated or legally required. The case involved a CPA for the Risk Management Agency. http://www.gao.gov/decisions/appro/302548.htm

b) Also, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 5757 (a) suggests that professional credentials would include only those items that are required for an individual to be licensed or otherwise certified to practice a particular profession. It speaks in terms of accreditation, licenses, and

certification--terms ordinarily used and commonly understood to refer to permission conferred on an individual by a regulatory body to engage in the practice of a regulated profession. Some types of documentation of regulatory authorization that would demonstrate an employee's qualification to work in a specific professional area include annual state bar membership, CPA licenses, medical licenses, court admission fees required of attorneys for admission to practice before a court if admission is necessary to carry out an agency's statutory mission, teacher certifications, and other certifications that permit an employee to practice in a professional area.

This means it that the practice of the profession is a requirement of the job. Thus, an agency should only consider certification when its workforce analysis shows there is a need for a demonstrated level (Note: merit principles apply and thus such a requirement would need to be documented in the employee position description.)

c) OPM issued 2008 guidance defining certifications as demonstrating a level of knowledge or skill "required to perform in an occupation, profession or role" and to pay for certifications agencies, must first determine what goals, identify job series and apply merit principles. http://www.chcoc.gov/Transmittals/Attachments/trans1489.pdf

11) **Does GIPSA allow for external training required to maintain a certification of an employee? Yes and No.**

a) No, if comparable training is available in AgLearn and course material is available that can meet the minimal requirements to maintain the certification. This is in recognition of current USDA policy established in the USDA, CIO memo May 2, 2008 and the GIPSA memo July 29, 2009.
b) Yes, provided the employee's position description meets specifies certification requirements above in question 10 and comparable training material is not in AgLearn.
c) Yes, if the external course is related to the job is not a requirement of the position and meets the specific training need of the individual in support of their position. Further, the course not a certificate test. Also, the main reason for taking the course is not simply to maintain the employee's certification. If uncertain contact the Training Office.