



Power Up Your Professional Development Plan

From the [N2025 Strategic Plan](#), “We believe in the power of every person. The most important asset at the University of Nebraska is its people — students, staff, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty. It is critical to **provide access** to individualized professional development and effective mentorship **for all members of the university community.**”

As a part of this plan, it is expected that all faculty, post-doctoral fellows, staff, and graduate and professional students have a documented and individualized professional development plan. A Professional Development Plan (PDP) is a written document that establishes both your career development goals and a strategy for meeting them.



1. Self-assessment

Complete the *Brainstorming Worksheet* **Self-Assessment** section with your strengths, challenges, and visions. This will provide insight on areas of interest and focus for your plan. It is important to be as open and honest as possible when answering.

Examples

	+ Strengths	- Challenges	Q Visions
Technical or Duty Related	1 What are you good at? Very organized	What skills do you struggle with? Can't drive the forklift	What certifications or qualifications do you want to achieve? Get certified to drive the forklift when organizing inventory
	2 What do others say about your strengths? Great presenter Pick up new skills quickly	What areas have you been told you need to improve or develop? My unit's PowerPoint presentations are dull and boring	What are you passionate about that could add value to your position/unit? I want to make our unit's presentation slides to be more engaging
Interpersonal Communications & Interactions	3 What do others say about your strengths? Great ideas to improve the workplace culture	What do others say about your weaknesses? Don't talk during meetings or share my ideas or opinions	What does success look like to you? Be more assertive and feel comfortable talking in groups and meetings while sharing my ideas
	4 When interacting with others what do you feel good about? Friendly and welcoming Like to meet new people	What habits if any do you need to change? Chatty with coworkers taking me off task	What certifications, qualifications, or skills do you want to achieve? Be a mentor/trainer onboarding the new hires in our unit

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Leadership (of people or projects)	<p>5 What teams or projects have you led and why were you successful?</p> <p>Good at training my team on technical aspects of job</p>	<p>What holds you back?</p> <p>Don't know how to address some team members who are not meeting expectations.</p>	<p>What leadership skills do you need for a leadership role?</p> <p>Be able to have those difficult conversations without fear and help coach my team to improve</p>
	<p>6 What natural leader skills do you have?</p> <p>I'm good at recognizing people's strengths and how they can contribute effectively</p>	<p>Which leadership skills are you uncomfortable with?</p> <p>Delegating when I don't know team members well</p>	<p>What projects or committees would you like to lead to help you feel comfortable leading?</p> <p>A small team or task force to improve Inclusive Excellence in our unit</p>
Miscellaneous	<p>7 What achievements are you proud of?</p> <p>Active member of my college's Committee on Inclusive Excellence & Diversity</p>	<p>What areas have you been told you need to improve or develop?</p> <p>I've been encouraged to broaden my knowledge of our campus community, visiting each college and non-academic unit</p>	<p>What are you passionate about that could add value to your position/unit?</p> <p>Work on DEI initiatives that would impact the entire campus</p>
	<p>8 What improvements have you contributed to that are you proud of?</p> <p>Helped create new online form to reduce paper processing</p>	<p>What tasks do you avoid due to a lack of confidence?</p> <p>Avoid learning new processes that don't pertain to my everyday work</p>	<p>What other skills would you like to learn to be more successful?</p> <p>Cross-train other tasks to help create new online forms</p>

2. Resources & Strategies

Complete the *Brainstorming Worksheet Resources & Strategies* and the **Barriers** sections.

- a. In the **Resources & Strategies** section, identify what you need to be successful with your visions.
- b. In the **Barriers** section, list any concerns you have. E.g., time, budget, support

Examples of Resources & Strategies

10% Formal professional development	20% Interactions with others	70% On-the-job experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University training and workshops • University e-learning portal • University classes with employee scholarships • Attend conferences, seminars, professional chapter meetings, and other presentations • Read journals, magazines, and books • Subscribe to newsletters in your field that are a good source of current information. • External course offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking feedback from direct reports, peers, or a critical friend • Maintain membership in professional organizations • Online networking opportunities, i.e., connecting with experts on LinkedIn or contributing to blogs and discussion boards • Mentoring • Communities of practice • Attend networking events • Establish a personal networking team to whom you can turn for advice, suggestions, assistance, and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking on higher duties • Job rotations • Job shadowing • Cross-training • Request feedback on specific tasks to ensure accuracy • Site or campus visit learning opportunity • Stretch projects • Sign up for and participate in job-related committee work i.e. Wellness committee, UNOPA, Staff Senate, Safety committee

3. Set your SMARTER Goals

Before you begin to set your goals, you will need to narrow your focus and decide which vision(s) belong in your professional development plan.

- What are your top priorities?
- What is the most value-added goal for your unit?
- What does your supervisor support?
- What do you have time for?
- What has the least barriers to accomplishment?

Complete the *SMARTER Professional Development Plan* worksheet.

Specific	
Well defined, clear, and unambiguous.	<p><i>Who is involved in this goal?</i></p> <p><i>What do I want to accomplish?</i></p> <p><i>Where is this goal to be achieved?</i></p> <p><i>When do I want to achieve this goal?</i></p> <p><i>Why do I want to achieve this goal?</i></p>
Measurable	
Quantify an indicator of progress.	<p><i>How many/much?</i></p> <p><i>How do I know if I have reached my goal?</i></p> <p><i>What is my indicator of progress?</i></p>
Agreed-upon (Action)	
Include the action-based steps that you will do to make the goal happen.	<p><i>How will I achieve my goal?</i></p> <p><i>What steps must I take to get what I need?</i></p>
Resources & Realistic	
Realistic standard to your position and your vision of your career's future.	<p><i>Does this align with the department, college, university, and overall system objectives?</i></p> <p><i>Is this supportive of your current position or your future career goals?</i></p>
Select the appropriate available resources to help you achieve your goal.	<p><i>Have others done it successfully before?</i></p> <p><i>Do I have the resources to achieve my goal?</i></p> <p><i>If not, what am I missing?</i></p>
Time-bound	
If the goal is not time-constrained, there will be no sense of urgency and, therefore, less motivation to achieve the goal.	<p><i>Does my goal have a deadline?</i></p> <p><i>By what date do I want to achieve my goal?</i></p>
Evaluation	
Besides yourself, identify who else will help hold you accountable in reaching your goal. Identify steps on how you will be evaluated to determine your success.	<p><i>Who will help hold you accountable, Supervisor, employees, coworker?</i></p> <p><i>What will indicate you have met this goal?</i></p>
Recognition	
Recognize and celebrate your accomplishment.	<p><i>What date did you achieve your goal?</i></p>