

CAREER DISCUSSION: EMPLOYEE PREPARATION GUIDE

This guide can be used to plan for an effective career discussion with your manager. Reference the [Competency Models / Development Guides](#) to answer questions related to competencies for your current level or desired future level.

Purpose of Career Discussions

To discuss your career interests, goals, strengths, development areas, work preferences, and organizational needs. Career discussions help you align your career goals with organizational needs. These conversations help you take charge of your development by communicating your aspirations and interests, and this insight helps your manager support your development. You should meet with your manager at least twice per year to review progress, request feedback, and update your Individual Development Plan (IDP) based on any changes to your personal career goals and organizational needs. A good time to hold these discussions is during mid-year and end-of-year performance reviews.

Your Role

- Take the lead in the conversation. Discuss your career aspirations and goals, interests, skills, motivations, and work preferences. Ask questions about organizational needs and opportunities that align with your goals and interests.
- Be open and honest. Your manager is there to support your career development.
- Ask your manager to help you identify learning and development opportunities and make connections with individuals and groups involved in your areas of career interest.

Prepare for the Career Discussion

- Schedule your career discussion with your manager.
- Research the current and future needs of your organization and organizations in which you have future interest.
- Think about your aspirations, interests, strengths, and skills, and prepare to discuss them with your manager (see the sample questions below).



Sample Questions

- What are my aspirations?
- What am I passionate about?
- What strengths and skills do I want to leverage?
- If I could create my ideal job, what would it be?
- What do I want to be doing 1-2 years from now? 3-5 years from now?

Take notes in advance of the meeting (see Page 2 of this guide for a template for preparing for the discussion).

Hold the Career Discussion

Meet with your manager to discuss:

- **Career goals:** Discuss your short-term career goals (1-2 years), long-term career goals (3-5 years), interests, and future roles you want to pursue.
- **Organizational needs:** Discuss organizational needs; discuss key positions and hard-to-fill positions and the skills and experiences needed to fulfill them; identify transferrable skills.
- **Barriers:** Discuss any barriers that may impact your career development (ex: work/life balance, mobility).
- **Strengths and development areas:** Discuss the strengths and skills you would like to leverage and areas you would like to work on to improve performance in your current role and/or prepare you for future roles.
- **Next steps:** Discuss how to move forward (e.g., creating an IDP, updating your IDP).



Conversation Tips

- Do most of the talking (80% of time). Discuss your interests, preferences, and what's important to you in your career.
- Take the lead in creating solutions.
- Have an open mind and ask inquiring questions to gain full understanding.
- You and your manager do not need to have all the answers. Not having answers can drive more thought during the discussion. Ask for help with connecting with people in your areas of interest and identifying available resources.
- Be careful not to go into "solution mode" before you are done discussing your career interests.

Template: Preparing for the Career Discussion

Use the template below to help prepare for an effective career discussion with your manager. Using the questions below as a guide, take notes to capture key discussion points in advance for the meeting. Reference the [Competency Models / Development Guides](#) to answer questions related to competencies for your current level or desired future level.

Discussion Points	Questions to Consider	Notes
1. Personal Interests	<i>What are you most passionate about? What are you good at? What are you excited to learn?</i>	
2. Career Goals	<i>What Postal Service positions or functions interest you? What are your short-term career goals (1-2 years)? What are your long-term career goals (3-5 years)? How do your career goals align with the needs of the organization? What barriers may prevent you from reaching your career goals?</i>	
3. Strengths	<i>What knowledge, skills, and experiences do you currently possess? How do they align with your personal interests and career goals? In which competencies do you feel you exceed expectations?</i>	
4. Development Areas	<i>What specific education or qualifications do you think are needed to reach your career goals? In which competencies do you feel you need improvement? What competencies should you focus on developing in the next two years? What job experiences, feedback, coaching, and/or training might be useful in helping address each competency?</i>	