Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are self-assessment tools that trainees, including graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, can use in consultation with their mentors to plan ahead for their research goals and career success. IDPs are used to regularly review the research progress, professional development needs and career objectives of trainees.

FASEB, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, first recommended that IDPs be used regularly to promote success for postdocs and they provided template IDPs that are being used widely.

In 2012 FASEB and AAAS launched a web site to further promote the use of IDPs. A nationwide study of 7600 postdoctoral researchers found that postdocs who developed training plans with their advisers at the start of their appointments reported greater satisfaction, published more papers, and experienced fewer conflicts with those advisers. (Davis, G. (2005). “Doctors Without Orders.” American Scientist, 93 (3), supplement 1-13.)