

Individual Growth Plan



Why are individual growth plans important?

SEND International desires the personal and professional growth of every member of the mission. We believe that our members are our organization's greatest resource, and therefore we want to maximize their effectiveness in accomplishing the overall mission of SEND and in bearing fruit in the individual ministries to which we have been called.

Research shows us that mission agencies that encourage their members in their ongoing personal growth and development are going to have less attrition (resignations for preventable reasons).¹

But IGPs are not only important for the sake of the organization. We believe that our ongoing growth and development brings glory to God and cooperates with the ongoing transformative work of the Holy Spirit within us, making us into the image of the Son. If our strengths, skills and even ministries roles are God's gifts to us, then we must be good stewards of those gifts, and seek to develop them to their greatest fruitfulness. Paul tells Timothy, *"Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress."* - 1 Timothy 4:14–15.

We also believe that people who are continually growing in their capacities, skills and maturity are people are more likely to be joyfully productive in the ministries and cultural contexts to which they have been called, and more prepared and willing to transition into new assignments and ministries that God may open up for them.

But why do I need to develop my own personal growth plan? Can't I just use a generic plan recommended by the mission?

We want each member to be intentional about and take responsibility for their own personal growth. Just providing opportunities and ideas for ongoing learning is not enough. The pressure of ongoing ministry and family responsibilities will consistently crowd out our desires to grow and learn. Unless we make a plan for that learning to occur, set the time frame for when we plan to do that learning, and invite others to hold us accountable to that plan, our good intentions to grow will be trumped by the press of daily life and the expectations of others. We will be so busy "chopping wood" that we will have no time to "sharpen the ax." *If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success.* (Ecclesiastes 10:10)

At the same time, we recognize that learning plans must be individualized and tailored to each person's needs and learning style. For example, we could ask everyone in the whole mission to read the same

¹ In the Re-MAPII study (Retaining Missionaries: Agency Practices) in 2002, there was a strong correlation between organizations that scored high on retaining missionaries (low attrition) and organizations that provided their missionaries with opportunities for ongoing training and actively encouraged ongoing language and culture training. The Engage! research project by GMI on missionary retention built on Re-MAP and demonstrated that those who had resigned from missionary service were more than twice as likely to say that their agency did not encourage personal and professional development as those who were still serving on the field.

three books this year. But this would ignore the reality that many do not learn best by reading a book. It would also ignore the reality that some will have already learned the principles in those books in the past and others will not yet be ready to properly digest the subject matter. One size does not fit all.

What learning activities should I put into my individual growth plan?

The following pages seek to give you some ideas of different areas in which you might want to pursue learning. The “Missionary Growth Areas” on the fourth page lists 32 different growth areas in three different major categories. Some of our growth goals will be in the area of our ministry assignment, but not all of them. It is important to look at learning holistically. Our calling encompasses all areas of our life, and so we should be considering all areas of our life as possible areas of growth.

Be creative. Include many different types of learning activities. Don’t limit yourself to formal educational courses. In fact, the majority of our learning activities should not be classroom-based. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates 70 percent or more of work-related learning occurs outside formal training. Think of people you might interview, books you want to read, places you might want to visit, sermons you want to listen to or mentors/coaches you want ask for help. Invite others, including your fellow missionaries and team leaders to suggest learning activities. Look for ideas on the [SEND U wiki](#) which now includes an index of all resources on the wiki that would pertain to the three major areas of growth. Of course, we in SEND U are always glad to give suggestions and ideas for learning if you are stuck.

What’s the difference between ministry goals and IGP goals?

Setting goals for your ministry each year is an important part of determining what will be your priority tasks for the coming year. But an individual growth plan is focused not on your ministry tasks, but on **you**, on developing your ability to accomplish those tasks in the future. So setting a goal to start two new Bible studies in the coming year is a ministry goal. Deciding that you want to enroll in the Women-to-Women Ministry Training to learn how to facilitate small group Bible studies is a learning goal.

Ask yourself this question to determine whether it is a ministry goal or a learning goal: Is the primary objective of this goal to help others grow or to help me grow? Both types of goals are important, but only the second are truly learning goals. Remember the proverb about sharpening the axe!

How much time should I devote to my own growth and development?

Learning and growing is never our sole responsibility. Our primary assignment remains our primary assignment. But we believe that stopping regularly to sharpen the saw will make us more effective in the long run. We would suggest that 10% of our time be devoted to our ongoing growth and development. That would be the equivalent of one morning a week.

Keep learning,

Ken

Ken Guenther
SEND U Director



Process of developing your growth plan:

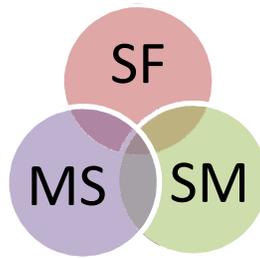
(to be done at the end of each year in preparation for the coming year)

1. **Spend some time in prayer**, asking God to direct you as you take a good look at yourself and plan for growth and development in the coming year. Listen to what God is saying to you about where He would like you to grow. We would encourage you to take a day or half-day prayer retreat as you do this.
2. **Complete the self-assessment**, using the scale of 1-4 to assess yourself in each of the 32 potential growth areas.
3. **Choose three growth areas that you want to prioritize** in the coming year by numbering them “1”, “2” and “3” in the last column. **We suggest that you choose one area from each of the main categories** of Spiritual Formation, Self-management and Ministry Skills. Remember, you do not necessarily need to work on your weakest areas. Sometimes more can be gained by focusing on perfecting your strengths. Sometimes you are satisfied to stay at a “1” or a “2” for now, given your present ministry responsibilities.
4. **Think of one to three learning activities that you could do that would help you grow in each of your three priorities.** Some examples of possible learning activities could be books you want to read, people you want to interview, research projects you want to complete, or seminars you want to attend. Go to the [SEND U wiki](#) for ideas. If you are stuck, ask a trusted friend, a coach or your team leader for ideas.
5. **Fill out the Individual Growth Plan.**
 - a. List your developmental priorities in the first column (from the self-assessment form)
 - b. Describe the improvements you would like to see in each of these areas in the coming year. Be as specific as you can be. If you cannot describe the desired outcome, describe the weakness you want to address.
 - c. List the learning activities you have selected for each of the developmental priorities. Choose at least one or as many as three learning activities for each priority.
 - d. Note the date (during the coming year) by which you intend to complete this learning activity. Theoretically, you could choose December 31 as the completion date for all of the learning activities, but it probably is more helpful to stagger the completion dates, so that you know what you need to do first, and do not procrastinate until the end of the year to start your learning activities.
 - e. As you complete each learning activity, mark the date on the IDP form (column 5)
6. **Show your completed IGP to a trusted friend or your team leader** so that they can encourage you and keep you accountable.
7. **Reflect on what you have learned** - During the year, and again just prior to doing another self-assessment at the end of the year, reflect on what you have learned over the past year. You may want to ask a coach to help you identify what you have learned. Use the reflection form on the last page. If that does not provide you with enough room, you can record what you are learning on another piece of paper or in a word processor.

Missionary Growth Areas

Spiritual Formation (SF)

- Prayer & Fasting
[regular personal prayer life; corporate prayer; utilizing fasting in focused prayer]
- Scripture
[read entire Bible; regular devotional reading; memorization; meditation; study; familiarity]
- Worship
[corporate worship; personal worship]
- Submissiveness & Accountability
[to God; to leadership/authority; to one-another]
- Gratitude
[toward God; toward others]
- Walking in the Spirit
[Dependence; displaying fruit of Spirit, power for ministry, perseverance]
- Holiness & Purity
[surrender; obedience, experiencing forgiveness; moral purity; dealing with temptation]
- Calling
[clarity and understanding; corporate calling; personal calling]
- Soul Care
[Sabbath; rest; solitude; silence; journaling; spiritual retreats]
- Spiritual Warfare
[awareness, spiritual armor, praying against forces of darkness]
- Community / Body Life
[committed to a local body, understanding one's ministry role, receiving ministry from others, encouraging & loving others]



Self-Management (SM)

- Life Skills
[hygiene; laundry; cooking; shopping; navigation/ability to use a map]
- Financial Stewardship
[tithing; personal budgeting; being content; debt management; giving to others]
- Physical Wellness
[health; nutrition; exercise; rest]
- Emotional Wellness
[manage stress, express emotions appropriately, have positive outlook on life]
- Interpersonal Skills
[conversational ability, take initiative in building relationships, hospitality]
- Time Management
[organization; promptness; scheduling; prioritizing]
- Family
[solid marriage, good communication, boundaries; rearing children]
- Self-Awareness
[understanding of your personality, strengths, passion, and how they fit together to fulfill God's design for your life]
- Personal Integrity
[honesty; transparency; accountability]
- Learner
[humble, asking good questions; listening well]

Ministry Skills (MS)

- Evangelism
[know and clearly explain gospel, know methods, have experience, confidence, passion to reach the lost]
- Disciple-Making
[nurturing new believers, developing reproducing disciples]
- Church-Planting (CP)
[cross-cultural CP; CP movements; types of church planters, developing national leaders]
- Ability to Lead
[leadership/facilitation of small group Bible studies; leading ministries, teams; servant leadership]
- Communication Skills
[giving testimony, communicating with donors, teaching & preaching, storytelling]
- Language Acquisition
[develop preparatory skills, growing in fluency]
- Developing Relationships
[with lost; among team members; with those of other cultures, adopting an incarnational lifestyle]
- Conflict Resolution
[resolving own conflicts, ability to be peacemaker in conflicts of others]
- Coaching/Mentoring
[encouraging others in their development and ministry]
- Teamwork
[finding your fit; respecting other's strengths & roles on the team; pulling your weight; multi-cultural teams]
- Technical Skills
[skills specific to your ministry assignment]



Self-Assessment for Growth Plan

Name: _____ Date of self-assessment: _____

Self-Assessment Scale: *(this scale is based on the 4 developmental levels of Situational Leadership)*

1	= In this area, I have very little or no knowledge, experience or skill and recognize that I have a lot to learn.
2	= I have some knowledge and a little experience in this area. But I often fail to do well, or I do not meet my own expectations or the expectations of others in this area.
3	= In this area, I have a lot of knowledge, and a fair amount of experience, but I am not confident that I would be able to consistently do well when I am under stress, or in another language/culture.
4	= Although I would not claim perfection, this is an area where I am confident and able to teach or mentor others.

Category	Quality or skill area	Self score	Priority for this year
Spiritual Formation	Prayer & Fasting [regular personal prayer life; corporate /public prayer; utilizing fasting in focused prayer]		
	Scripture [read entire Bible; regular devotional reading; memorization; meditation; study; familiarity]		
	Worship [corporate worship; personal worship]		
	Submissiveness and Accountability [to God; to leadership/authority; to one another]		
	Gratitude [toward God; toward others]		
	Walking in the Spirit [Dependence; displaying fruit of Spirit, power for ministry, perseverance]		
	Holiness & Purity [surrender; obedience, experiencing forgiveness; moral purity; dealing with temptation]		
	Calling [clarity and understanding; corporate calling; personal calling]		
	Soul Care [Sabbath; rest; solitude; silence; journaling; spiritual retreats]		
	Spiritual Warfare [awareness, spiritual armor, praying against forces of darkness]		
	Community / Body Life [committed to a local body, understanding one's ministry role, receiving ministry from others, encouraging & loving others]		
	Life Skills [hygiene; laundry; cooking; shopping; navigation/ability to use a map] Evaluate yourself on those life skills you need today.		

Self-management	Financial Stewardship [tithing; personal budgeting; being content; debt management; giving to others]		
	Physical Wellness [health; nutrition; exercise; rest]		
	Emotional Wellness [manage stress, express emotions appropriately, have positive outlook on life]		
	Interpersonal Skills [conversational ability, take initiative in building relationships, hospitality]		
	Time Management [organization; promptness; scheduling; prioritizing]		
	Family [solid marriage, good communication, boundaries; rearing children]		
	Self-Awareness [understanding of your personality, strengths, passion, and how they fit together to fulfill God’s design for your life]		
	Personal Integrity [honesty; transparency; accountability]		
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Ministry Skills	Evangelism [know and clearly explain gospel, know methods, have experience, confidence, passion to reach the lost]		
	Disciple-Making [nurturing new believers, developing reproducing disciples]		
	Church-planting [cross-cultural CP; CP movements; types of church planters, developing national leaders]		
	Ability to Lead [leadership/ facilitation of small group Bible studies; leading ministries, leading teams; servant leadership]		
	Communication Skills [giving testimony, communicating with donors, teaching & preaching, storying]		
	Language Acquisition [develop preparatory skills, growing in fluency]		
	Developing Relationships [with lost, among team members; with those of other cultures, adopting an incarnational lifestyle]		
	Conflict Resolution [resolving own conflicts, ability to be peacemaker in conflicts of others]		
	Coaching/Mentoring [encouraging others in their development and ministry]		
	Teamwork [finding your fit; respecting other’s strengths & roles on the team; pulling your weight; multi-cultural teams]		
Technical Skills [skills specific to your ministry assignment]			

Individual Growth Plan of _____, for _____.
 (name) (year)



Priorities for growth for the coming year	Improvements you want to see in this area	Learning activities chosen to address this area (1-3 for each priority)	Date you plan to complete the learning activity	Actual completion date
1. <u>Spiritual formation</u>		1.		
		2.		
		3.		
2. <u>Self-management</u>		1.		
		2.		
		3.		
3. <u>Ministry Skills</u>		1.		
		2.		
		3.		



Reflection on learning (at end of year)

Priorities for growth for the past year	Learning activities chosen to address this area	Significant lessons learned from these learning activities	Changes you have noticed as a result of your learning this past year
1. <u>Spiritual formation</u>			
2. <u>Self-management</u>			
3. <u>Ministry Skills</u>			