Good Morning, or afternoon, depending on your location. I'm Kathy Fallow, a Senior Training Analyst with Team AgLearn. Jerry Fernandez, your AgLearn Lead asked me to present this webinar on IDPs and Best Practices so that you could have the latest information on the implementation of IDPs in AgLearn. If you have a question during the presentation, please enter the question in the Q&A section. I'll pause twice for questions and will answer them at that time. Ready? Let's get started.

The AgLearn online IDP has a number of characteristics that are quite different from the paper form you may have been used to, which is one reason for this webinar today. We'll explain the concept of trusted source documents so that you can understand the underlying reasons for creating and submitting IDPs in the recommended fashion. I'll define the IDP tennis ball approach that governs when to edit and submit updates and changes to your IDP. I'll step you through the process of creating and submitting and IDP as well as adding activities to IDP goals to help accomplish those goals. I'll identify troubleshooting tips that we've learned from our current experiences with agencies implementing online IDPs and I'll offer some best practices as well. Finally, I'll point out available training resources in AgLearn for users, their supervisors and for admins supporting the online IDP in AgLearn.

Let's start by introducing the term trusted source document. You can also substitute the term official document. For the AgLearn IDP, this means that only those people who are the authoritative owners of the learner's IDP can modify and maintain the document. While the agency may use the data in the IDP to identify trends, no other persons, including AgLearn administrators, can make changes to this document. It is also true that the subordinate and the supervisor must be aware of the control mechanisms in place to protect the validity of this document. One of the most important mechanisms is the fact that all changes and updates must be documented by the user and the supervisor, and all changes must be submitted and approved before the end of the plan period.

What that means is that an online IDP is only available for updating and modification during the plan period. A fiscal year plan can only have goals added, updated or approved during the plan period. This is the most important difference between paper IDPs and the AgLearn IDP and it is what has gotten a lot of users and supervisors caught by surprise.

An IDP is like a contract much like a house buying contract. If you decide to write up a contract on a house but never give it to the seller, that contract is worthless. Likewise if the seller reads over your submitted contract but never approves it, that contract is worthless.

IDPs must be submitted for approval by users and they must be approved by the supervisor before the plan period is over. Only supervisors and employees can make changes. We administrators cannot get into your IDP to make changes if you make mistakes. We don't' even have a program that will let us delete the plans if you make mistakes.

Team AgLearn usually encourages users to create their IDP at the beginning of the fiscal year, add one goal, and then submit that plan for approval by the supervisor. Once the supervisor approves that initial plan, additions and updates can be made by either party.

The IDP will probably go back and forth between the employee and supervisor several times over the year as the plan is updated, but the point I must stress here is that all the activity must be documented and approved by both parties within the time frame of the plan period. Because the document is a Trusted Source document, this is critical.

The other major difference between the online form and a paper form is that only one person should be making changes to the plan at any one time. Think of the IDP as a Tennis Ball. The employee creates the IDP and submits it for approval. That action sends it over the net, so to speak, to the supervisor. At that point, the user should make NO further changes until the plan comes back into his court! The supervisor will get an email that the IDP is now in his "court" and should take action quickly to review and approve or reject the plan. When the IDP "ball" is not in your court, hands off!

As the plan moves between subordinate and supervisor, it changes status. It is very important to understand what changes the status of an IDP and what action is necessary when it is in that status.

When a subordinate first creates an IDP, it is in the Draft status. As I mentioned earlier, in this status it is pretty worthless, so we want to get it out of this status as soon as possible. The reason for this is twofold:

First, we want to encourage the employee to think about his plan for the upcoming year and discuss the plan with his supervisor so that it can be documented, submitted and approved and he can then have much of the full year to begin working on that plan.

The second reason is that if the plan stays in Draft status, we won't know if older plans might be a potential problem that needs to be addressed until the Draft plan tries to move into a Submit/Pending status. For example, if the employee creates a plan but decides not to submit it, we won't know until he does decide to submit it, that he doesn't see a Submit for Approval button.

Once the subordinate submits the IDP, it moves into Submit Pending status. That means that the plan is now awaiting action by the other party. Both the user and the supervisor can put a plan into Submit Pending status. As the plan goes back and forth between supervisor and subordinate, whoever makes changes to the plan will have to have those changes approved by the other party. That's why we encourage you to use the tennis ball approach and recommend that changes be made only when the IDP has been submitted to you.

If one of the parties, most likely the supervisor, rejects the plan, it must still receive an action by the other party. This has caused some confusion. The action that must be performed is a review. The other party must acknowledge that the plan has been rejected. At that point the plan can be modified or a new plan can be created.

If the plan is approved, it moves into an Active Approved status. At this point additional changes can still be made, but if they are, they must be submitted for approval by the other party.

Inactive Approved status means that the user created and submitted a plan and had it approved, but the begin date is in the future.

A superseded plan occurs when a new plan is created with dates that overlap the existing active plan. If I have a Calendar 2010 plan in place and I decide to create a fiscal year 2011 plan in October of 2010, my Calendar year 2010 plan will have the last three months of 2010 overlapping with the first three months of my fiscal year 2011 plan. When my fiscal year 2011 plan is approved, my calendar 2010 plan will move into Superseded status. I can elect to move goals from that plan into my new fiscal year plan if I choose.

The final status to discuss is the Expired status. A plan that proceeds normally through the IDP process should be in an Active Approved status before it reaches the end of the plan period. That means that any changes, updates, additions, etc must be documented and submitted for a final approval well before the end of the plan period so that the supervisor can approve the plan one last time. As the Active/Approved plan moves past the last day of the plan period, the status automatically changes from Active/Approved to Expired. If the plan is not in an Active Approved status when the plan period ends, it can cause problems and we'll talk about how to resolve those problems in this session.

In this next section, I'll walk you through the steps of creating an IDP, pointing out tips and tricks as I go along

I'll mention this several times. Before users begin to create their IDPs, stress that they FIRST make sure their current supervisor is in AgLearn. I'll provide a link to a job aid later in this session if they don't know how to do this.

Required fields are marked with red asterisks. As we move through the next few screens, I'll point out the required fields and fields that are helpful to fill in even if they aren't required.

It's a good idea to use the calendar icon to fill in dates so that no mistakes are made in formatting.

Also, remind users not use the Browser back button but to always use the Back link icon to move to previous screens in AgLearn.

On the next few screens I'll walk you through the creation and submission of an IDP. Once approved, I'll demonstrate how to add goals and activities for the upcoming year and then how to resubmit.

From the Career tab, you will click a button to Create a New Plan.

Then enter a plan title.

Here's a tip: If you are submitting Fiscal Year Plans, name them using a similar naming convention so that they appear in order when you create reports. For Example, name your plans FY09, FY10, FY11 or Kathy's Fiscal Year 2009, Kathy's Fiscal Year 2010, etc. A Best practice is to name your plans so they appear in order.

Next, you'll need to select a plan period.

In this example I'm selecting the Fiscal Year 2010 Plan Period

That will automatically populate the Effective Date and Expiration Date fields.

Now you'll click Add to create the shell of your new Plan. Next we'll add our initial goal. Plans need to have at least one goal before they can be submitted for approval. If people are having difficulty thinking of that first goal, I usually suggest a goal such as "meet with my supervisor to discuss my development plan for this upcoming year".

Goals need to be measurable and tied to a specific date, and as I said, each plan must have at least one goal. Each goal can have a number of fields that help to define the goal, but the required fields are the goal name, the section and the Target Date.

If you have had competencies assigned to you prior to the creation of this IDP, you may see that your brand new IDP already has a number of goals defined. If you haven't had competencies assigned, you'll need to create your IDPs first goal. To create a goal, click the New Goal button.

The goal number is not a required field, but it does help to keep your goals in order. The number must be unique, so if you may want to leave gaps between goal numbers to insert interim goals later. Enter a name for your goal. In this example, the user has entered a goal to become more proficient in Word Macros. Notice that the Goal Description is not a required field, but it might be helpful to more clearly identify exactly what you hope to accomplish.

Note that the Goal Category is not a required field and my recommendation is that you ignore it unless you are an FSA employee. The FSA category appears on all USDA IDP plans and we are trying to find a way to make it viewable to only FSA employees. For now, skip this field, it only serves to segregate your data which has caused some confusion for users and supervisors. FSA employees can certainly use this field per FSA instructions.

Next you'll need to click the Section drop down list and choose the All Goals section. Here's another tip. Grouping goals into sections has caused a bit of confusion for users and supervisors. My recommendation is to place all goals in the All Goals section so that you view all of your goals together. Some of you won't see anything but the All Goals section, so this is an easy choice.

Next you'll need to enter a goal target date. Click the calendar icon to select a date in the future by which you plan to complete your goal.

Just a quick tip about the Target Value and the Stretch value. You'll notice they are not required fields, but they do help track your progress. For example if your goal is to attend 3 LiveMeeting Training sessions this year, your Target Goal would be 3. Your stretch goal might be to attend 5 sessions this year, so your stretch goal would be five. You'll be able to track your progress towards meeting this goal by entering a number in a "Current" field and compare that to the Target and Stretch fields.

Now that you've identified your goal (to become more proficient in Word Macros), click the Finished button. At this very moment, your plan is in DRAFT status. You've created a plan but you haven't submitted it to anyone. It's a pretty worthless contract, as in our previous example. Our next step will put the plan into a different status.

First I'll click the Save button to save my plan. Now, here's another BIG TIP. Make absolutely sure your current supervisor is listed in AgLearn. If you're not sure, you can leave your IDP (you've saved it), and go to your profile from the AgLearn home page. This is one of the most common errors that users make regarding IDPs. They submit their plan when either the wrong supervisor is listed in AgLearn or no supervisor is listed in AgLearn.

Once you've made sure your current supervisor is listed in AgLearn, return to your IDP and click the Submit for Approval button. Now can anyone tell me what I should do next? That's right, nothing!

Now, notice the red text. Do nothing more until your supervisor takes action!

After you've submitted your plan, you'll notice that your plan status has changed from DRAFT to Submit/Pending. Here's another tip: The Plan Status Triangle will tell you who the next person to take action on the plan should be. If weeks go by after you create your IDP and you can't remember who is supposed to be the next person to take action, this triangle will tell you. In this example, Amy Alabama, the user, submitted her IDP to her supervisor Kathy Fallow. Kathy has no action or approved date next to her name, so the IDP is now Kathy's responsibility. She must approve or reject the plan before Amy takes any further action.

Shortly after you submit your IDP plan, you will receive a cc of an email sent to your supervisor. Please note the email is not sent to you but to your supervisor, you are just receiving a copy. This has caused some user confusion in the past because the text of the letter states that the plan should be reviewed as soon as possible and some users think they are being directed to do something with the plan they just submitted.

It's important to realize that until your supervisor takes action on your plan, you should do nothing to that plan. Once the supervisor does take action, you will receive an email stating that your IDP has been approved or rejected.

We're about half way through and this is probably a good time to stop for questions.

Now let's take the viewpoint of the supervisor. I'm a supervisor and I've just received an email stating that my subordinate has submitted an IDP. I login into AgLearn and see an alert message on my personal home page stating that I have Subordinate plans that require Review and Approval. I click the link and am taken to the Pending Reviews and Approval page. I see my subordinate's name and her plan, with a corresponding Review button. I click the Review button.

From the next screen I can approve the plan. I can also print or view other plans. Once I click the Approve button, the status of the plan changes again. At this time the plan is in Active Approved status and I have successfully sent the IDP “ball” back over the net to my subordinate.

When the supervisor clicks the Approve button, an email is generated back to you. At this time, you can go into AgLearn, access your plan, add additional goals, update the status of existing goals and add activities to goals to assist in your development.

Activities can be attached to goals by you or your supervisor to identify what things you might do to help you reach your Goals. For example, if my goal is to become more proficient in Word Macros, I might add an activity that would involve taking an AgLearn course that covers advanced topics like Word Macros. That would be considered an internal activity. Activities that don’t involve AgLearn resources are external activities.

To add an activity to a goal, I simply click the Goal triangle to expand my Word Macros goal, then I expand the Activities area

To add an Internal Activity, I search for the item in AgLearn using the Search tool

I select the course that I want from the available list and click Add to add it to my IDP and my learning plan

If my goal is something like finding ways to improve my work/life balance, I might decide to take a culinary arts class offered at my local community college. That would be an external activity, not available to me by searching, so I would simply need to create that new activity, enter a target date and value and click Add to add it to my IDP. I’ll need to update the status of this goal when I complete the cooking class.

Whenever I make changes to my IDP or update the status of my goals and want my supervisor to review the plan, I can submit the plan for approval. As soon as I click that submit button, I’ll see a red alert that tells me my plan contains changes that at this moment, have not yet been approved. My supervisor will get an email, I’ll get the cc of the email and the IDP “ball” has now moved over to my supervisor’s “court”.

It’s always a good idea to save a copy of your plan in a PDF format. That way you’ll have a historical record of what you plan looked like at various stages. To save and print your plan, you should use the My Plan report, available in AgLearn. Simply click the Reports menu, select the My Plan report, choose a local file destination so that you can download it to your PC, then choose PDF format. Enter the date range you wish to see in your report, then click Run and save the PDF file to you PC and print it if you wish.

There are two IDP screens that will tell you a lot about what might be causing user problems. The IDP List All Plans screen and the IDP Status screen.

As soon as a user reports an IDP problem to you, you'll want to get a look at the List all Plans screen. If you can't visit the user, have them take a screen shot of this screen and forward it to you.

You'll want to see the Plan Status column, the expiration date column and the Action column. In the next few screens I'll tell you why.

The other screen that provides a lot of information is what I call the Expanded Plan Status screen. From the List All Plans screen have the user click the View Plan button of the current plan. Then ask them to click the blue icon next to the Plan Status to see the Action table. This will tell you who is responsible for taking the next action on this plan.

One of the most common reasons that a user does not have a Submit for Approval button is that he's already submitted the plan and forgot that he did so. If his current plan is in Submit Pending status, he submitted the plan but his supervisor hasn't acted on it yet. You can send the user the FAQ document, or you can ask him to check his plan status to reveal who should take the next action.

The next most common reason for no submit button is that there is an older plan that is causing a problem. Here's where you're going to want to check the Expiration Date column of the List all plans screen. If the expiration date is older than the current time frame and the plan is still in DRAFT status, that plan can and should be deleted by the user. Remember, since it was never submitted for approval, it is worthless. Have the user delete the old DRAFT plan, then try to resubmit the current draft plan. They may need to log out and back in to see that Submit for Approval button appear.

If all the older plans are in an expired status, check the Action column of the List all plans screen for a Review button.

Here's what a My Plans screen looks like with a Review button in the Action column. This is easy to miss, so look carefully if a user reports an issue, telling you that he can't submit his draft report, but has only expired plans in his My Plans screen. Sometimes an old expired plan needs additional actions before the current Draft plan can be submitted. In this case, the FY09 Expired IDP has to have a final review before the Draft FY10 plan can be submitted. The user here just needs to click the Review button and follow any additional instructions that appear on the page.

They may then need to logout and back in to see the submit for approval button appear on their current plan.

Expired plans should never be deleted and in general are not the reason that current plans can't be submitted. If you don't see a Review button next to an Expired plan, look elsewhere for the problem.

If you see an older plan that is in Submit Pending Status, the user won't be able to delete it and you'll need to report that to your AgLearn Agency Lead so that it can be reported to Team AgLearn. This is one of the few situations that we will need to deal with on the back end and deleting it from the back end is the last resort so Team AgLearn try to make sure there are no other reasons that the current IDP has no submit button before we will delete it on the back end.

If the user has submitted a plan to the wrong supervisor, check the status of the Plan. If the plan is in Submit/Pending status, have the user access his profile in AgLearn and make the change to the correct supervisor. It's important to note that the change must be made by the user, not by you the administrator. Remember, this is a trusted source document and the user and supervisor are supposed to be the only ones that can make changes.

When the change is made to the new supervisor, the plan will be automatically rejected. The user can now view the plan from the List All Plans screen and can now submit it to the correct supervisor.

If the plan that was submitted to the old supervisor is in an Active Approved status, the user can still change his profile and select the current supervisor.   Since the plan is in Active Approved status, the user can now make changes and then the submit for approval button will appear and the plan will now be submitted to the new supervisor.

So, to summarize,

The IDP is a Trusted Source document – only supervisors and subordinates can make changes to an IDP.

Encourage your users to get the IDP out of Draft status early so that goals can be identified and progress tracked

And remember the tennis ball approach, only change the plan with the ball is in your court!

Before the IDP is submitted for the first time, make sure your supervisor and your email address is correctly identified in your AgLearn profile

Plans start out in Draft status and from there usually move to Submit/Pending, to Active Approved, then back and forth between Submit/Pending and Active Approved until they expire.

The IDP is a living document and it can be updated throughout the year by adding goals, activities and updating status

By Viewing the List All Plans screen users can see the status and Actions possible for all plans

If they click the View Plan button for any plan, they will be able to click that little blue triangle next to the Plan Status to see who's responsible for taking the next action on the IDP

IDP Activities are added to goals to identify what you will do to reach your goal

Activities can be internal, meaning the training resources are available in AgLearn, or externa,l meaning resources are available outside of AgLearn

It's always a good idea to Run a My Plan report to save and print your plan so that you can have a snapshot of what your plan looked like at any given point in time.

The FAQ document should always be reviewed before calling the Help Desk

When you are Troubleshooting and there is no Submit for Approval button for your Draft plan,

Check the List all plans screen

The Plan may have already been submitted

If an older plan is in Draft status, delete it

If an older plan is in Expired status with Review button, review it

If an older plan is in Submit/Pending status, notify your lead so that he can attach an IDP by Learner Report and the List All Plans screen shot to an ATS ticket

If the plan was submitted to wrong supervisor and it is still in Submit pending status, have the user change his profile, selecting the correct current supervisor.

That action will reject the plan and send it back to the user so that he can resubmit the plan to the correct supervisor

If the plan was submitted to the wrong supervisor and it is in Active Approved status, have the user change his profile, selecting the correct current supervisor.

When he next makes changes to his plan, they will be submitted to the new supervisor

Finally, some best practices.

It's a good idea to create and submit your plan for approval early in the fiscal or calendar year. That way, we can get the plan out of DRAFT status, and identify early if any older plans might be causing issues.

Supervisors – approve the initial plan as soon as you receive it to place the plan in Active Approved status. You and your subordinate can then add goals to the plan that your subordinate will update and document progress over the course of the year.

Remember – approval of the IDP is simply an approval of the plan, it is not a guarantee that training will be funded or that training will happen.

And remember the tennis ball approach – only make changes when the IDP ball is in your court!

We have an FAQ job aid available at the link you see here. This is a great job aid to help users troubleshoot their own IDPs. Your AgLearn lead can also provide you with that FAQ document, as well as the slides for this presentation, which will be posted on the AgLearn Central site immediately after this session.

Perhaps one of the most important things to remember before you create your IDP is make sure your AgLearn profile contains your correct email address and your current supervisor. This slide provides a link to an existing job aid, if you're not sure how to do this.

It's also a good idea to take the online training that's available in AgLearn. Simply click Help from the AgLearn Splash page, then select the course titled How to Create Your IDP. Skip the section on adding competencies and refer to your individual agency as to their policy regarding how competencies will be tracked in your IDP.