Why should you set goals?

• Those who set career goals achieve greater career success as measured by salary, promotions and level of responsibility.¹

• Those who set career goals report greater career satisfaction and rate themselves as more successful than their peers.²

• 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.³


What are your long-term career goals?

• Questions to get you started:
  • What are your #1 and #1’ career path choices?
    • Remember: A postdoc is a temporary position.
  
  • What do you hope to achieve in your career?

  • What do you want to be known for?
How do you get there?
How do you get there?

**S**pecific

• Define the goal as much as possible with no unclear language.
  • **Who** is involved? **What** do you want to accomplish? **Where** will it be done? **Why** are you doing it (reasons, purpose)?

**M**easurable

• Can you track the progress and measure the outcomes?
  • How will you know when the goal is accomplished?

**A**chievable

• Can the goal reasonably be accomplished?

**R**elevant

• Is the goal worthwhile?
  • Is the goal consistent with the other goals you have established?
  • Does it fit with your immediate and long-term plans?

**T**imely

• Your objective should have a time limit (deadline).
  • This will prompt you to have good time management.

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Adapted from: https://www.minutemovement.com/smart-goals/
Build my professional network to learn about types of science policy by connecting with 10 new policy professionals over the next six months through attending the NPA meeting and conducting informational interviews with institutional alumni.

| S (Specific)                        | • Define the goal as much as possible with no unclear language.  
|                                     | • **Who** is involved? **What** do you want to accomplish? **Where** will it be done? **Why** are you doing it (reasons, purpose)? |
| Measurable                          | • Can you track the progress and measure the outcomes?  
|                                     | • How will you know when the goal is accomplished? |
| Achievable                          | • Can the goal reasonably be accomplished? |
| Relevant                            | • Is the goal worthwhile?  
|                                     | • Is the goal consistent with the other goals you have established?  
|                                     | • Does it fit with your immediate and long-term plans? |
| Timely                              | • Your objective should have a time limit (deadline).  
|                                     | • This will prompt you to have good time management. |
Tips to achieve your goals

• Write down the steps to achieving each goal and post it in a place you’ll see it regularly.

• Set realistic deadlines for each step but be flexible.
  • Goals will change throughout your career, and that’s normal.
  • You’ll have hiccups in executing your plan. Stop and reevaluate.

• Find a partner, support person or mentor.
  • Institutional postdoc office, other postdocs, other PIs.

• Advocate for your career goals to your colleagues and mentor(s).
Initiating the conversation

• Prepare and choose your battles.
  • Are your goals SMART?
  • PRIORITIZE what you plan to ask for and have a clear plan of what you want to say.

• Use the mode of communication that works best for you and your mentor.
  • Email
  • During a weekly meeting
  • Impromptu meeting

• Get to the bottom line quickly.
  • Do not assume that your mentor knows what you are asking for or that they can figure it out based on what you are suggesting.
  • Real life example:

EXAMPLE EMAIL:
Hi {PI}, I hope that you are enjoying your time away. I met with {name} from the grants office to discuss potential funding mechanisms for a fellowship. If you think it is possible I would like to apply for the Damon Runyon Fellowship Award, which is due March 15th, followed by ACS (due April 1) and NIH F32 (due April 8).
During the conversation

• Use assertive behaviors.
  • Use “I” statements, not, “Maybe it would be good if...”
  • Don’t be afraid to say “no” politely.
  • Rehearse what you want to say. Remember to be SMART.
  • Do not get emotional.

• Keep in mind that you and your mentor have different objectives, but you are both there to support each other.
  • However, YOU are responsible for your career.

• Listen to your mentor’s response and try to reflect on it.
  • Respond only once you have carefully thought about their reasoning.

• Don’t be afraid to continue the conversation at a different time and ask reasonable questions.

• Rely on your other mentors and resources that are available to you.
After the conversation

• If the conversation was not in writing, follow up with an email.
  • Preferably the following day but within a week at the latest.

• Follow through with your side of the deal in a timely manner.

• Know that you may need to have the same conversation again.
  • Do not expect your PI to remember what you agreed on.
  • Try to exercise patience and understanding if this happens.
  • When continuing the conversation via email, be sure to use the follow-up email chain.
Examples of conversation topics

• Attending conferences
• Volunteering for committees, non-profit organizations, or educational programs
• Taking a course during your postdoc
• Applying for fellowships
• Teaching opportunities
• Taking on a rotation student or intern
• Taking on a new project
Resources

• Individual Development Program tools
  • myIDP
  • ChemIDP
  • ImaginePhD

• Institutional postdoc office and career center

• NPA website (core competencies)

• Others?