Career Planning

Doing great science as a graduate student or postdoc takes focus, dedication, and a tremendous amount of time and effort. But many researchers become so focused on their immediate career future—the next experiment, the next lab meeting, or the next paper—that they fail to plan adequately for their long-term career future. They risk coming to the end of their training without a specific plan for what to do next.

Make a Plan

Successful career planning means two things:

1. You know where you are heading. This means you have explored your career options to identify one or two that would be a good fit.
2. You know how to organize your job search to get there, whether you’re bound for a job in academia or beyond.

Use a Planning Tool

Many leaders [1] and funders [2] in the scientific community now recommend that graduate students and postdocs should engage in an annual career planning process. Several tools have been developed to help with this process. We endorse the following two:

1. Science/AAAS's Individual Development Plan (IDP) called myIDP [3], created with UCSF authors. myIDP may be especially useful for postdocs and any graduate student who is past their qualification exam.
2. The UCSF Graduate Division’s My Annual Plan (MAP [4]), especially useful for students who are in their first few years of training.

For tips about how you can engage your mentors in productive career planning discussions, click here [5].

How We Help
We’ve compiled best practices to guide you through each step of your job search and sample postdoc/job search documents donated by former students and postdocs who have succeeded in the process.

- Career Exploration [6]
- Academic Career Development [7]
- Non-Academic Job Search [8]

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