

Learning Plan

A Tool for Charting Your Path for Professional Growth

The Learning Plan can help you:

- Identify the competencies that are priorities for your current work and career goals.
- Develop a personal plan for professional learning that includes actions aligned with your priority competencies.
- Build, strengthen, and apply your competencies.

The Learning Plan builds on your responses to the Self-Assessment.

The Self-Assessment provides context, structure, and vocabulary that can inform your Learning Plan. You may find the Learning Plan more useful after exploring this reflection tool, available at astc.org/isl-pathways/self-assessment.

The Learning Plan steps

- 1 **Where Am I Now?** →
- 2 **Where Do I Want to Go?** →
- 3 **How Will I Get There?** →
- 4 **What's Next?**

Framework

Self-Assessment

Strategies for Professional Learning
Complements the Learning Plan

Learning Plan



Explore the online version and full suite of tools here.

★ TIP

Developing your Learning Plan can take significant time and energy. Consider completing it over several sessions. You may also want to work together with a colleague, or in a group setting such as a workshop or classroom.



1 Where Am I Now?

Review your ratings and reflections from the Self-Assessment.
Which competencies or larger categories might you want to develop?

CONSIDER...

- Areas that are important to **advancing your career goals** or satisfaction.
- Areas that are **important to your current work**.
- Where you placed yourself lower on the scale, as that may suggest **opportunities for professional development**.
- Where you placed yourself higher on the scale, as that may represent **personal or professional strengths** that you want to continue to develop.
- Areas that meet the **needs of your community or organization**.

My priorities for professional learning	Reflections on the considerations above

2 Where Do I Want to Go?

Consider the competencies and categories you identified in step one. Now decide which ones you want to prioritize. Remember to be practical and realistic in setting priorities and expectations.

Select a **specific competency**, a **category of competencies**, or an assortment from across different categories and domains.



Think about **why you want to develop that competency or competencies**. Understanding and describing your motivations will increase your chances of success.



Consider the **changes you hope to see** as a result. The descriptors in the Self-Assessment (e.g., "This might look like...") can be useful, or you can come up with your own ideas.



EXAMPLES

I would like to develop...	Because...	Results of my learning might look like...
<p>Budget-related skills and knowledge. OP.16</p>	<p><i>I am often asked to support financial tasks, like processing invoices, but I don't have a larger sense of my program's budgets or how they fit into my organization's finances more broadly.</i></p>	<p><i>I know what systems my organization uses to manage budgets and I am comfortable using them.</i> <i>I am able to develop and monitor budgets for both new and current programs.</i></p>
<p>Deeper engagement between my organization and the community. GE.1 & AI.5</p>	<p><i>As an educator, I help create and deliver all kinds of programs, but I'm not sure if they are meeting community members' actual needs.</i></p>	<p><i>I have personal connections with leaders at the schools and community groups we serve.</i> <i>I am comfortable asking questions, listening, and receiving feedback from community members.</i></p>
<p>My ability to manage programs and teams. OP.2, 3, & 5</p>	<p><i>I want to move into a management role, but I don't have experience managing people or working with teams outside my department.</i></p>	<p><i>Knowing how my organization's departments work and who to contact for different things.</i> <i>Taking on more leadership roles within my team.</i></p>

2 Where Do I Want to Go? cont.

I would like to develop...	Because...	Results of my learning might look like...

3 How Will I Get There?

Now that you've identified priority competencies from the Framework, think about specific steps you can take to develop those competencies. Remember, this is *your* plan—designed by you—for your own professional learning.

Select a **specific competency, a category of competencies**, or an assortment from across different categories and domains.
(Copy from step two.)

Think about how you like to learn. Recognize barriers and how you might address them. Consider timing, as well as the opportunities and resources available to you.

With those considerations in mind, identify some **clear, tangible steps you can take** towards your learning goals.



I would like to develop...	I should keep in mind...	My next steps are...
<p>Budget-related skills and knowledge. OP.16</p>	<p><i>My department doesn't do in-depth budgeting until summer, so I might want to meet with our project manager in the spring.</i></p> <p><i>Our finance team holds monthly office hours for drop-in questions.</i></p>	<p><i>Check with my manager to see if I can use work time to participate in an online course on budgeting.</i></p> <p><i>Set up a meeting with a finance colleague to walk through my project budgets.</i></p> <p><i>Sign up for the online course. See if colleagues want to join me.</i></p>
<p>Deeper engagement between my organization and the community. GE.1 & AI.5</p>	<p><i>I made connections at a previous conference with colleagues interested in this topic.</i></p> <p><i>At our all-staff meetings, anyone can propose a topic of discussion. This could be a good fit.</i></p>	<p><i>Review recent strategic planning documents.</i></p> <p><i>Talk to marketing colleagues about their strategies for reaching the community.</i></p> <p><i>Set up meetings with community group leaders.</i></p>
<p>My ability to manage programs and teams. OP.2, 3, & 5</p>	<p><i>This is the first job out of college for several members of my team, so they're just learning about workplace culture.</i></p> <p><i>My team has many projects running simultaneously and team members are often stretched very thin.</i></p>	<p><i>Talk with a colleague at a peer organization to compare notes on how they approach working with very early-career team members.</i></p> <p><i>Review our systems for documenting project activities and milestones; consider whether they're adequate to keep team members up to speed.</i></p>

EXAMPLES

3 How Will I Get There? cont.

I would like to develop...	I should keep in mind...	My next steps are...

4

What's Next?

Start your plan today. Now that you have priorities and next steps outlined, you can begin building your competencies. Remember that professional learning is an iterative, ongoing process and every learning path is unique and personal. Your path may look straight or jagged, or it might meander. Your objective is not to come to the end of the path, but to continue the journey.

How will you record your progress?

In addition to making notes on your Learning Plan, you may find it helpful to use a journal, spreadsheet, task management application, or another tool to track and celebrate milestones along your learning path.

Who, if anyone, will you share your progress with?

It may be helpful to share your learning plan with a peer, supervisor, or mentor.

How often will you refer back to the Framework and your Learning Plan?

Consider if you will revisit these tools on a monthly, semiannual, or annual basis.

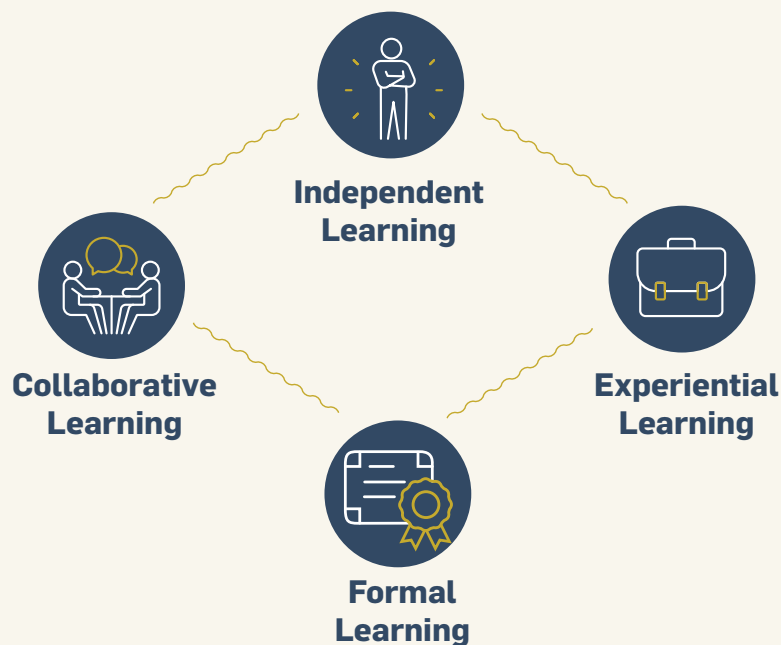
When you return to your Learning Plan to reflect on your progress, consider:

- What accomplishments can you celebrate?
- Where did you encounter challenges?
- Are there any additions or adjustments you want to make to your plan?

Strategies *for* Professional Learning

There are many ways that professionals can develop their competencies. Below are practical strategies that individuals, groups, or organizations can shape to meet specific goals.

The strategies are in four broad categories:



✦ TIP

As you explore how to incorporate these strategies into your learning path, consider consulting the Pathways resources—a selection of organizations, publications, courses, and other tools that support professional learning.



Explore the Resources page.



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Strategies *for* Professional Learning



Independent Learning

Independent learning is driven by an individual. It doesn't have to be isolated, but it is primarily self-directed. Whether or not you include other people in your independent learning, you should initiate, shape, and apply strategies that suit your specific goals, timeline, and measures of success.

Examples of Independent Learning

Reflective practice Select a competency or a desired area of growth, and then deliberately observe—and, if helpful, document—your related activities to reflect and learn from them.

Independent reading Select a set of books, journals, or online materials about a specific topic to skim or read, then reflect, synthesize, and apply relevant content.

Informational interview Seek out one or more individuals who are experienced, skilled, or knowledgeable in a particular area. Ask them to participate in a conversation with you about their career path, competencies they find important, professional development suggestions, and recommended resources.

Strategies *for* Professional Learning



Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is driven by a group. The group's shared goals or characteristics—such as geography, employer, professional role, or personal identity—shape the focus, approach, and format of each of these learning strategies. Collaborative learning can provide community and accountability to support your professional learning goals. It can be formal or informal, in person or virtual. If you are interested in collaborative learning, you may seek out an existing group or create a new one.

Examples of Collaborative Learning

Book club Gather with others to read and discuss books or journal articles related to specific topics or professional competencies.

Cohort learning Meet with a group going through a similar phase of learning (e.g., new hires at an organization, members of a fellowship program, or individuals being introduced to new technology).

Community of practice Join a group of people who have a common interest, identity, or job role. Use regular meetings or online platforms to share experiences, tools, and resources that support community members' learning and practice.

Coaching Create a partnership between two or more people to develop specific competencies through conversations, advice, resources, and goal setting. You may seek out a coach with more experience, knowledge, and skill than you. Alternatively, you can use a peer coaching model where colleagues provide mutual support, feedback, and thought partnership to help navigate elements of professional growth.

Mentorship Develop an intentional relationship with a professional mentor in your field. Mentorship is typically a long-term relationship, either structured or unstructured, that focuses broadly on the mentee's growth and development. Mentorship is often identified as one of the most important experiences influencing an ISL professional's career.

Strategies *for* Professional Learning



Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is driven by doing, or learning through practice. This type of learning can occur in your current place of employment, where you volunteer, or in another environment where you actively practice the skills you want to develop. The setting and activities will shape the potential topics and approaches for learning.

Examples of **Experiential Learning**

Intentional practice Identify a set of skills you wish to develop, and intentionally find and/or focus on opportunities to practice those skills in your current job, volunteer role, everyday life, or another setting.

Internship Find or create an internship with an organization aligned with your professional area of interest. Internships are typically short-term and focus on exploring a professional field. Internships can be paid or unpaid and vary considerably in the degree of structure and support provided.

Workshop Participate in a workshop focused on a specific skill set. Workshops are often offered by professional organizations and typically provide both content background and opportunities to practice and apply skills.

Volunteering Find or create a volunteer opportunity in your current organization, a professional association, your community, or another setting where you can practice professional skills. Volunteers can hold highly specialized and professional roles, such as serving on a board of directors or advisory committee, or as peer reviewers for a journal. Volunteering should benefit both the volunteer and the host organization and not replace paid labor.

Strategies *for* Professional Learning



Formal Learning

Formal learning is driven by a structured *program, institution, or other professional or academic organization*. Some of these learning strategies can result in a degree, certificate, or other credential, which can be helpful for career advancement. As a learner, you may be able to adapt or curate formal learning experiences to meet your needs. However, the content, format, and measures of success will generally be determined by the institution developing and facilitating the program.

Examples of Formal Learning

Higher education Enroll in an academic program leading to a degree or certificate from a college, university, or other accredited institution. Courses of study can include both practical and theoretical training related to any area of STEM, as well as management, education, and other topics relevant to informal STEM learning.

Continuing education Pursue a certificate in a relevant specialization. In addition to academic programs at a college or university, consider professional programs offered by organizations and companies. They often provide training and certificates related to specific competencies, such as project management or use of a specific software.

Professional Organizations Join a professional organization to access workshops, conferences, publications, and networks. Many have local or regional branches, and most organizations provide resources for non-members.

Labor unions Some professional roles are represented by labor unions, which often offer workshops, support, and other learning opportunities.

Online learning Many professional or networking platforms offer structured learning options, sometimes leading to a credential of some kind. This is a particularly useful strategy for competencies related to organization-wide operations (e.g., human resources, project or budget management, or specific technology).