Phase 2: Reaching an agreement
Reaching an agreement involves working with your team members, either individually or as a group, to devise a Developing Performance agreement that outlines the key work tasks, professional development and support activities and steps that will be taken toward career aspirations in the coming work period.

It is important that there are clear links between the key work tasks and professional development and support activities in an individual’s or team’s Developing Performance agreement, and the priorities and key deliverables in the work unit or school plan.

The Department of Education and Training recommends that you use resources such as strategic departmental documents, professional standards and frameworks, position descriptions and work unit or school plans.

Key elements that should be included in Developing Performance agreements are performance objectives, the capability focus of support and professional development, actions and responsible personnel, time frames, and how performance development will be demonstrated, measured and evidenced.

Agreements may be either verbal or written. If you and your team member decide to record a written agreement, you may find it useful to reference the templates available on the Developing Performance website. Please note that some employee groups, such as school leaders, must have a written agreement in order to fulfill the requirements of their enterprise agreements.

Why is this phase of the process important?

As part of the annual strategic and operational planning cycle, schools and work units set key objectives and goals that align to the overarching strategic priorities of the Department. These objectives and goals, in turn, inform the key work tasks and actions that each employee undertakes during the work period in order to progress the core business of the work unit or school.

In reaching an agreement, team leaders and team members are able to see the ‘big picture’ of how each individual’s work and the professional development or support available will contribute to achieving the school or work unit’s objectives and goals. Team leaders are also able to determine how the career aspirations identified by employees can be integrated in agreements in ways that are mutually beneficial to individuals, the work unit or school and Department.

The case studies that follow demonstrate some of the reflections and resulting key actions team leaders in pilot schools and work units undertook, to effectively integrate Phase Two of the framework.

Case study: Tailoring the recording of agreements

Mudgeeraba Special School Registrar Debbie Akerlund and her team have shown how the flexibility offered by the Developing Performance Framework enabled each team member to record their Developing Performance agreement in a way that was tailored to suit their needs.

Debbie and her team members considered the options of written or verbal Developing Performance plans, and agreed that they would make a personal choice based on what they believed would be of most benefit to them and their preferred way of working.
Most team members favoured verbal agreements, perceiving them as easier to work with and believing that they would encourage a more focused discussion with their team leader. Team members who opted for a written agreement did so primarily in the belief that this approach better supports the formalisation of timelines. These team members designed their own template based on the generic templates found on the Developing Performance website. Debbie believes that, while individualised templates offer a personalised way of recording Developing Performance plans, it’s important to ensure that they include key work tasks, career goals, and support and professional development options.

**Case study: Reaping the benefits of including career goals**

Mudgeeraba Special School Registrar Debbie Akerlund and her team have seen real benefits from sharing their career aspirations in Developing Performance conversations and discussing the capabilities required to reach these goals.

During one-on-one meetings, Debbie worked with her team members to agree on the steps they would take towards achieving their career aspirations and to determine the capabilities they would focus on developing during the coming work period. Debbie encouraged those aspiring to new roles to talk to employees in similar positions about the capabilities they would need. On reflection, she feels that these discussions helped team members to set realistic goals.

Once goals were set, Debbie and her team members were able to ‘break their professional development and support needs down into bite size pieces’. Across agreements, there is evidence of a wide range of professional development and support options, indicating a broadening of team members’ views on what constitutes professional development. Debbie stresses that ‘there are a myriad of professional development options available that do not include courses and conferences. As a school, we should be able to offer PD in many forms to many people’.

One of Debbie’s team members, a teacher aide, shared her career aspiration to become an administrative officer. To support this aspiration, her agreement included learning about the operation of the phone system, protocols for accessing information and emergency procedures, and undertaking a Certificate IV in Business. As Debbie was aware of the team member’s aspiration, she was given the opportunity of backfilling the position when Debbie or the current administrative officer were away. Following these experiences, the team member provided Debbie with some valuable feedback, including observations such as ‘I didn’t realise it was so busy in the office — you have to do so many things simultaneously’.

Not only have these opportunities given the team member hands-on experience in the role to which she is aspiring, but she has gained a greater appreciation of the roles the registrar and administrative officer play in the smooth running of the school.

**Case study: Developing individual performance to benefit students**

Through group discussion, members of the Health and Physical Education team at Redcliffe State High School were able to identify a number of improvements that could be made to enhance team performance. They used the Professional Standards for Teachers to reflect on how the capabilities of team members contribute to the team as a whole. The outcomes of this discussion were then formalised in a written faculty agreement specifying the core issues requiring attention and the measures for achieving change.
These team conversations were the catalyst for individual reflection and the creation of personal Developing Performance agreements. In these agreements, key work tasks, career goals and professional development and support opportunities were outlined. According to team members, forward planning has provided team members with clarity, helping them feel more in control of their day-to-day work and career development.

One team member, Michael Roberts, articulated his vision for raising the standard of literacy, increasing academic accountability and improving the behaviour of students in the rugby league excellence program. Michael designed a program that gives students the opportunity to create a rugby league magazine during class time, with a view to integrating the task into the English curriculum in the long term. Michael’s success in defining and working towards this vision is one of many examples of how the Developing Performance Framework has had a positive impact on the development of an individual team member, and most importantly, on student outcomes at Redcliffe State High School.

**Case study: Enhancing existing planning with the Developing Performance Framework**

Prior to the introduction of the Developing Performance Framework, Mount Isa District Office had been working to create a Developing Performance culture, including individual performance planning. Individual performance plans were recorded on a template, called an ‘achievement plan’. By integrating the Developing Performance process, the team at Mount Isa District Office extended this work and built on its existing planning to incorporate a focus on career aspirations, and support and professional development requirements.

Michelle Donn, Principal Education Officer – School Improvement, used a coaching methodology to encourage her team members to break their key work tasks down into smaller components, consider possible approaches to completing these tasks, and devise realistic timeframes. Where tasks required contact with one of the many rural or remote schools in the district, Michelle supported her team members to construct realistic assessments of the level of service that could be provided. For example, she encouraged them to consider alternative approaches to providing services, such as teleconferencing and networking through curriculum groups.

To extend agreements to include career aspirations and support and professional development, Michelle uses the same coaching methodology. Through effective questioning, she and team members identify the links that exist between their career aspirations and their current roles. Once key work tasks and career goals are agreed, discussions focus on identifying the support and professional development they require. Michelle believes that as a result of including these new focuses, *‘team members are increasingly self-reflective about their practice, career goals and performance’.*

Michelle has seen great benefits for one team member aspiring to the role of Head of Curriculum. This team member already possessed an excellent understanding of literacy and well-developed coaching skills, but needed to build her knowledge of curriculum development. Michelle helped the team member to seek joint working opportunities with others who possessed this know-how. By facilitating a range of meetings and professional development opportunities aimed at building the individual’s capability in this area, Michelle was able to support her as she worked towards her career aspiration in combination with undertaking agreed key work tasks.