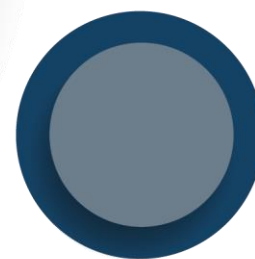


# Succession Planning

A FRAMEWORK  
& WORKSHEETS



Réunir les  
communautés régionales  
D'EXPRESSION ANGLAISE DU QUÉBEC

Connecting  
QUEBEC'S REGIONAL  
ENGLISH-SPEAKING  
Communities

# Succession Planning

## *A Framework & Worksheets*

Layout and design: Rachel Hunting

Content adapted from: *Succession Planning Toolkit*, University of Washington, 2016; *Guide to non-profit succession planning*, Amy Haile, 2020; *Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit* Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, 2008

Images: “Good idea” by Sibent from Pixabay.com

Published by: Regional Development Network

This guide was created with the financial support of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d’expression anglaise.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d’expression anglaise.

To request copies of this document contact: Regional Development Network

E-mail: [info@regdevnet.ca](mailto:info@regdevnet.ca)  
[www.regdevnet.ca](http://www.regdevnet.ca)

Copyright © 2022 by Regional Development Network.

**Secrétariat aux relations  
avec les Québécois  
d’expression anglaise**

**Québec** 





# CONTENTS

Why Is Succession Planning Important for an Organization?.....	4
Key elements – <i>les incontournables</i> .....	5
Who should participate & why? .....	6
Worksheets .....	8

# Why Is Succession Planning Important for an Organization?

The departure of an executive director, president, or another critical leader within an organization can impact the financial stability of the organization, its strategic direction, and its staff engagement. Succession planning helps an organization to identify critical roles, potential vacancies, and the key competencies that are needed for the organization to continue moving forward towards its mission and objectives.

A strong plan will identify future staffing needs as well as anyone already working or volunteering at the organization who has the skills and potential to fulfill critical roles and strengthen the organization's overall capacity to minimize impact during transition periods.



The toolkit at the end of this framework includes worksheets and tips to:

- ✚ Help make sure that succession planning is closely tied to the organization's strategic goals;
- ✚ Understand who the key participants to involve in the process are;
- ✚ Clearly define how the organization will develop key talent; and
- ✚ Help staff to understand their role in the process and what is expected of them.





# Key elements – *les incontournables*

## **Emergency Succession Planning**

Lessen the disruption of key leadership and administrative tasks in the event of an unplanned, temporary absence.



## **Strategic Leadership Development**

Organizational practice of identifying, recruiting, and developing people with the right skills to carry forward the organization's strategic vision.

## **Departure Defined Succession Planning**

Building the organizational and operational capacity to encourage stability beyond its current leadership by identifying the organization's future goals and the skills needed to actualize them.

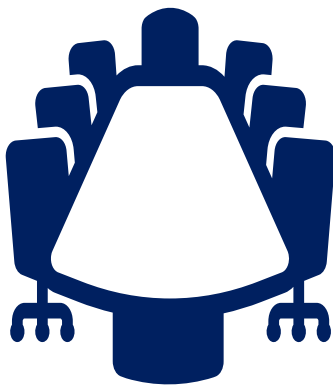


# Who should participate & why?

To cultivate inclusivity and diversity in the workplace and to avoid trying to fill leadership roles based on the person that currently occupies it, it's important to make succession planning a collaborative process within the organization. A succession plan should include input from board members, the executive director, and key staff on how to identify, select, and mentor potential candidates.



## Board members



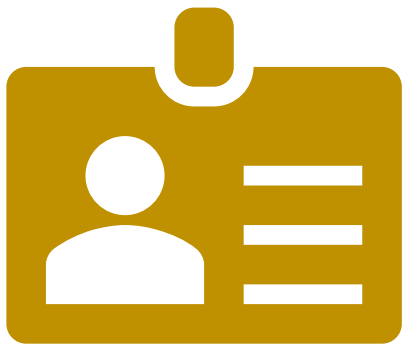
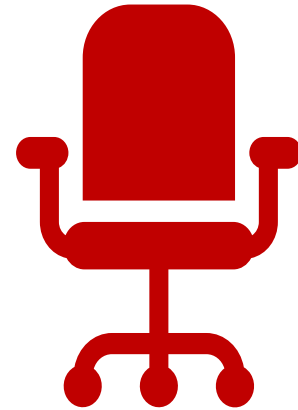
- ✚ Protect the organization's future by clarifying direction and ensuring strong leadership.
- ✚ Understand the complexity and responsibilities of the executive role because they select, support, and evaluate the executive director on a regular basis.
- ✚ Leverage their own expertise and network and can provide additional support during periods of leadership transition.
- ✚ Should play a lead role in working to develop and approve succession plans for different scenarios the organization may face.
- ✚ May appoint a board committee to dig deeper into potential transitional issues in the unexpected departure of the executive director.





## Executive Director

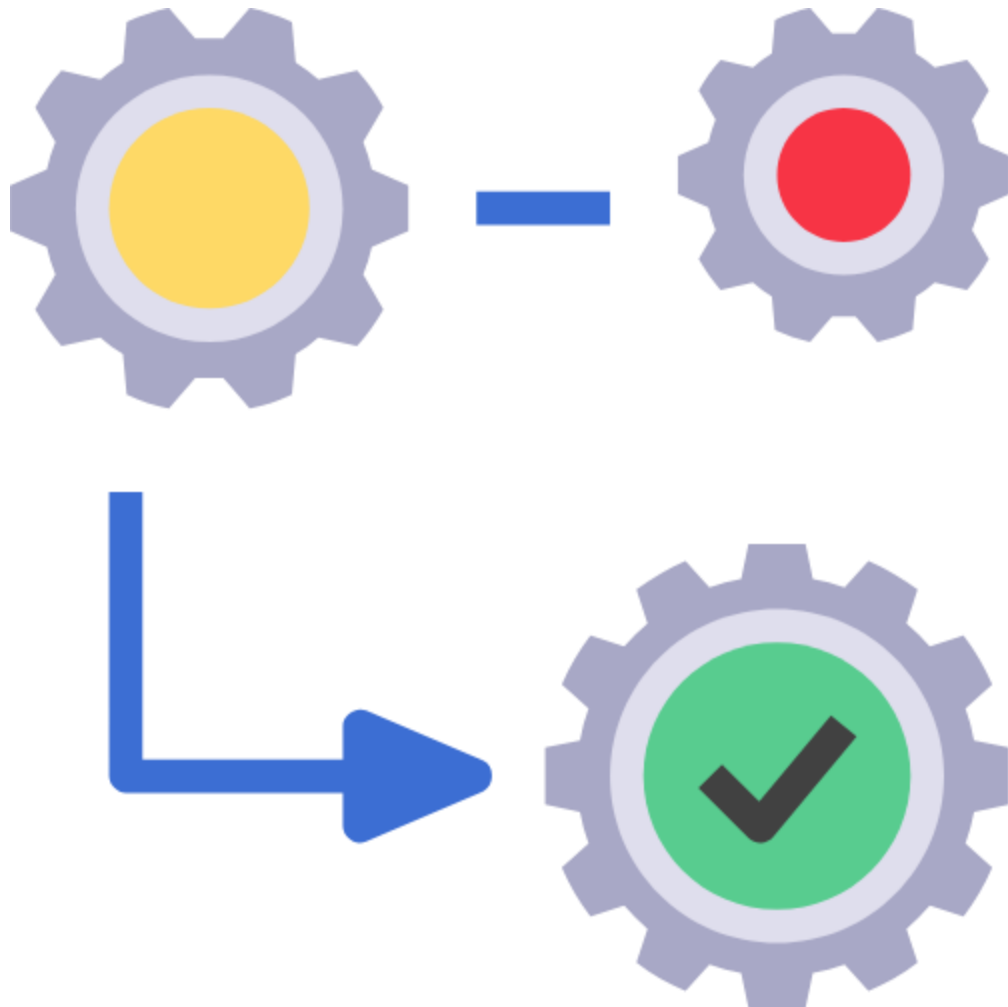
- ✚ Reviews and supports the board's success annually.
- ✚ Can work to ensure that legacy and succession happen by drafting different succession plans and submitting them to the board for approval.
- ✚ Implements processes to develop key staff members and promote an organizational culture that encourages professional development for all staff.
- ✚ Works with the board president or appointed committee to schedule meetings dedicated to succession planning.
- ✚ Promotes and encourages the executive succession planning process by evaluating their own role within the organization
- ✚ Implements and communicates the organization's succession plan with concerned staff once it's approved.



## Key Staff Members

- ✚ Are important to the successful transition of new executive directors and can provide program and organizational information during their absence.
- ✚ Continue to provide services to clients in absence of the executive director and during transition periods.
- ✚ Are often aware of the defined internal and external communication plans so they can help the board address public inquiries.

# Worksheets





Use the following worksheets to:

## Assess

- ✚ Challenges the organization may face in the next 1–5 years;
- ✚ Identify critical positions needed to support organizational continuity;
- ✚ Identify abilities, skills and organizational knowledge that are important factors for success.



## Evaluate

- ✚ Consider high potential employees;
- ✚ What it will take for individuals to meet challenges successfully;
- ✚ Skills gaps within the organization;
- ✚ The likeliness of the organization attracting high quality candidate.

## Develop

- ✚ Capture the knowledge that key and experienced employees possess before they leave the organization;
- ✚ Develop a pool of internal talent that could step into critical positions through targeted career and professional development strategies.



# Getting started - readiness questionnaire

-  Is the organization positioned to implement a succession plan that was previously adopted and approved?
-  If the executive director (ED) were suddenly unable to serve, has the organization identified candidates for the job (interim or permanent)?
-  Can the organization sustain a decrease in income or fundraising activities in the absence of the ED?
-  How well equipped is the board to effectively hire a new ED? How committed are they to the success of the ED?
-  Will the organization lose institutional knowledge and contacts if its ED were to leave suddenly?
-  Is the ED's current level of responsibility realistic? What are the skills that need to be replicated and what could be developed among staff or board?
-  Does the current ED understand and possess the skills and expertise necessary to lead in today's economic and political climate?
-  Are there other positions beside the ED within the organization that would leave it vulnerable should they depart? Is there a plan?



**Use this questionnaire as a first step in measuring the organization's readiness for succession planning.**



# Environmental Scan Worksheet



The organization's strategic plan is a great place to start in identifying current and future challenges. If the organization doesn't have a strategic plan, an environmental scan can provide enough information to start the succession planning process.

Participants:

Date:

*What is happening inside and outside of the organization:*

Right now?

In the next  
year?

In the next  
3 to 5  
years?

# Critical Position Worksheet



Review positions to determine which are key; consider positions that call for a unique skillset, can be difficult to recruit for, or have a high turnover rate. Evaluate their impact in achieving strategic goals and objectives, vacancy risk and their marketability.



Assess a position's impact against a prioritized list of the organization's mission and strategic objectives.



Assess a position's vacancy risk against factors such as the current employee's retirement eligibility, marketability, etc.

Position title:

Position status:      Filled                  Vacant

Impact:                  High                  Medium                  Low

Vacancy risk:                  High                  Medium                  Low

# Critical Success Factor Worksheet

GOOD IDEA



Identify the specific abilities, skills and organizational knowledge that are critical success factors for each position that should have a succession plan.

Position title:

Education:

Work  
experience:

Key skills and technical competencies:

Communication

Strategic planning

Relationship building

Focus

Community knowledge

Valuing diversity

Managing change

Development & coaching of others

Autonomy

Leadership

Project management

Financial literacy (budget & fiscal management)

Bilingualism (oral & written)

Policy development & analysis

Human resources management

Legal compliance

Information systems & technology (IT)

Program development

Data analysis

Grant writing & contract management

Other skills:

Unique organizational knowledge or relationships

What unique organizational knowledge or relationships are important to the success of this position?

Does anyone else in the organization have this knowledge? Who?

How critical is it that this knowledge is documented and shared?      High      Medium      Low

Plan for sharing knowledge:

Process documentation

Mentoring

Job shadowing

Other

# High Potential Employee Identification Worksheet



Take an inventory of staff members within the organization that are ready to successfully assume a new role right away or that have the potential to grow into it over time.

Name:

Position title:

Years in current  
role:

Target position:

Target position  
key skills required:

Ready:      Now                  within 1 year                  within 2 years                  within 3 to 5 years

Action plan:

# Employee Development Plan Worksheet



Career development conversations with high potential employees should be focused on closing the gaps in or strengthening their existing skills and abilities.

Name:

Position title:

Supervisor name:

Supervisor title:

Long term goals:

What are your career goals over the next 3 to 5 years?

1.

2.

3.

Short term goals:

What are your career goals for the next year or two (may or may not be the same as your annual performance goals)?

1.

2.

3.

Skills and ability requirements:

What skills or abilities do you need to build to reach your goals?

Skill or ability to be developed	Training activities	Target dates	Associated costs	Results

*This employee development plan provides an opportunity to demonstrate your career potential and is not a guarantee of a promotion. The plan should be evaluated at least every six months and adjusted as needed based on organizational and/or personal priorities.*

Employee signature

Date

Supervisor signature

Date



[www.regdevnet.ca](http://www.regdevnet.ca)

416-684-8810

[info@regdevnet.ca](mailto:info@regdevnet.ca)

1135 Grande Allée Ouest, suite 180, Québec, QC G1S 1E7