COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON
NONPROFIT PRACTICES INSTITUTE
APRIL 29, 2019

SUCCESSION PLANNING

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Succession Planning – What is it?
Background – lessons learned

Thoughtful succession planning prepares an organization for leadership transitions, *expected or unexpected*
Background – lessons learned

Lack of succession planning can result in a post-transition meltdown
Background – lessons learned

With a long-term executive, a successful leadership transition requires a lot more up-front preparation than the months required for search and screening.
Benefits of succession planning

Aligns staff development with strategic vision
Builds leadership capacity of staff
Makes the top position more “doable”
Engages and reassures the board
Gives confidence to funders
Small group discussion

• Briefly, what’s the status of succession planning at your organization?
• What questions about succession planning do you have?
• Choose THREE QUESTIONS for report out from your table

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Succession planning – org and board

Org – three types:

• Strategic Leader Development
• Emergency Succession Planning
• Departure Defined Succession Planning
Succession planning – org and board

Board:

• Define Role

• Define a Development Process for Future Board Leadership

• Define a Process of Succession

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Strategic Leader Development

**Definition:** *Creating a culture of continuous learning, talent development and accountability*

- Aligning talent with strategic vision
- Pushing leadership up and down

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Strategic Leader Development: The Key Cultural Elements

- Current Strategic Plan
- Performance goals tied to strategic goals
- Professional development goals
- Professional development budget
- Annual evaluations – board and staff
- Shared leadership & delegation

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Strategic Leader Development

Starts with STRATEGIC PLANNING

Vision: What are the organization’s strategic goals—for next year & five years out?

Skills: What competencies do you need to get there?

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Strategic Leader Development

Assess current competencies & identify gaps in skills needed
Performance reviews

Fill in the gaps
Training
Recruiting

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Strategic Leader Development

Build the Team for “shared leadership”

- Delegation of duties & authority
- Shared decision making
- Shared accountability

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Emergency Succession Planning

Definition:

• Preparing for an *unplanned* leadership departure

A risk-management best practice
Creates a more “leaderful” agency

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Emergency Succession Planning: Five First Steps

1. Identify critical executive functions
2. Name a backup for each function
3. Develop a cross-training plan for backups
4. Name who would become Acting Executive
5. Specify board’s monitoring & support role for Acting ED

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Departure-Defined Succession Planning

Attention to the *personal and professional issues* of the departing executive director

Thoughtful planning and activities to ensure *organizational sustainability*

A special *opportunity for reflection* on where you’ve been, where you want to go, and what it will take to get there

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DDSP: Five Key Steps

Healthy closure with departing executive
Strategic Vision update
  Strategic Review
  Leadership Agenda
  Candidate Profile
Candidate recruitment
Screening & hiring
Launching the new executive

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Executive Readiness

Organizational barriers to letting go:

No obvious successor

“No one else can do this job”

Unfinished organizational business
Executive Departure Path

Resources for getting ready
- A personal coach
- Peer networks
- Career planning
- Negotiating a departure package
- Workshops on “Next Steps”

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Creating a DD Succession Plan

Engage the Board
Engage the senior managers
Set up a planning committee
Acquire the needed resources
- Funding
- Consultants

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Creating a DD Succession Plan

Conduct a “strategic review” to identify vulnerabilities & opportunities

Sources of input
- Executive Director
- Managers & Staff
- Board
- Funders & peer agencies

Tools: Surveys & interviews

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Creating a DD Succession Plan

The review questions: What are our vulnerabilities with departure of our ED?
- Resource connections
- Unique skills of the ED
- “Doability” of the ED job
- Management TEAM strength
- Board leadership / independence

What are our opportunities to build our community impact?
What are our organizational constraints?

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Creating a DD Succession Plan

Draft the Succession Plan

• Set strategies to remedy the vulnerabilities & organizational constraints
• Delineate the ED’s transition tasks
• Update the strategic vision for greater community impact
• Update the ED job description and profile of skills needed to pursue the vision
• Draft the timeline and plan to recruit a successor who has those skills

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The BOARD steps up

Puts a committee in charge
Attends to its own succession planning
Supports the departing executive
Addresses agency vulnerabilities
Sets future directions
Recruits & supports a successor who fits the future

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DDSP: Five Things Not to Miss

1. Board ownership & leadership
2. Attention to closure with the exiting executive
3. Manager inclusion in future planning
4. Openness to organizational truths
5. Excitement for the future

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Board Succession Planning

Define the role.

• Where are you at in your nonprofit’s life cycle?
• Important to define, as this will drive conversation as to key roles on the board.

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Board Succession Planning

Define a Development Process for Future Board Leadership.

• Align actual qualifications and talent with organizational needs.
• Build credentials, confidence, interest, and knowledge.
Board Succession Planning

Define a Process of Succession.

• When was the last time you looked at your by-laws?
• When was the last time you amended your by-laws?

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Small Group Discussion

- What are the top two or three items that your organization needs to attend to for succession readiness?
- Choose the top THREE that emerge at your table.

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Succession Planning Tools

www.compasspoint.org/et

Tools

Emergency plan template
Sabbatical planning checklist
Succession readiness checklist
Self-reflection tool for executives

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