SUCCESSION PLANNING GUIDE

Government of the Northwest Territories

A companion document to the GNWT Human Resources Strategic Plan

Government of
Northwest Territories

Contents

Introduction

Is there an experienced employee in your unit who will be retiring soon and whose knowledge is invaluable? Perhaps there is an employee who has shown interest in moving up but does not yet have the necessary requirements for a managerial role. Maybe your unit is planning to take on a new project which requires a very special skill set but does not yet have the capacity to complete the task. This guide will assist you in determining your department's current needs and implementing a succession plan.

What is Succession Planning

Succession planning requires looking into the future and planning ahead. While it may seem time consuming now, it's always better to have a plan in place than to be left shorthanded.

Succession planning identifies strategies to develop employees to build capacity and capability. Effective succession management results in a larger pool of qualified candidates available to fill critical positions.

Benefits of Succession Planning

- Retain existing employees and corporate knowledge.
- Increase diversity of the workforce.
- Increase quality in employee performance.
- Increase in employee productivity.
- Improve employee morale.

An Open Dialogue

The GNWT takes a collaborative approach to succession planning. Supervisors and senior management should be having discussions with their teams to assess employees' interest in changing positions, plans for retirement, interest in moving into different roles or desires to learn and develop new skills. Some questions for supervisors to consider:

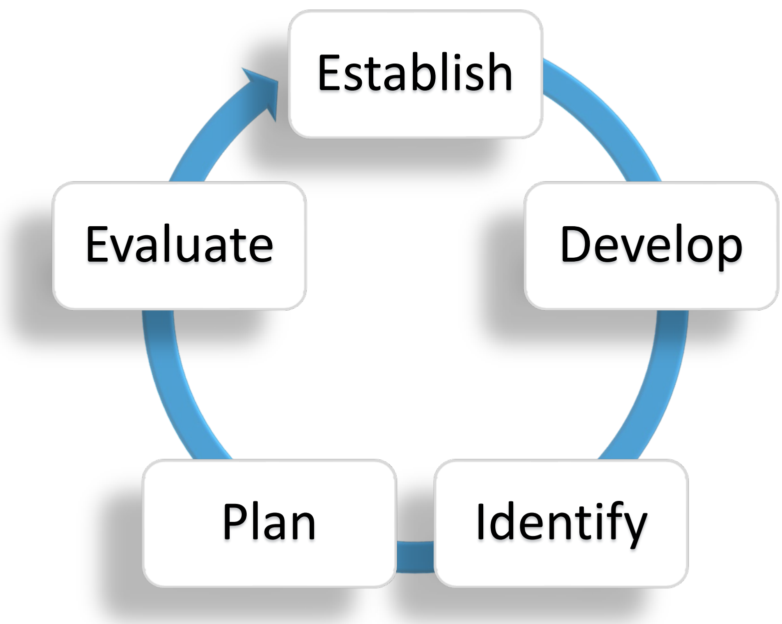
- Are you allowing space for your employees to share their professional goals and aspirations with you?
- Are you setting clear expectations for your team?
- Are you supporting your staff to take training and development relevant to their career paths?
- Do your employees all have workplans and a means to track career development?
- What is the average length of time an employee remains in a position?
- Are there lateral and/or vertical lines for career pathing available?
- Are the sightlines for those pathways easily seen and discussed with your team?
- Are you providing a network of support: personal, professional, and organizational?
- How does an employee advance through roles in your division?
- Are your employees currently meeting or exceeding core competencies?

Succession Planning Process

Succession planning is a joint effort: employees are responsible for envisioning and communicating their career goals; supervisors work with their employees to assist with learning opportunities and growth; and senior management works to foster a diverse, qualified, and supported workforce.

Succession planning can be broken down into five steps:

1. Establish which positions are in most need of succession planning.
2. Develop eligibility requirements for the positions.
3. Identify potential successors.
4. Plan to develop potential successors.
5. (Re)Evaluate workforce needs.



Step 1: Establish which positions are in most need of Succession Planning

The first step in succession planning is to establish which positions need it most. A key position or occupational group can be defined in many ways, but two important criteria that should be considered are **criticality** and **vulnerability** risk.

Criticality refers to the positions' impact on your department's (or unit's) ability to conduct normal business. The significance of the impact could be considered in terms of safety, financial operation, efficiency, public opinion, and so on.

Vulnerability refers to a position's lack of potential successors should an unanticipated vacancy arise.

The matrix below helps identify positions in need of succession planning. Leadership can use the excel **Succession Planning Tracker Template** available in **Appendix A** to perform this step. Positions that have high vulnerability and high criticality pose the highest risk.

Criticality: Impact on the Department's or Unit's ability to conduct normal business	**Vulnerability:** Position identified as most vulnerable to lucrative knowledge loss			
		Low Vulnerability	**Moderate Vulnerability**	**High Vulnerability**
	High Criticality	Moderate Risk	High Risk	High Risk
	Moderate Criticality	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
	Low Criticality	Low Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk

* *Determining critical positions can be time consuming and difficult to reach agreement on. Identifying vulnerable positions first makes the process easier because it reduces the number of potentially critical positions to assess.*

Step 2: Develop eligibility requirements for the positions

Once positions in need of a succession plan have been determined, the next step is to develop a profile of the position and performance expectations; this will help determine who has the experience to take on the role.

All positions have a requisite set of knowledge, skills and abilities that are expected of employees who are filling that function. Succession planning provides an opportunity to review the competencies traditionally associated with jobs, particularly with respect to current goals and objectives. Several ways to determine and develop required competencies include:

- Reviewing job descriptions and relevant merit criteria; and
- Interviewing current and former job incumbents and their supervisors.

Although job descriptions offer a good starting point for the identification of competencies, it is important to also consider interviewing supervisors and incumbents of the position. Current incumbents, for example, have a good understanding of which competencies are the most important to their job. Interviewing these people may reveal knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary for the job, but are not currently identified in the job description. With that in mind, it is important to review the job description as well given that employees may have potential biases. Given the practical scope of any job, valid identification of competencies is necessary for:

- Establishing minimum requirements for job success;
- Creating a baseline for assessing interested potential candidates; and
- Identifying appropriate learning and development opportunities.

Step 3: Identify potential successors

Once the eligibility requirements of the position have been established, you can then identify a pool of candidates that could temporarily fill the vacancy and potentially apply as a candidate for the position should the need arise. Based on the discussions and preparations from the earlier steps, are there any employees that are well-suited for the position or could be with the appropriate training? To identify these individuals, think on these three succession categories:

- **Indigenous Development** – Are there any Indigenous employees interested in this position? Do they currently have the necessary skills, or would they require additional training?
- **Leader Development** – Are there any employees interested in this role? Does their current position have similar day to day experiences in the functional areas and tasks performed for the successor role?
- **Career Development** – Could a more junior employee, summer student or intern fill this role? Are there any employees whose position currently cultivates the core competencies needed to perform the role? Is there possibility for organizational restructuring to include more developmental steps within a particular group? (e.g., junior and senior positions, assistants/officers and analysts/specialists,) Could the employee's job description be updated to allow more flexibility to develop into this role? (e.g., administrative assistant into junior analyst)

What about Hard to Recruit?
Hard to Recruit positions are positions identified as an occupational category that Employment and Social Development Canada has projected to exhibit a labor shortage. These are positions that may not have internal potential successors and may require additional recruitment efforts and marketing initiatives. For assistance with this, contact your client service representative.

It is important to note that succession opportunities are to be openly shared with all employees to encourage transparency, trust, and engagement. The identification process is used as a starting point to see whether any employees are interested in leadership roles, career advancement or lateral moves that might not be easily attained without focused training or other learning and development opportunities. Managers should be encouraging their employees to self identify as potential successors through open conversation.

Use the **Active Succession Plan Tracker Template** available in **Appendix B** to perform this step.

Step 4: Plan to develop potential successors

You've established the positions that are in most need of succession planning and have identified potential successors; the next step is to create a developmental plan for each of the potential successors or a marketing plan if none are identified. The Workforce Development Framework provides a comprehensive list of learning and development approaches available to GNWT employees. Performance Development can be used as a tool to find potential successors by evaluating their performance of the competencies required for the target position. Performance development can also be used as a tool to monitor how learning goals are coming along and the readiness for succession.

Use the **Active Succession Plan Tracker Template** available in **Appendix B** to manage the developmental or marketing plan.

**For a full list of learning and development pathways please review the Workforce Development Framework.*

Foster an open dialogue with employees

by discussing performance development and learning goals.

Create a developmental plan for the potential successors

with training and learning opportunities that are aligned with the target position. Consider opportunities available through the Workforce Development Framework.

Strategies for development

- Does the employee require official certification or education that can be completed through education assistance?
- Is there a GNWT training program that can help the employee develop the target skill?
- Would the employee be eligible for the Indigenous Development and Training Program?
- Could the employee benefit from a transfer assignment or secondment?
- What opportunities are there for the employee to job shadow, receive mentoring or act?
- What projects could the employee participate in that are outside their current experiences and would help them develop the desired competency?
- Is there an opportunity for cross training within unit or cross-region training for the employee? Is there a position that could be double filled?

Where retention is not possible, consider recruitment strategies

Internship Program; Summer Student Employment Program; Indigenous Career Gateway Program; Cross-Departmental Indigenous Employee Eligibility List, Regional Recruitment

Step 5: (Re)Evaluate workforce needs

By evaluating your succession planning efforts each year, you can continually improve your succession planning strategy and your organization's effectiveness. When evaluating succession planning program, consider the following:

1. Compare the number of qualified "ready now" candidates compared to before succession planning started.
2. Improvements in employee development (e.g., training completed or acting opportunities taken, performance development learning plans completed).
3. Team performance and contribution to organization overall.
4. Whether there is reduced risk associated with employees leaving the organization (e.g., turnover rates decreased, employee morale increased).

Should you have any questions or require any assistance with the succession planning process please contact the Manager of Employee Development and Workforce Planning.

Appendix A: Succession Planning Priority Template – EXAMPLE ONLY

This spreadsheet, in conjunction with the Step-by-Step Guide to Succession planning, is designed to help identify positions in most needs of succession planning and to help track our succession planning progress. This sheet will help determine which positions are in most need of succession plans. Follow the steps below to determine the most vulnerable and critical positions and then prioritize your succession planning efforts.

	Step 1: First identify how vulnerable each position is using the key below	**Step 2:** Second, identify the criticality each position is using the key below. Consider whether a vacancy in this position could disrupt your organization's ability to achieve the objectives.	**Step 3:** Finally, determine which positions are highest priority to begin succession planning. It is recommended to prioritize positions with high vulnerability and high criticality first.
Position Title	**1. Position Vulnerability**	**2. Position Criticality Ranking**	**3. Succession Planning Priority Rank**
	High Vulnerability = No identifiable potential successor **Moderate Vulnerability** = Potential successor ready in 1-2 years **Low Vulnerability** = Potential successor ready now	**High Criticality** = Essential to the mission **Moderate Criticality** = Moderate impact on the mission **Low Criticality** = Little influence on the mission	**High Risk** = Establish succession plan now **Moderate Risk** = Establish a succession plan in the next 6-12 months **Low Risk** = Monitor Successor Progress
Deputy Minister	**Moderate Vulnerability**	**High Criticality**	**High Risk**
Senior Administrative Coordinator	High Vulnerability	Low Criticality	Moderate Risk
Senior Advisor	Moderate Vulnerability	Moderate Criticality	Moderate Risk
ADM	**High Vulnerability**	**High Criticality**	**High Risk**
Administrative Coordinator	Moderate Vulnerability	Low Criticality	Low Risk
ADM	**Low Vulnerability**	**High Criticality**	**Moderate Risk**
Administrative Coordinator	High Vulnerability	Low Criticality	Moderate Risk
Director, Policy	**Moderate Vulnerability**	**High Criticality**	**Low Risk**
Administrative Assistant	High Vulnerability	Low Criticality	Moderate Risk
Director, Finance	**Low Vulnerability**	**Moderate Criticality**	**Low Risk**
Administrative Assistant	Moderate Vulnerability	Low Criticality	Low Risk

Appendix B: Succession Plan Tracker Template – EXAMPLE ONLY

This sheet will track the progress of succession plans and determine where development is most needed. Fill in the chart with the positions and names of the people you'd like to start succession planning for and the employee who may be able to temporarily fill their position while a permanent successor is identified. For positions that do not have a potential successor ready now, consider meeting with the incumbent and the potential successor(s) to identify development opportunities.

Functional Areas	**Senior Management**	**Senior Management**	**Administration**	**Senior Management**	**Management**	**Management**
Position	Position 1 Deputy Minister/Secretary to Financial Board	Position 2 Senior Advisor to the Deputy Minister	Position 3 Senior Administrative Coordinator	Position 4 Government Chief Information Officer	Position 5 <insert>	Position 6 <insert>
Current Incumbent	John Dan	Gina Young	David John	Clair Jones		
Tentative Turnover Date (if known)	2/2/2025	9/1/2035	1/1/2030	1/1/2023		
Ready Now						
	None	Employee B	Employee H	None		
Ready in 1-2 Years						
	Employee C	Employee D - if obtains accounting designation	None	None		
	Employee I					
Ready in 3+ Years						
	Employee E	Employee F - req. mgt training	Employee G - further mgt exp. /mentoring	None		
			Employee J - further mgt exp. /mentoring			

Colour Key

Potential successor(s) ready now	Potential successor(s) ready in 1-2 years	Potential successor(s) ready in 3+ years	No potential successors identified