



# Developing Your Succession Planning Program

CPS HR Webinar Series  
January 2026



# Learning Objectives

In this session, you'll learn:

- “Why” engage in succession planning?
- “What” does succession planning involve?
- “How” does succession planning work?
- Barriers, Challenges, and Success Strategies

# Where are you in your succession planning journey?



1 = **No current program**

2 = **Under development**

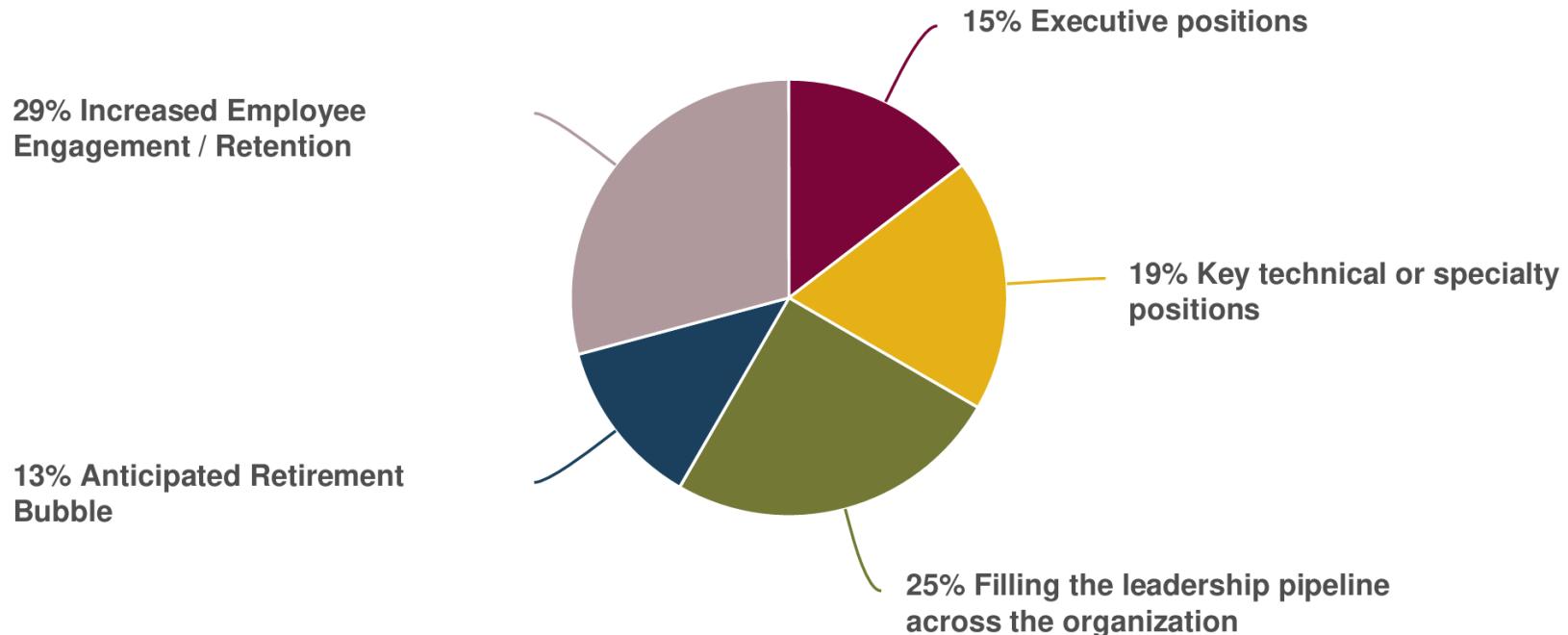
3 = **Existing Program**



# WHY ENGAGE IN SUCCESSION PLANNING ?



# Why Succession Planning – Recent CPS Survey Results



# Benefits

Knowledge Transfer

Continuity

Stability

Retention

Talent Development

Employee Engagement



# WHAT IS INVOLVED IN SUCCESSION PLANNING ?



# Succession Planning Model

Maintain leadership continuity through knowledge transfer, competency development, and program sustainability



# Succession Planning Phase 1



- Consider resources needed to manage and support the candidates when determining the population for each wave
- Identify which positions will be included. Target:
  - Urgent or mission-critical positions (with no backup)
  - Specific departments/functions
  - Cross-organizational job titles (e.g., Supervisors, Managers, Directors)

# Phase 1, continued



- Develop and Implement Communication Plan
  - Purpose and Timeline
  - Set realistic expectations regarding promotion (repeat frequently and document in writing)
- Create incumbent succession profiles
  - Prioritize the competencies needed to be successful in the position
  - Capture the most effective development avenues (e.g., training, mentoring, just-in-time feedback, associations, certifications, hands-on experience, job shadowing)

# 3x3 Succession Model

Your Job Title		
Leadership/ People	Business/ Operations	Technical
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

Prioritize the competencies that contribute to success in the position, rather than duplicate the job description skill requirements.

# 3x3 Sample

<b>Operations Manager</b>		
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Business/Ops</b>	<b>Technical</b>
1. Daily Supervision	1. Judgment & Decision Making	1. Infrastructure and Organizational Knowledge
2. Communication	2. Customer Service	2. Safety & Regulatory Compliance
3. Performance Management	3. Project Management	3. District Policies and Procedures

# Competency Demonstration

- **What do you do?** Describe specific actions (e.g., Discuss, Coach, Delegate, Facilitate, Research, Analyze, Mediate, Prioritize)
- **What makes you successful?** (Style, Empathy, Communication, Inclusion, Humility, Emotional Intelligence)
- **What do you wish you knew before taking the job?** (Administration, Politics, Negotiation, Supervision, Coaching, Strategic Thinking)

## **Safety & Regulatory Compliance:**

Promote and enforce a culture of safety. Read and understand permits. Creatively develop solutions to adhere to permitting requirements.

### **Greater Detail**

1. Reinforce a culture of safety and regulatory compliance by promoting and monitoring training, meetings, self-inspections, facilitating open discussions, and responding quickly to shared concerns.
2. Maintain awareness of national issues or legislation; keep up on industry news and trends.
3. Be familiar with District policies and procedures.
4. Reinforce a culture of compliance by consistently reviewing and discussing facility permits.
5. Understand how we could violate a permit before it happens to mitigate outcomes.

## **Safety & Regulatory Compliance:**

Promote and enforce a culture of safety. Read and understand permits. Creatively develop solutions to adhere to permitting requirements.

### **Suggested Development Opportunities to Provide to Aspiring Leaders:**

1. On the job training
2. Provide opportunities to lead safety meetings, emergency response drills, review JSAs, and self-inspections
3. Participate in California Association of Sewer Agencies (CASA) organized regulatory updates
4. Attend CWEA, SWRCB, and other industry meetings

# Competency Acquisition

How did/could you acquire those skills?

**Formal Training  
or Certifications**

**Coaching, Mentoring,  
or Shadowing**

**Hands-On  
Practice**



# Key Considerations – Phase 1

1

## Identify Key Positions & Competencies

### HR:

- Share relevant workforce planning information
- Establish Program Scope & Policy Requirements
- Develop and Implement Communication Plan
- Set clear expectations regarding promotion

### Department:

- Consider:
  - Critical positions with no backup
  - Upcoming retirements/ promotions
  - Industry or Organizational Changes (e.g., Regulations, Marketplace)
- Identify most critical competencies
- Dedicate time to create incumbent profiles

# Succession Planning Phase 2



- Determine any minimum eligibility requirements (e.g., experience, time in position, performance record, licenses)
- Create or revise any policies (as needed)
- Reinforce expectations regarding promotion (repeat frequently and document in writing) – no guarantees
- Encourage eligible and interested candidates to participate



# Key Considerations – Phase 2

2

## Identify Candidates

### HR:

- Determine any eligibility rules (tenure, time in position)
- Review list to ensure fairness / no favoritism

### Department:

- Ask staff about career aspirations
- Ensure eligible and interested candidates participate
- Review Performance Track Record (as needed)
- Consider lead time needed for proficiency



# HOW DOES SUCCESSION PLANNING WORK ?



# Succession Planning Phase 3



- Develop or select a methodology that includes self- and/or supervisory assessments of the candidates' readiness level
  - Interviews
  - Survey
- Compare those skill gaps to current training curriculum to identify any additional needs



# Successor Rating Scale

Category Definitions	Current Experience Level
<b>Knowledge (K)</b> = Awareness and theoretical understanding of the concept(s) in the competency.	<b>Lower (L)</b> – Has up to a basic understanding of the concepts. Can apply the knowledge with guidance.
<b>Application (A)</b> = Ability to demonstrate the concept(s) to successfully complete work tasks.	<b>Moderate (M)</b> – Fully understands the concepts. Can assess the situation and apply the knowledge in routine situations with little or no supervision.
	<b>Higher (H)</b> – Thoroughly understands the concepts. Can apply the knowledge in complex or unusual situations. Can guide others.



# Sample Successor Survey Page

## **Customer/End User Focus:**

**Address staff/user needs in a timely manner to ensure they can be effective and efficient.**

## **How the Competency is Demonstrated:**

1. Respond to inquiries as soon as possible (and on-call 24/7).
2. Provide application-specific training.
3. Develop and share SOPs to help users resolve issues quickly on their own.
4. Listen actively to understand users' needs and respond to their hardware and software questions effectively including training and demonstrations.
5. Develop and deliver presentations or training to end users.
6. Determine the user's level of technical expertise when offering support (meet them where they are).
7. Recognize the importance of different learning styles (verbal, written, kinesthetic) when instructing or training others.

**Lower** - Up to a basic understanding of concept;  
Can apply with guidance.

**Moderate** - Understands concept; Can assess and  
apply in routine situations.

**Higher** - Thoroughly understands concept; Can guide others; Can  
apply in complex, unusual situations.

**Knowledge of Competency**

**Application of Competency**



# Potential Successor Self-Assessment

Succession Profile Self-Assessment - Information Technology Analyst			
People & Operational Competencies		Knowledge	Application
<b>Communication</b>	Communicates with end users and managers on a regular basis. Helps end users understand technologies and resolve technology issues to increase staff efficiency.	HIGH	MOD
<b>Analysis &amp; Problem Solving</b>	Uses technology expertise and troubleshooting to analyze data and develop logical solutions to complex technology issues.	MOD	LOW
<b>Customer Focus</b>	Addresses staff/user needs in a timely manner to ensure they can be effective and efficient.	HIGH	HIGH
<b>Time Management &amp; Self Development</b>	Manages own time and adjusts priorities to effectively to achieve objectives and meet deadlines. Demonstrates attention to detail to ensure accuracy, thoroughness, and quality work products. Allocates time for skill development.	MOD	LOW
<b>Adaptability &amp; Flexibility</b>	Prioritizes requests based on urgency and importance. Switches tasks quickly and effectively. Stays abreast of technological changes.	MOD	HIGH
Technical Competencies			
<b>Network Knowledge</b>	Performs administration functions and supports the District's network infrastructure. Acts as help desk support; ensures network connections are functioning properly.	MOD	MOD
<b>Hardware &amp; Software Expertise</b>	Demonstrates a high level of technical expertise and broad knowledge of IT hardware and software.	MOD	MOD
<b>Hardware Installation &amp; Maintenance</b>	Installs and maintains computer hardware for the District.	HIGH	HIGH
<b>GIS Support</b>	Provides Geographic Information System technical expertise to District staff.	LOW	LOW
<b>Website Maintenance</b>	Updates and improves the District's website and Intranet including adding new functionality and improving user ability.	MOD	MOD



# Key Considerations- Phase 3

3

## Evaluate Skills Gap

### HR:

- Develop or select an assessment tool and process to evaluate skills and competencies
- Ensure alignment with job description and strategic plan

### Department:

- Encourage honest self-assessment to ensure development needs are identified
- Encourage exploration, growth, and advancement
- Anticipate near-future skill needs



# Succession Planning Phase 4



- Co-create development plans to address the skill gaps identified in Phase 3
- Consider what type of opportunities are most effective
  - Training
  - Coaching / Mentoring
  - Job Shadowing
  - Hands-on practice

# Co-Creating A Development Roadmap



- Discuss the self-ratings in more detail
- Pinpoint specific areas to focus on
- Identify the highest priorities (*urgency, importance, time horizon needed*)
- Determine what development strategies would be most effective and how to sequence them

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#1

#2

#3

#4

# Potential Questions

1. Is this an urgent or high priority development need or do we have time to focus on other areas?
2. Is there anyone else with this capability?
3. Is this a broad skill gap (across the department or organization)?
4. How steep is the learning curve? How much time is needed to reach proficiency or mastery?
5. How much support will be needed?
6. How much bandwidth/availability do I (or they)?

# Co-Creating A Development Roadmap



- Develop a timeline or deadlines for the chosen activities
- Ensure time is available to complete the tasks (may require adjusting workload)
- Revisit the plan on a regular basis; make adjustments as needed

# Key Considerations - Phase 4

4

## Create Development Plans

### HR:

- Assist with translating skills gaps into Individual Development Plans (IDPs)
- Determine any links between the IDP and performance evaluations

### Department:

- Co-create development plans with each successor
- Prioritize development needs (e.g., urgency and time horizon)
- Adjust workload to accommodate development plan activities

# Succession Planning Phase 5



- Identify priority individual training needs
- Evaluate common topics across positions (e.g., project management, providing constructive feedback, presentation skills)
- Allocate the necessary time and support
  - Adjust workload and priorities
  - Set time aside for guidance and support



Competency Category	Director of Environmental Programs & Planning Job Competencies	Competency Detailed Description	Formal Training/Certification	Mentoring/ Shadowing	On-the-Job Training/ Practice
Leadership	Strategic Planning	Analyze pending regulations, market trends, land use options, transportation planning, and economic forecasts to determine what environmental services are needed to fulfill ACME's role as an environmental steward. Anticipate the departmental resources needed to fulfill demands.	* Strategic Planning * Land Use Planning (UC Berkeley or Davis) * Industry Conferences (hydrogen, zero emissions, PFAS, etc.)	* Attend meetings and observe; debrief * Review documents and decision-making	* Attend webinars and conference * Take the lead; get feedback
Leadership	Staff Performance & Development	Manage staff performance. Identify and provide career and growth opportunities to increase staff capabilities. Empower staff to make decisions and solve problems with little supervision.	* Performance Management * Learning Center modules * Management Training	* Observe how you handle their performance reviews, being included in the decision process and explain rationale.	* Assign acting duties * Take the lead and debrief
Leadership	Communication	Share information on environmental regulations, initiatives, grant funding opportunities, with internal and external stakeholders.	* Media Training * Presentation Skills * Board Presentations * Communications (verbal and written) * Public Speaking	* Review documents (content, style, etc.) * Assist with presentations * Attend presentations then debrief	* Draft the presentations or documents * Facilitate or lead the meeting with feedback
Business	Workload Management	Make work assignments based on expertise and workload. Hire consultants, as needed, for specialized expertise and/or to balance staff workloads.	* Project Management * Setting Priorities	* Observe and explain rationale for decisions	* Make recommendations with feedback
Business	Program & Policy Improvement	Evaluate current programs and policies to identify areas for improvement (streamlining, cost effectiveness, efficiencies) to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.	* Project Management * Program Management	* Observe and explain rationale for decisions	* Make recommendations with feedback
Business	Resource Management	Ensure the department has the necessary resources (staff, tools, technology, equipment) to achieve goals within the allocated budget. Seek grant funding opportunities to support environmental initiatives including zero emissions 2030.	* Budgeting * Grant funding workshops	* Observe and participate in the process to learn codes, budgeting process, carryovers, etc. Explain rationale	* Make recommendations, track changes, and debrief
Technical	Environmental Compliance	Ensure ACME is in compliance with all environmental regulations (e.g., air quality, HazMat, wastewater, soil and groundwater, storm water, water quality).	* Professional licenses (Engineer or Geologist) (not required) * QISP - stormwater certification (not required) * Hazardous Waste and Operations * Asbestos and Lead Training * CEQA & NEPA Planning (UC Davis) * Air Quality 101 (UC Davis)	* Observe and review documents, explain rationale	* Make recommendations; create drafts and get feedback
Technical	Program Implementation & Management	Develop and implement environmental programs to meet ACME's Strategic goals and comply with environmental regulations.	* Program Management * Project Management * Change Management	* Observe and participate in the planning and implementation process, explain rationale	* Make recommendations and debrief
Technical	Land Use Planning & Permitting	Ensure that operations and development are consistent with land use plans and policies. Manage the development permitting process.	* City of XYZ Permitting workshop * Strategic Planning * Land Use Planning (UC Berkeley or Davis)	* Observe and participate in the planning and permitting process, explain rationale	* Make recommendations, draft responses, and debrief



# Key Considerations – Phase 5

5

## Provide Training & Mentoring

### HR:

- Link development plan needs to available training
- Enhance coaching skills at all levels
- Consider how to sequence the just-in-time training and long-term knowledge transfer

### Department:

- Allocate time and resources for development activities:
  - Training
  - Shadowing
  - Coaching/Mentoring
  - Conferences/Associations
  - Projects/ Work Assignments
  - Presentations
  - Cross-functional exposure





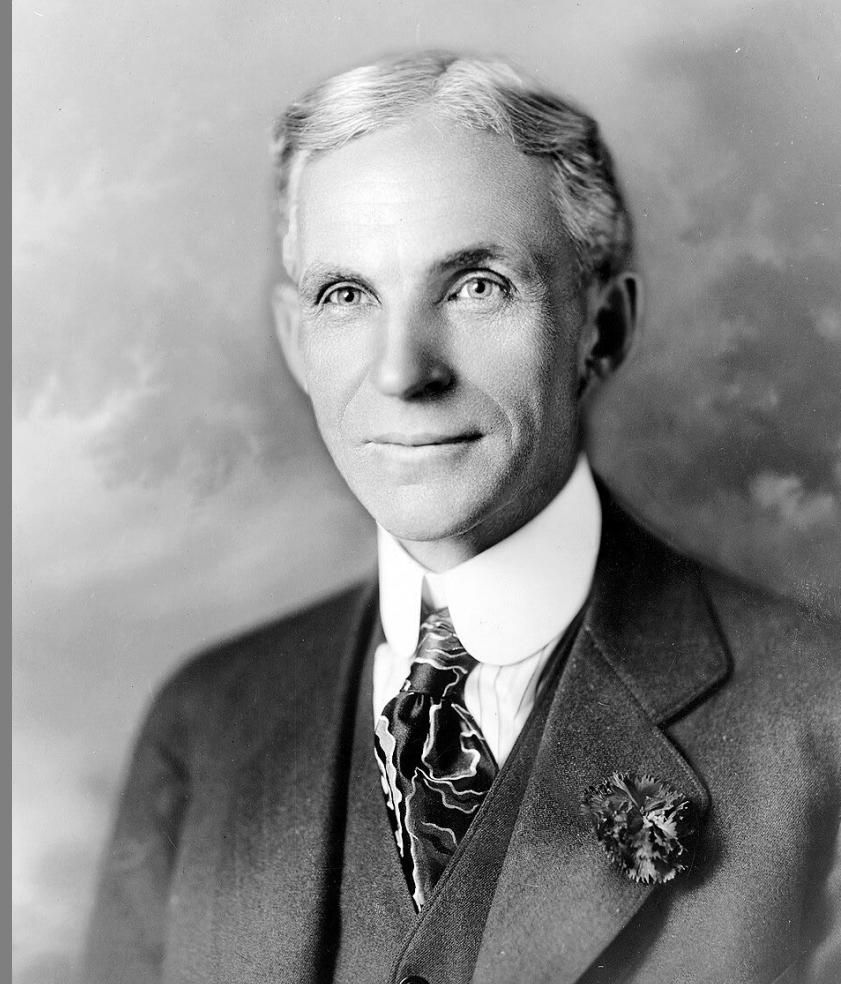
**Train people well  
enough so they can  
leave, treat them well  
enough so they don't  
want to.**

*~ Richard Branson*



**"The only thing worse than training your employees and having them leave is not training them and having them stay."**

*~ Henry Ford*



# Succession Planning Phase 6



- Check in with successors on a regular basis to ensure they're on track and making progress
- Provide guidance, encouragement, or resources as needed
- Make development plan adjustments if appropriate
- Share success stories (promotions, high profile assignments, certifications)



# Key Considerations – Phase 6

6

## Monitor Progress

### HR:

- Research additional training sources (vendors, universities, associations, etc.) to meet demands
- Encourage ongoing conversations
- Develop a library/database of development opportunities aligned with each competency

### Department:

- Conduct frequent and ongoing conversations about progress and career plan changes
- Make course adjustments as the work, industry, regulations, strategic direction and/or staffing needs change



## Barriers & Challenges

➤ **Lack of Urgency**

➤ **Talent Migration**

➤ **Lack of Trust / Perceived Bias**

➤ **Viewed as an HR Initiative**

## Success Factors

✓ **Plan Ahead, Allow time for Development**

✓ **Employee Retention & Engagement Strategies**

✓ **Transparent and Objective Process**

✓ **Business Unit Partnership & Commitment**

## Barriers & Challenges

- **Process Too Complicated**
- **Unpredictable Needs**
- **Lack of Leadership Skills/ Preparation**

## Success Factors

- ✓ **Clear Communications & a Phased Approach**
- ✓ **Frequent Updates & Environmental Scanning**
- ✓ **Support the Transition from Peer to Manager**

# Succession Readiness Checklist

We have:

- \_\_\_ Executive Leadership Support
- \_\_\_ Key jobs identified and prioritized (critical, hard-to-fill)
- \_\_\_ The most important competencies for success identified
- \_\_\_ A process to evaluate the skill gap
- \_\_\_ A development roadmap (plan to the skill gap)
- \_\_\_ Training aligned with key competencies
- \_\_\_ Resources available for development(training/mentoring)

# What's your biggest takeaway from today?



# Transforming HR Challenges



## CORE SERVICES

Comprehensive HR solutions for advanced organizational performance.



### TALENT MANAGEMENT

- Classification & Compensation
- HR Consultation / Outsourcing
- HR Membership Subscription
- Recruitment Solutions
- Organizational Assessment
- Succession Planning



### TESTING & SELECTION

- Assessment Center Services
- Employment Testing/Test Rental
- Job Analysis
- Selection Tools Development
- Test Administration



### HR COMPLIANCE

- Audits
- Policies & Procedures
- Complaint Investigation



### ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI)
- Employee Engagement



### LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

- Training
- Executive Coaching
- Performance Management
- 360° Feedback



### LICENSING & CERTIFICATION

- Accreditation
- Applicant/Candidate Management
- Credential Program Management
- Testing Services

## Contact Us

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# Q&A

