



Succession Planning Checklist:

Governance & Oversight

- Board understands its responsibility in succession planning
- Succession planning is discussed annually
- Succession planning is incorporated into strategic discussions
- Board has identified critical leadership positions
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly documented
- Emergency decision-making authority is established

Risk Assessment

- Organization has identified operational vulnerabilities
- Single points of failure have been identified
- Key institutional knowledge areas are documented
- Organization has assessed leadership pipeline gaps
- Financial and operational risks of leadership transition have been evaluated

II. Leadership Continuity

Executive Leadership

- Written Executive Director/CEO succession plan exists
- Emergency interim leadership structure is identified
- Board chair and executive committee know activation procedures
- Key external relationships are mapped and documented

- Leadership responsibilities are documented
- Important deadlines/calendars are centralized

Staff Leadership

- Critical staff positions are identified
- Backup personnel or cross-training exists for essential functions
- Staff roles and workflows are documented
- Internal leadership development opportunities exist
- Staff are encouraged to build institutional knowledge

III. Operational Continuity

Financial Operations

- Banking information and signatories are documented
- Financial procedures manual exists
- Audit, tax filing, and reporting timelines are documented
- Access to accounting systems is secured and transferable
- Budget oversight procedures are documented

Technology & Systems

- Password management system exists
- Access credentials are securely stored
- Vendor and consultant contact lists are maintained
- Technology systems are documented
- Website/social media administrative access is documented
- Cloud storage/shared drive access procedures are established

Administrative Operations

- Key organizational documents are centralized
- Contracts and agreements are organized and accessible
- Insurance policies are documented
- HR policies and employee records are maintained
- Membership/donor databases are documented

IV. Knowledge Transfer

Institutional Knowledge

- Key historical information is documented
- Major stakeholder relationships are tracked
- Grant and funding histories are organized
- Organizational calendar of recurring activities exists
- Board policies and procedures are current

Communications

- Internal communication plan exists for leadership transitions
- External communication templates are prepared
- Donor/member notification procedures are identified
- Media/public messaging responsibilities are assigned

V. Emergency Succession Planning

Immediate Response Procedures

- Organization has a written emergency succession policy
- Interim leader is identified
- Emergency contact information is current
- Board leadership can convene quickly if needed
- Authority levels during transition are documented

First 30-Day Transition Planning

- Transition communication strategy exists
- Priority operational tasks are identified
- Critical meetings/events/deadlines are documented
- External stakeholders to notify are identified

VI. Leadership Development & Future Planning

Building the Leadership Pipeline

- Emerging leaders are identified
- Professional development opportunities are encouraged

- Cross-training is part of organizational culture
- Mentorship opportunities exist
- Leadership responsibilities are shared when appropriate

Long-Term Sustainability

- Succession planning reviewed annually
- Board succession planning exists
- Committee leadership development occurs
- Organizational structure supports continuity
- Succession planning aligns with strategic goals

Essential Succession Planning Documents

Every organization should have:

- Emergency succession policy
- Updated organizational chart
- Key contact list
- Password/access management system
- Financial procedures documentation
- Board/staff roles and responsibilities
- Annual operational calendar
- Communications protocol
- Leadership transition checklist