

NYSCHP Succession Planning Guidance

What is succession planning and why is it important?

Succession planning involves creating a talent pipeline for key positions within the organization. It ensures continuity and sustained performance while identifying the knowledge, skills, and training required for potential candidates. Rather than being a one-time task, succession planning is an ongoing process that requires continuous development of team members.

Steps in Succession Planning

1. Develop Eligibility Requirements

- Create a profile of the position and performance expectations.
- Determine the experience needed for the role.

2. Identify a Talent Pipeline

3. Nominate Successors

- Consider inviting leaders, such as members of the Board of Directors and Committee Chairs, to nominate qualified individuals for inclusion in a succession plan. Additionally, provides an opportunity for members to express their own interests. Ensuring transparency in the process and clearly outlining candidate requirements fosters equity and builds trust.
- Consider the following qualifications:
 - Sustains high performance.
 - Demonstrates measurable positive impact on the organization.
 - Recognized as a future leader.
 - Fits well with the organizational culture.
 - Demonstrates the organization's values.

4. Create an Action Plan for Successor Development

- Creating a developmental plan for potential successors helps to identify meaningful growth opportunities.

5. Evaluate the Succession Plan

- By evaluating your organization's succession planning efforts each year, you can continually improve your succession planning strategy and your organization's effectiveness.

Defining a Development Process for Future Board / Committee Leadership

To avoid dilemmas, consciously and deliberately plan and invest in the development of Board and Committee members to ensure a seamless leadership succession.

Here are some cautionary notes and common concerns often associated with the selection of organizational leaders:

1. A candidate who actively seeks a leadership role is not always the most suitable choice and may even be someone to approach with caution. Carefully evaluate their motivations for pursuing the position. Are they driven by a genuine desire to serve the organization, or are they primarily seeking to enhance their resume? Ensuring that their intentions align with advancing the mission of the organization is critical.
2. Avoid relying solely on someone to step forward and volunteer as the most appropriate candidate is not necessarily the most assertive or overt.
3. Exercise caution when selecting a candidate who is the loudest or most dominant person for a position. While such traits can command attention and, in some cases, respect, they may not align with the collaborative skills necessary for effective leadership. The ideal leader should be capable of fostering engagement and encouraging participation from all members, rather than intimidating or overshadowing them. Recognize that leadership is situational and that the best candidate will depend on the specific needs of the organization. Evaluate the characteristics of your membership and the mission of your group to determine who will be the most effective fit for the role. Context and alignment with organizational goals are key in identifying the right leader.

The early stages of Board / Committee leadership development

Thinking about future potential Board / Committee leadership can begin as early as the initial stages of Board / Committee recruitment. One consideration in choosing future Board members should at least be a passing consideration as to whether or not this candidate has any potential to provide leadership for the Board / Committee in a few years. While it is true that a Board / Committee Chair ultimately grows into his or her role, this process can and should be consciously developed by those on the Board / Committee who are looking toward the long-term future of the organization. Instead of just hoping that a highly qualified and appropriate leader will emerge, the Board / Committee should instead think consciously about developing younger Board / Committee members to ensure that they could be ready to assume this leadership.

The Board / Committee needs to actively identify and invest in potential leaders, giving them opportunities to develop the necessary perspectives and skills to assume future leadership positions. One needs to be careful of not falling into the trap of looking for perfection, as every leader will undoubtedly have weaknesses as well as strengths. The challenge for the Board / Committee is to try to help the individual work on these weaknesses and to allow them to further strengthen their skills. The Board / Committee can make committee assignments and provide committee leadership opportunities in a manner that will allow the person to grow and learn about different facets of the organization. This also provides the opportunity to test and prove their leadership. Volunteer opportunities and activities can highlight folks who really are committed to the organization. Keep an eye open for those that eagerly take on new assignments, report their outcomes in a timely manner, are constructive in their suggestions, and draw out the best in others.

The goal is not to identify an anointed leader early but rather to have several Board / Committee members in the leadership pipeline at all times. The Board may want to consider investing in training opportunities for potential leaders and should try to mentor them with the current leadership and other established and respected members of the Board.

Defining a Process of Succession

The organization needs to define a formal process for succession to the Chair's role. You may want to consider having Board / Committee leadership roles to include a Chair and Chair-elect, and possibly a past Chair.

When a Leader Completes Their Term

When a person steps down as Board / Committee Chair, they do not necessarily leave the Board, as they certainly can continue to serve as a Board / Committee member. Some organizations have the past Chair serve on the executive committee for at least one year. This person has probably devoted significant time and energy to the organization, and their service and leadership should be appropriately acknowledged and celebrated.

In all likelihood, they will remain highly invested in the organization, and this commitment can be capitalized upon. The incoming Board / Committee Chair may want to seek advice and counsel from this person, but this must be defined by the new Chair and their comfort level in involving the previous administration, even in an informal manner. If the outgoing Chair has been a good contributor, the new leadership should actively seek meaningful ways for the past Chair to volunteer and stay involved.

The individual stepping down should also pass along to the person taking over their role an outline of the deadlines/requirements (timeline) for the position to ensure a smooth transition occurs to help with the consistent functioning of the organization. Some items to include are:

- **Constitution and Bylaws (C&B):**
 - Comprehensive Understanding: Gain a thorough understanding of the organization's Constitution and Bylaws (C&B). Review Schedule: Identify how frequently the C&B should be reviewed and updated.
- **Meetings:**
 - Types: Clearly explain the differences between the following types of meetings and what each entails
 - Board meetings
 - General chapter membership meetings
 - Networking meetings

- Subcommittee meetings
 - Frequency: Determine how often meetings are scheduled.
 - Location: Identify whether meetings are virtual or in-person.
 - Agenda: Clarify who is responsible for sending out agenda items.
- **Finance:**
 - Budget:
 - Understand when the budget is due for review and approval.
 - Identify the individuals involved in creating and approving the budget (e.g., Board of Directors or membership).
 - Outline the process for transferring authority (e.g., banking documents, checking accounts, savings accounts, credit cards, and online payment portals).
 - Processes:
 - Learn the steps for paying bills and ensuring compliance with approval requirements.
 - Tax Documentation:
 - Identify the person responsible for preparing tax-related documents.
 - Understand timelines for filing taxes.
 - Clarify the organization's tax-exempt status (e.g., 501(c)(6)).
 - Provide an overview of required tax-related forms and documentation, such as:
 - Certificate of Incorporation
 - Federal Tax Exemption Letter
 - W-9
 - Form 990
 - Form ST-119
 - Roles:
 - Clearly define which tasks are assigned to specific roles.
 - Outline any cross-coverage responsibilities, if applicable.
- **Committee Chair Selection:**
 - Timing: Establish when committee chairs are selected or appointed.
- **Board of Directors (BOD) and Director Reports:**
 - Submission Frequency: Understand how often reports are submitted and to whom.
- **Communication:**
 - Vendor Relations: Provide guidance on appropriate communication with vendor sponsors, including:
 - Template invitations
 - Requests for member information
 - Compliance considerations
 - Usual Correspondence:
 - Required communication with the BOD, membership, or NYSCHP Office.
 - Speeches:
 - Determine if speeches (e.g., incoming and outgoing addresses) are required.
 - Submissions:
 - Identify required submissions (e.g., newsletter articles).
 - Deadlines: Note when these are due and the intended audience (e.g., membership, BOD, NYSCHP Office).
- **Nominations and Awards Committee:**
 - Structure and Timeline:
 - Establish the process and schedule for nominations and awards, both locally and statewide.

Reference:

1. Succession Planning: A Step-by-Step Guide. Office of Human Resources. NIH.
2. Succession Planning for the Non-profit Board Chair. Social Venture Partners. Boulder, CO. February 2012