

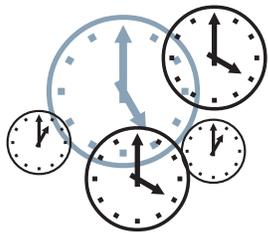
Succession Planning



Right People,



Right Time,



in State of Alaska Agencies

**State of Alaska,
Department of Administration,
Division of Personnel & Labor
Relations**

Introduction

Workforce planning is a broad strategy that influences a department's, division's, or agency's entire workforce. Defined by the International Public Management Association for Human Resources, workforce planning is "the strategic alignment of an organization's human capital with its business direction." It is a process of analyzing the current workforce, determining future workforce needs, calculating the gaps that will exist due to surpluses or deficits in employee skills now and in the future, and creating and implementing a plan to close those gaps. Succession planning is one small piece of the entire workforce planning strategy.

Many State of Alaska agencies, when faced with the overwhelming possibility of losing valuable employees through retirement, transfers, and other forms of attrition, often get bogged down with the idea of all that succession planning could entail. Supervisors and managers may find it easier to plan for future and current workforce needs by concentrating on the concept that succession planning can be aptly and simply defined as training and leadership development.

The State of Alaska is committed to preparing, through training and development, state government employees to assume critical positions of leadership. It is important to note that leadership does not apply only to senior-level positions, but also refers to leadership in all work units and at all levels. This means developing the human capital needed for the future by encouraging individuals to acquire and enhance the skills and knowledge necessary for personal *and* professional growth.

Succession planning often works hand in hand with knowledge transfer concepts, since developing new leaders means that the knowledge of current leaders will be shared before retirement, promotion, or other attrition with those who will follow in their footsteps. As managers and supervisors develop and implement their workforce plans, it is helpful to see how different components all work together.

Benefits of Succession Planning

As a piece of the workforce plan, succession planning has many benefits for both the current leadership and for the employees in the agency. Building a leadership bench becomes a top priority and employees feel valued when they know that the agency cares about their futures. In addition, it helps ensure that departing employees feel that they are leaving the agency in good hands—that they have successfully “passed the torch.” The State of Pennsylvania identified six fundamental benefits to both agencies and employers that result from succession planning which can also be useful to Alaska state agencies as they start workforce planning efforts.

1. Enables the organization to assess its talent needs by establishing competency models or job descriptions
2. Allows leaders to identify and tap key people who are available to fill critical work functions
3. Provides avenues for present and future succession planning and discussions about how to develop talent
4. Defines career paths for employees to increase the breadth and depth of their organizational knowledge
5. Provides for a higher return on investment from employees
6. Leads to the appropriate promotion of people to meet organizational goals.

Source: Public Personnel Management (Winter 2007) [Navigating Pennsylvania’s Dynamic Workforce: Succession Planning in a Complex Environment](#)

State of Alaska’s Workforce Challenges

In workforce planning, there are a number of challenges and opportunities that must be addressed. It is simple enough to get a count of current employees, to get retirement projections for the next one, five, and ten years, and to determine average ages of current employees and new hires. In the State of Alaska, there are approximately 15,000 employees working in the executive branch departments, providing services to 680,000 Alaska citizens. The average length of state service across all departments is 8.82 years and the average age is 44.8 years.

Additional questions must be asked, however, in order to get a complete picture of an agency’s employee demographic. Agencies need to ask employees or otherwise ascertain where in the employment life cycle the employees are right now.

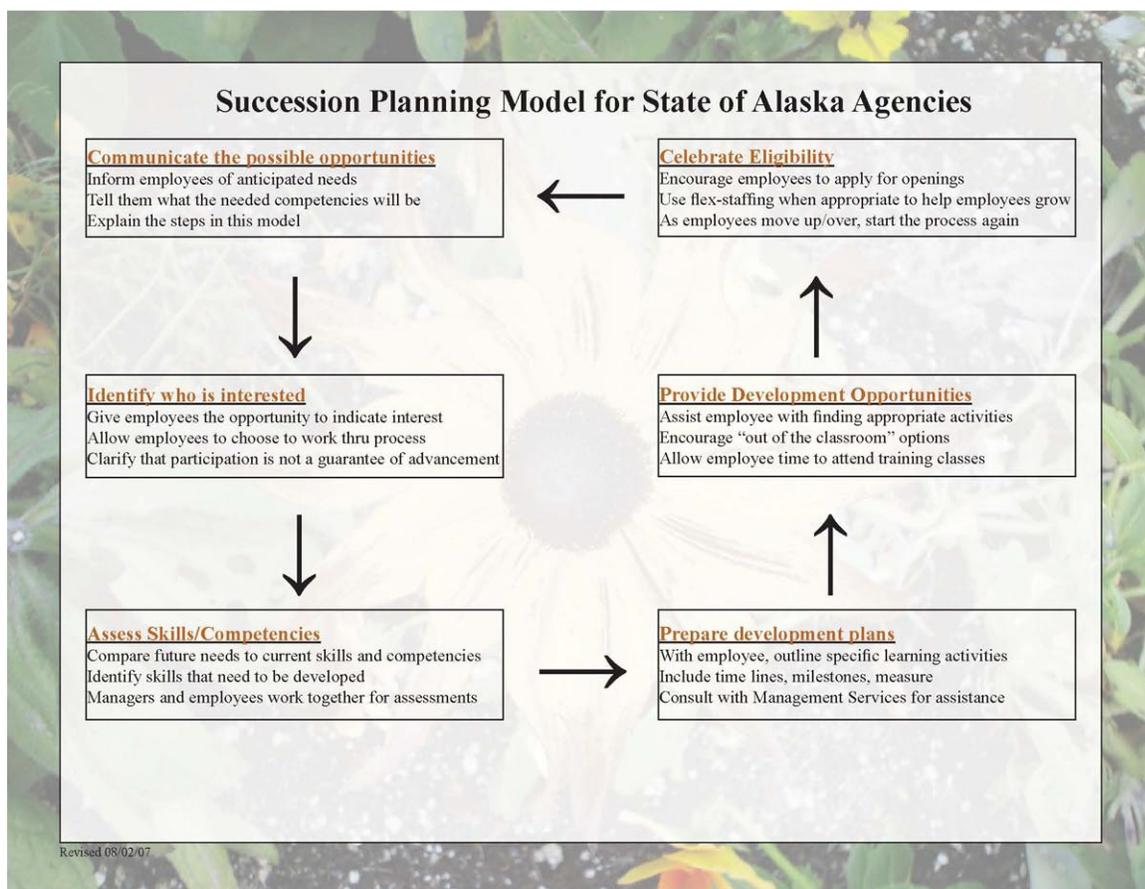
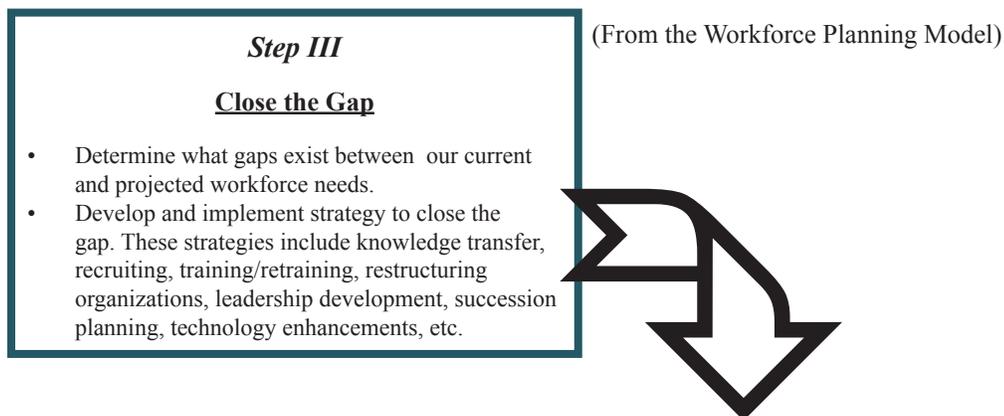
- Are employees, regardless of age, beginning a new career path?
- Are employees, regardless of age, at the end of promotional opportunities in their chosen field with the state?
- Are employees getting ready to leave for retirement, promotion, or other reasons?
- Are employees now in the on-boarding process (newly hired or promoted)?

In order to determine future needs, the agency needs to understand which skills and competencies are at risk of leaving (end of an employee’s career), which skills and competencies have just joined the agency (beginning of an employee’s career), and which skills and competencies need to be further developed (middle of an employee’s career).

Workforce planning has received enormous attention throughout this state and, indeed, throughout the entire United States in the past decade. Baby boomers are leaving the workforce in record numbers, the average job tenure in any one position nationally is 4 years, and here in Alaska, 25% of the employees working in state government positions are eligible to retire in 5 years or less.

State of Alaska Succession Planning Model

To address the anticipated employment needs that agencies have identified in their overall workforce plans, the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations has developed the following succession planning model.



The overarching idea behind the state's succession planning model is that workforce planning has taken place in the agency, with a gap analysis done to identify the anticipated needs. *Until that part of the workforce plan has been completed, this model will not be workable.* An assumption on which this model is based is that appropriate positions for which there will be a future need have been identified. Steps to complete that portion of the workforce plan, *at a minimum*, include:

- Identifying functions and when positions are expected to be available
- Reviewing position functions and anticipated future work requirements
- Identifying future competencies required for each position

For more assistance with these steps, refer to the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations publications [Introduction to Workforce Planning: A Quick Reference for Supervisors and Managers](#) and [Workforce Planning Desk Reference and Guide](#).

Once the gap analysis is completed, the succession planning model can be applied. The model consists of six major phases, with steps in each phase:

- Phase One: Communicate the possible opportunities
 - ❑ Inform employees of the anticipated needs
 - ❑ Tell them what the needed competencies will be
 - ❑ Explain the steps in this model
- Phase Two: Identify who is interested
 - ❑ Give employees the chance to indicate interest
 - ❑ Allow employees to choose to work through the process
 - ❑ Clarify that participation is **not** a guarantee of advancement
- Phase Three: Assess current skills and competencies
 - ❑ Compare future needs to current skills and competencies
 - ❑ Identify skills that need to be developed
 - ❑ Managers and employees work together for assessments
- Phase Four: Prepare development plans
 - ❑ With the employee, outline specific learning activities
 - ❑ Include time lines, milestones, and measurable objectives
 - ❑ Use all services the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations has to offer (Management Services, Employee Planning and Information Center, and Training and Development)
- Phase Five: Provide development opportunities
 - ❑ Assist the employee in finding appropriate opportunities
 - ❑ Encourage “out of the classroom” options
 - ❑ Allow employees time to attend training classes
- Phase Six: Celebrate eligibility
 - ❑ Encourage employees to apply for openings
 - ❑ Use flex-staffing when appropriate to help employees grow
 - ❑ As employees move up or over, start the process again

Practical Actions to Take

State agencies have a responsibility to their employees in providing leadership and other employment growth opportunities. As an agency begins to develop its succession plan, consider taking some of the following actions.

- Perform meaningful evaluations and coaching sessions for those employees who have elected to follow the model.
- Obtain commitment from the employee that she/he will use the new skills and competencies in the agency.
- Make learning a part of the agency's standards. Encourage learning in all capacities and at all levels. Offer training opportunities to all interested employees.
- Give employees increased responsibilities in their regular day to day work.
- Make it clear that the agency is committed to developing and implementing the plan.
- Put the plan in writing, well in advance of its implementation to give employees plenty of time to choose to participate or not.
- Develop and maintain an atmosphere of transparency about the process—invite as many employees as are interested to participate. Nothing destroys trust in a public employer faster than having employees feel like one is being favored over others or that one is being pre-selected (“groomed”) to take over certain responsibilities.
- Monitor and revise the plan as needed.

Common Challenges to Anticipate

As with any new plan, implementation will include challenges and opportunities. Being aware of these challenges will make it easier to avoid them. Some of the more common mistakes include:

- Thinking of succession planning as a one-time event. Succession planning, in order to be successfully managed, should be considered an ongoing process for the agency. The agency's goals and leadership will change and those that are constantly preparing for change through succession planning will be better able to manage those changes.
- Delaying the plan. Succession planning takes time, energy, and effort. It is time-consuming, but in the end, it takes much less time, energy, and effort than it would take to constantly hire, train, rehire, and retrain employees.
- Not preparing all current incumbents for succession. Everyone leaves at one time or another—some stay longer than others, but in the end, *everyone* leaves. *All* critical positions should have a succession plan so that the essential functions of the agency continue. Help current incumbents understand how important it is to prepare the next generation of employees and explain that by creating a succession plan, the agency is recognizing the value of the work being done now and that continuation of the work is critical to the agency.
- Failing to prepare successors adequately. Managers and employees should be prepared to invest the time and effort it will take to thoroughly train the new skills and competencies. The most successful succession plans start, on average, three to five years out from the anticipated date of need. This allows time for the current incumbent to make the transition away from the agency and for the employees who need the skills to apply for openings to become fully proficient.
- Not having a written plan. When the plan is written down, everyone can refer to it, everyone can understand it, and the agency will find it easier to monitor.
- Failing to make succession planning a part of the agency's overall workforce plan and strategic plan. Succession plans will not work in a vacuum—they must be part and parcel of the agency's strategic plan.

Source: www.ioma.com/law (February 2008) Eight Ways to Grow Leaders and Shore up Succession Plans

Available Resources

Succession planning is another tool in the toolbox for agencies to use as they begin to develop their workforce plans. The Division of Personnel and Labor Relations is ready to assist with workforce planning efforts. The Human Resource Service Centers contacts for workforce planning are

Resource Group Service Center, serving the Departments of Fish and Game, Natural Resources, and Environmental Conservation can be reached at 465-2463.

Public Protection Service Center, serving the Departments of Corrections, Public Safety, and Military and Veterans' Affairs can be reached at 334-2606.

General Agencies Service Center, serving the Departments of Law, Administration, Commerce Community and Economic Development, Education and Early Development, Revenue and Labor and Workforce Development can be reached at 465-2498.

Transportation and Public Facilities Service Center can be reached at 465-6956.

Health and Social Services Service Center can be reached at 465-2308.

Division of Personnel and Labor Relations offers open enrollment classes designed to assist managers and supervisors. For a list of the classes, dates, and times, go to <http://dop.state.ak.us/website/index.cfm?fuseaction=TrainingDevelopment.main>

In addition, the Employee Planning and Information Center has the following publications and documents to assist with workforce planning in the agency

State of Alaska Workforce Planning Guide and Resource
Introduction to Workforce Planning—Quick Reference for Managers and Supervisors
Knowledge Transfer Tools
Skill Gap Analysis Power Point
HR Update (published monthly)
State of Alaska Workforce Profile (published annually)

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