

**SUCCESSION PLANNING:
A DIALOGUE FOR LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY**

by

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ABSTRACT

Nonprofit organizations, including cultural institutions such as public gardens, typically practice succession planning less frequently than organizations within the for-profit sector. Despite research that indicates a significant number of nonprofit Executive Directors will retire in the near future and that public gardens arguably assume one of the highest levels of risk in the nonprofit sector due to differences in generational workforce trends, the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the American Public Gardens Association (the Association) membership is unknown. Therefore, the objective of this research is to understand the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the Association membership.

This research utilizes two strategies in the collection of relevant data: quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative strategy, a Screening Tool was distributed to Association membership leaders to identify research participants and gather a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens.

The qualitative strategy involved three methods. The first method, Interviews, was conducted to provide greater insight to the responses of the Screening Tool and to gain an understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan. The second method, a Focus Group, was conducted to understand the perception of succession planning as it does or does not relate to public gardens; the position of not having a formal plan including, but not limited to, barriers or reservations on approaching the subject; and what would be most helpful for future transitions. The third method, which included Case Studies and one Alternative Case

Study, was completed to assess how public gardens utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries.

The results of this study revealed that the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the Association membership is limited; even organizations with succession plans are admittedly new to the process.

Most participating organizations did not have succession plans, because they were unfamiliar with the costs, processes, and impacts associated with the planning process. Organizations with succession plans were motivated by necessity, the desire to improve upon past transition efforts, and the desire to build leadership throughout their organizations. They characterized the costs as minimal and the process as positive, but have not yet been able to quantify the degree of their plans' successes.

Despite a desire to prepare Association member gardens for leadership transitions through long-term objectives, increased flexibility, and effective communication, all of which are characteristics of succession planning, organizations without plans do not perceive this as the strategy to accomplish this objective.

One reason succession planning may be a limited practice within the Association membership is due to a lack of understanding of the subject as a practical strategy for leadership continuity. To adjust for this, further dialogue surrounding the subject is encouraged. The more succession planning is understood as an accessible, proactive strategy within the Association membership, the more comfortable Boards and leaders may become with the subject, leading to increasingly open dialogues, strategy experimentation, and communication of trials and triumphs within the membership.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

To insure the security and longevity of any organization is to adequately perceive future challenges and take appropriate measures to meet such trials long before they unfold. Among the most daunting of challenges lies the recognition of potential shifts in leadership and constructing strategies to not only fortify internal resilience, but also to embrace imminent change. Succession planning provides “a means of identifying critical management positions, starting at the levels of project manager and supervisor, and extending up to the highest position in the organization. Succession planning also describes management positions to provide maximum flexibility in lateral management moves and to ensure that as individuals achieve greater seniority, their management skills will broaden and become more generalized in relation to total organizational objectives rather than to purely departmental objectives” (Rothwell 2010).

When properly employed, succession planning “is proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from within the organization through planned development activities. It should be regarded as an important tool for implementing strategic plans” (Rothwell 2010). It illuminates the organization’s projections for the future by providing the clarity and transparency necessary to sustain staff confidence and maintain organizational operations during times of uncertainty and change (Dahlke 2012). Organizations without a succession plan are at risk for loss in key talent and critical knowledge (Dahlke 2012).

In the nonprofit sector, it is the responsibility of the Board to manage succession planning at the executive level. As “the ultimate guardian of the community’s investment in the agency, it is the Board’s duty, regardless of its practices to date, to attend to succession planning —and long before leadership issues create a crisis for the agency” (Wolfréd 2008). However, succession planning has historically been an uncomfortable subject for some as “executives may be reluctant or ambivalent about bringing up the uncomfortable topic of leaving. Board members may feel overwhelmed at the prospect of replacing a tenured or founding executive” (Price 2008).

Despite the need for succession planning in nonprofits, there has been limited published research on the subject specifically for cultural institutions and even less for the American Public Gardens Association membership, the subject of this study.

Therefore, the primary objective of this research is to understand the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the Association’s membership.

Supporting objectives include:

1. Identifying potential research participants and gathering a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens
2. Providing greater insight and gaining an understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan
3. Understanding the positions of organizations without succession plans through dynamic discussion
4. Assessing how public gardens utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction and Overview of Succession Planning

Now a permanent pillar of the human psyche, the dynamic of leadership and followership predates the human species as evidenced by behavior exhibited in other social animals evolved from a common ancestor (Ahuja and Van Vugt 2011). As man evolved, so did strategies to manage this dynamic. With the earliest accounts of formalized leadership succession tracing back to biblical times, primogeniture, the right of succession belonging to the firstborn child, outlined a hierarchy of power to the family unit (Corcos 2012). Military and government forces have historically employed a highly formalized system, known as chain of command, to determine order and succession (Powers 2011). In the nineteenth century, writer and strategist Henri Fayol alluded to the necessity of succession planning as an organizational need within his classic fourteen points of management (Rothwell 2010). Fayol's twelfth point, stability of personnel tenure, highlights the leadership's responsibility to cultivate talent and rates of retention; failure to do so results in key positions "filled by ill-prepared people" (Rothwell 2010).

Today, succession planning can be defined as "a means of identifying critical management positions, starting at the levels of project manager and supervisor and extending up to the highest position in the organization. Succession planning also describes management positions to provide maximum flexibility in lateral management moves and to ensure that as individuals achieve greater seniority, their

management skills will broaden and become more generalized in relation to total organizational objectives rather than to purely departmental objectives” (Rothwell 2010). Evolved from primitive dominance tactics and linear structures of power, modern succession planning looks beyond the individual executive and instead focuses on what resources, personnel included, are required to meet future organizational needs.

It is common for the concepts of succession planning and replacement planning to be thought of as synonymous; they are not. Replacement planning is a form of risk management that typically focuses “attention on each organizational unit—division, department, or work group—and asking the manager of each unit to identify up to three people from inside the organization as possible backups” (Rothwell 2010). On the contrary, succession planning “is proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from within the organization through planned development activities. It should be regarded as an important tool for implementing strategic plans” (Rothwell 2010). The distinction is important to understand, because replacement planning is short-term and definitive in nature, while succession planning is long-term and flexible.

According to the American Public Gardens Association’s Benchmarking Platform, over 50% of its membership, the subject of this study, holds nonprofit classification status (Anonymous 2017). In the nonprofit sector, organizational leadership is two-fold: the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director. “Board members are the fiduciaries who steer the organization towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance and financial management policies, as well as making sure the nonprofit has adequate resources to advance its mission”

(National Council of Nonprofits 2016). Among the Board's most critical responsibilities is the hiring and continued evaluation of an Executive Director, the Board's leadership counterpart, who manages the organization's daily operations (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

The Board and Executive Director work in tandem to guide the organization's mission, vision, and values, which are often reviewed during strategic planning initiatives (Lord and Markert 2007). This same aligned perspective relating to the future of the organization should help the Board and Executive Director to "see succession planning as an essential governance responsibility related to its duty to provide for staff leadership" (Wolfred 2008).

Indeed, succession planning has the greatest organizational impact when woven into a larger strategic planning effort as resources required for progress are inventoried, evaluated, and aligned (Wolfred 2008). To remain relevant, a succession plan should not only identify key positions and people that reflect strategic initiatives, but also require the same frequency of review as the strategic plan (Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman 2009). It should be said that while it is ideal for the Board and Executive Director to work together, because the Board is "the ultimate guardian of the community's investment in the agency, it is the Board's duty, regardless of its practices to date, to attend to succession planning—and long before leadership issues create a crisis for the agency" (Wolfred 2008).

While the nonprofit leadership dynamic between Executive Director and Board is standard, one nonprofit may require a different approach to succession planning than another. There are three main types of nonprofit succession planning: Strategic

Leadership Development, Departure Defined Development, and Emergency Succession Planning (Price 2008).

Strategic Leadership Development is “an ongoing process that identifies the core competencies, skills and knowledge needed by the organization in the next five years along with a plan to develop those competencies in your existing talent or to recruit new talent” (Price 2008). This approach takes a comprehensive look into the development of internal talent, identified as key positions, as well as the availability of external talent.

Departure Defined Development is “a course of action that Boards and executives employ when an executive begins thinking about leaving an organization” (Price 2008). When the Board and Executive Director are working in tandem, this conversation is expected and welcomed.

The third type, Emergency Succession Planning, is “a plan to address an unanticipated departure of an Executive Director, usually occurring with only a few days or weeks notice” (Price 2008). Motivations driving immediate departure can include, but are not limited to, sudden retirement, acceptance of a new position with another organization, and occasionally fatality. Because each organization has unique requirements, it is possible that an organization’s succession plan includes one, two, or all three of the types disclosed above.

Succession Planning Trends in Nonprofit Organizations

Despite the need for succession planning in nonprofits, there has been limited published research on the subject specifically for cultural institutions and even less for succession planning in public gardens. Therefore, the following studies have been selected to showcase the extent to which and need for succession planning in nonprofit

organizations. It is important to note that each of the studies have defined the term succession planning differently. The following studies include nonprofits outside of the Association's membership. This comparison was drawn, because there is more succession planning research for nonprofits than for public gardens and because the majority of Association member gardens hold nonprofit status. For the purposes of this research, it serves as a reflection of a larger research group in which public gardens may be included until additional research is conducted within the field of public horticulture.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management's *2006 Succession Planning Survey*, compared to the 72% of publicly-owned, for-profit organizations and 45% of privately owned, for-profit organizations that have formal succession plans, only 32% of nonprofit organizations claimed to have plans in place. The only organization type that ranked lower was government entities at 31% (Martin 2006). Another significant trend in the survey results was that formal succession plans were more common among larger organizations in that 36% percent of organizations with 500 or more employees had formal succession plans, 23% of medium-sized companies (100-499 employees) had plans, and 19% of smaller firms had plans (Martin 2006).

A 2004 study sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, an organization that defines succession planning as “a sound risk management practice...critical to ensuring the viability of an agency in the event of a key manager's unplanned absence” (Wolfréd 2008), surveyed over 2,200 nonprofit organizations (Kunreuther 2005). Results showed that “65% of respondents expected to go through a leadership transition by 2009, while just 57 percent had experienced a transition during the past

10 years. Fifty-five percent of current Executive Directors surveyed were 50 or older” (Kunreuther 2005).

Similarly, a study sponsored by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation surveyed 350 nonprofit executives in the greater Milwaukee area in 2004 (Price 2008). The study defined succession planning as “an ongoing and thoughtful process that is integrated into the organization’s overall strategic planning processes” (Price 2008). The results concluded “66% of nonprofits surveyed were likely to experience an executive transition within the next five years, and 26% of those in the next two years; only 1-2% of nonprofits reported having a succession plan in place; and organizations with founding executives were even less likely to have a plan in place” (Price 2008). Furthermore, “55% of the current nonprofit executives were over 50 years old and only 33% of responding organizations had a deputy director” (Price 2008). The results of this survey highlight the rate of expected executive leadership turnover in the next five years.

In 2006, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and the Meyer Foundation published *Daring to Lead 2006*, which surveyed 1,900 nonprofit leaders. The results showed that 75% of responding leaders were planning to leave in the next five years (Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred 2006). However, only 29% of responding leaders had discussed succession planning with their Boards (Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred 2006).

Despite these projections, when the recession hit in December 2007, many who had been planning to retire elected to maintain their positions instead, further postponing a major leadership shift (Norton and Linnell 2015). Third Sector New England showed a continuation of this trend through its 2014 study, which defined succession planning as “ensuring organizational sustainability by identifying and

addressing key vulnerabilities so that the organization is not dependent on any one leader, funder, strategy, or way of thinking” (Norton and Linnell 2015). The study surveyed 877 nonprofit leaders, the majority of whom were Executive Directors, and 330 nonprofit Board members with the objective of understanding the status of nonprofit leadership in New England (Norton and Linnell 2015). Nearly two-thirds of responding leaders indicated they expected to leave their jobs within five years with 30% planning to depart in the next two years (Norton and Linnell 2015). Additionally, 58% of leaders and 62% of Board members reported “their organizations do not have any type of succession plan in place” (Norton and Linnell 2015).

In reviewing nonprofit cultural institutions, the Museum Association of New York surveyed approximately 12,000 museum professionals throughout the association’s member museums in 2004. This study defined succession planning as “a broad spectrum of strategies that build overall organizational capacity by stimulating self-assessment, evaluation, personal and organizational development and continuity for Board, staff, and the Executive Director” (Baldwin 2008). The results showed that 91% of reporting institutions did not have succession plans (Baldwin 2008).

In 2014, BoardSource conducted a “national study of nonprofit governance that includes responses from both Chief Executives and Board Chairs”, titled *Leading With Intent*. The study showed “only 34% of Boards have a written CEO succession plan. Yet, 50% of Boards will be confronted with replacing a CEO within the next 5 years. 25% of CEOs intend to leave their post within the next 2 years, and another 25% intend to leave within 3 to 5 years” (BoardSource 2015). Additionally, “the 846 individuals who responded to the chief executive survey have an average tenure of 9.3 years as chief executive” (BoardSource 2015).

Specifically in the field of public horticulture, in fall of 2007 Andrew J. Pulte at the University of Tennessee surveyed 448 public garden Executive Directors in the United States with the objective of learning their opinions on leadership and leadership development. In response to the open-ended question, “What continuing education topics or programs about leadership would you like to see offered through APGA or other sources?” only four responses explicitly cited succession planning (Pulte 2008). Five years later, one session discussed a garden’s approach to succession planning at the 2013 Association Annual Conference. This indicates the field of public horticulture’s mild desire to understand succession planning.

In summary, while the nonprofit sector is expected to experience significant rates of change in leadership in the near future, most do not have succession plans in place. Additionally, multiple interpretations or definitions of the term “succession planning” exist throughout the nonprofit sector, making it difficult to draw direct comparisons between organizations like public gardens, which are mildly interested in learning more about the subject and its application.

Workforce Trends

Considering the expected rates of nonprofit leader retirement in the near future, public gardens arguably assume one of the highest levels of risk in the nonprofit sector due to differences in generational workforce trends. With only a third of the oldest baby boomer generation still working (Newport 2015), a significant portion of today’s leadership, encompassing years of institutional knowledge and cultivated relationships, will move on with limited talent in the leadership pipeline.

With regards to emerging talent, there are two main trends to consider: rate of entry into the workforce and rate of retention. Concerning rate of entry, “in study after

study about what CEOs worry about, a chronically important topic is how to develop the next generation of effective leaders” (Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman 2009).

A concerning trend, interest in horticulture as a career path at the college and university level has declined over the past decades. For example, “Michigan State University’s enrollment [in horticulture] has declined from 146 in 2005 to 110 in 2010; Penn State University’s horticulture program has been declining for nine years and has about 45 students; and Virginia Tech University has about 85 students [in horticulture] compared to about 150 [students] 15 years ago” (Hall 2011). While public horticulture provides a wide range of professional opportunity, including careers in marketing and finance, horticulture is the backbone of public horticulture institutions and is not currently pursued as a popular career choice. Initiatives such as the Seed Your Future campaign are actively working to reverse this trend on a national scale by improving public perception of horticulture and working to increase the number of high school and college students entering horticultural programs (Seed Your Future 2016).

The second trend, rate of retention, suggests that the limited workforce entering the field of public horticulture with aspirations to take on leadership roles in the future may abide by generational trends that differ drastically from their predecessors. “Leaders and potential leaders come and go with varying stays lasting from a few years to decades” (Adams 2010a). Indeed, it appears that the era of leaders with tenure of decades or even a lifetime with a single organization is fading. In its stead, the millennial generation, which includes those born between 1977-1997, is projected to hold numerous jobs and even career titles throughout their lifetimes (Meister 2012). Forbes Magazine states that “the average worker today stays at each

of his or her jobs for 4.4 years, according to the most recent available data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, but the expected tenure of the workforce's youngest employees is about half that" (Meister 2012).

A silver lining to this trend is that "boomerangs" (people who have left and come back) are just as valuable as people who stay" (Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman 2009). This negates the notion that investing in talent with potential to leave is a fruitless effort, especially if the talent returns. "Leaders who invest in tomorrow's talent build for the future, create sustainability, and ensure a legacy" (Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman 2009).

With consideration to workforce trends, limited published research on succession planning within public gardens, and the necessity of incorporating succession plans into strategic plans, the definition of succession planning used for the purposes of this research is "a comprehensive, continuous process of ensuring the organization's readiness and capacity to respond to a planned or unplanned change in top leadership and senior management positions. A succession plan is woven into the organization's overall strategic plan and includes developing replacement talent within the organization, as well as identifying externally available talent sources."

Chapter 3

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This research utilizes two strategies in the collection of relevant data in the year 2016: quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative strategy, the Screening Tool was distributed to identify potential research participants and gather a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens.

The qualitative strategy involved three methods. The first method, Interviews, was conducted to provide greater insight to the responses of the Screening Tool and to gain an understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan. The second method, a Focus Group, was conducted to understand the perception of succession planning as it does or does not relate to public gardens; the position of not having a formal plan including, but not limited to, barriers or reservations on approaching the subject; and what would be most helpful for future transitions. The third method, which included Case Studies and one Alternative Case Study, was completed to assess how public gardens utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries.

Institutional Review Board

All research conducted during this study adhered to the guidelines of the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board (IRB). All research methods were

deemed exempt from IRB review before engaging with participants, including: questions included in the Screening Tool (Appendix A, first page), semi-structured questions included in the Interviews (Appendix A, second page), semi-structured questions included in the Focus Group session (Appendix A, third page), and semi-structured questions included in the Case Studies (Appendix A, fourth page). The only exception includes data gathered for the Alternative Case Study, which was collected in a manner similar to, but not identical to the Case Studies.

Selection Criteria for Participants

Participating institutions included in this study were active institutional members of the American Public Gardens Association (the Association) at the time the research was conducted. In the Screening Tool, which was distributed by the Association to garden directors and main contacts responsible for maintaining membership at each member garden, formerly anonymous participants self-identified as willing to participate in this research by providing personal contact information. From this pool of willing participants, each was contacted for an Interview. Based on the interview discussions, gardens identified as not having a succession plan were invited to participate in a Focus Group. Also based on the interview discussions, four gardens identified as having a succession plan were invited to participate as Case Studies. One garden, which did not respond to the Screening Tool, was identified through Thesis Committee members as a potentially viable Case Study candidate. An Interview was later completed and the garden participated as a Case Study.

Classifications considered in the selection process include annual operating budget and geographic region. Annual operating budget data from the Association's Benchmarking platform had been classified into six categories (Anonymous 2017).

For the purposes of this research, annual operating budgets have been classified into three ranges (See Table 1).

Table 1 Association institutional member organization operating budgets were classified into three ranges for the purposes of this research

Annual Operating Budget	Number of Member Gardens
<\$150,000	227
\$151,000-\$999,999	227
\$1-10 Million	121

Geographic region classification (See Table 2) was sourced from the Association’s Public Gardens Benchmarking platform (Anonymous 2017). Participating gardens should represent a wide range of geographic regions.

Table 2 The Association classifies its membership into seven geographic regions

Geographic Region	States within Region
Interior West	AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, TX, UT and WY
Mid-Atlantic	DC, DE, MD, PA, VA and WV
Midwest	IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, OH, SD and WI
Northeast	CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, RI and VT
Pacific	AK, CA, HI, OR and WA
Southeast	AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, OK, PR, SC, TN and USVI
International	All Other

Screening Tool

The research objective of the Screening Tool was to identify potential research participants and to gather a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens. The anonymous survey was created using Qualtrics© survey software made available through the University of Delaware. The Screening Tool identified whom

among the Association membership was willing to be contacted to participate in this research. On January 14, 2016, Association Executive Director Dr. Casey Sclar, with the assistance of Association Communications Manager Caitlin Simkovich, distributed an e-blast (Appendix B), which included the survey link, to 573 Association institutional member “main contacts” on behalf of the primary researcher. The term “main contact” refers to the Association’s primary contact at member gardens, usually the chief executive.

Of the 573 emails sent, four bounced, meaning the email reached 569 contacts. Potential reasons for bounced emails include an expired email address of a past-employee no longer associated with the garden, a server interruption, or a garden security firewall prevented delivery. The email’s open rate was 50%. When the survey closed on February 1, 2016, it yielded 86 responses and a 100% participation rate of those who opened the survey link. Of the 86 responses, 37 provided personal contact information, indicating willingness to be contacted further regarding this research. The Screening Tool questions can be found in Appendix C, and its results can be found in Appendix D. To maintain anonymity, contact information provided by participants is not provided in the results.

Interviews

After the Screening Tool closed, Interviews were scheduled with 33 of the 37 respondents who self-identified as willing to discuss their organization’s experiences with succession planning (See Table 3). The remaining four respondents were unresponsive to interview requests.

Table 3 33 Association institutional member organizations participated in the Interview method

Interview Garden	Geographic Region
ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden	Interior West
Bedrock Gardens	Northeast
Block Botanical Gardens	Southeast
Boerner Botanical Gardens	Midwest
Brookside Gardens	Mid-Atlantic
Cadereyta Regional Botanic Garden	International
Cape Fear Botanical Garden	Southeast
Chicago Botanic Garden	Midwest
Delaware Botanic Gardens at Pepper Creek	Mid-Atlantic
Delaware Center for Horticulture	Mid-Atlantic
Descanso Gardens	Pacific
Fort Worth Botanic Garden	Interior West
Garden Literacy	Northeast
Goizueta Gardens at the Atlanta History Center	Southeast
Green Bay Botanical Garden	Midwest
High Glen Gardens	Mid-Atlantic
Ladew Topiary Gardens	Mid-Atlantic
Land and Garden Preserve of Mount Desert Island	Northeast
Morris County Park Commission	Northeast
Mount Auburn Cemetery	Northeast
Mt. Cuba Center	Mid-Atlantic
Powell Gardens	Midwest
Sandhills Horticultural Gardens	Southeast
Secrest Arboretum	Midwest
Southern Highlands Reserve	Southeast
Springs Preserve	Interior West
Stanley M. Rowe Arboretum	Midwest
The North Carolina Arboretum	Southeast
The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College	Mid-Atlantic
Toronto Botanical Garden	International
Tower Grove Park	Midwest
Tucson Botanical Garden	Interior West
UC Botanical Garden at Berkeley	Pacific

The research objectives of the Interviews were to provide greater insight to the responses of the Screening Tool and to gain an understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan.

In preparation for the semi-structured Interviews, a set of discussion questions was created with three parts (Appendix E). Part I, an explanation of the conversation's structure, thanked the interviewee for his/her participation, reiterated the purpose of the study, requested consent to record the conversation while maintaining participant anonymity in publication, and provided an overview of the discussion. Part II, the baseline questions, requested organizational information such as the length of the current Executive Director's tenure, organizational structure, the number of staff, and whether the organization had a Human Resources Department. Part III, discussion of Screening Tool responses, asked questions built upon the interviewee's survey responses, providing flowchart-like structure. For instance, different follow up questions were prepared for those who had answered "yes" to Screening Tool Question 1 than for those who had answered "no". This provided both consistency and flexibility to the Interviews.

Though the semi-structured set of questions was consistent, the interview setting and length of interviews varied. Of the 33 interviews completed, 31 were phone interviews, one interview was conducted in-person, and one interview was an email interview. The email interview was necessary to overcome a language barrier. Each phone and in-person interview was recorded using QuickTime Player version 10.4 and transcribed using Wreally Studio Incorporated's Transcribe software. All interviews were coded using QSR International's NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. More information on coding can be found in Chapter 4: Results.

Focus Group

After the Interviews were completed, interviewees who had indicated their organizations did not have succession plans and were planning to attend the Association Annual Conference in June 2016 were invited via email to participate in a Focus Group. The Focus Group took place on Wednesday, June 8, 2016 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Miami, FL. Planning details for the Focus Group, including materials, research objectives, schedule of the day, and Focus Group rules can be found in Appendix F. The Focus Group research objective was to understand the positions of organizations without succession plans through dynamic discussion. This focuses on understanding participant perception of succession planning as it does or does not relate to public gardens; participant position of not having a formal plan including, but not limited to, barriers or reservations on approaching the subject; and what would be most helpful for future transitions.

On the morning of the Focus Group, a reminder email was sent to each of the nine participants planning to attend. Eight participants attended the Focus Group (See Table 4) and each participant signed a waiver upon arrival (Appendix G). The waiver stated participation would be anonymous in nature unless the primary researcher specifically asked to include a direct quote, requiring the explicit permission of the participant. In preparation for the Focus Group, a set of semi-structured discussion questions was created with 3 parts (Appendix H).

The Focus Group session was recorded using QuickTime Player version 10.4, transcribed using Wreally Studio Incorporated's Transcribe software, and coded using QSR International's NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. More information on coding can be found in the Chapter 4: Results.

Table 4 Eight Association institutional member organizations were represented in the Focus Group session

Focus Group Garden	Participant Position	Geographic Region
Garden 1	Executive Director	Mid-Atlantic
Garden 2	Executive Director	International
Garden 3	Director	Mid-Atlantic
Garden 4	Director	Mid-Atlantic
Garden 5	President and CEO	Northeast
Garden 6	Director	Interior West
Garden 7	Executive Director	Mid-Atlantic
Garden 8	Associate Director	Pacific

* Seven out of eight participating gardens had annual operating budgets between \$1-10 Million. 1 garden had an annual operating budget between the range of \$151,000-\$999,999.

As a result of the Focus Group discussion, one participant was later contacted, because the participant’s organization had plans to begin a succession planning process. Due to the private and sensitive nature of this process, the primary researcher was unable to include the garden’s activity as a Case Study. However, the participant granted a meeting to discuss projections for the plan and progress made to date, which is featured as an Alternative Case Study.

Case Studies

After the Interviews were completed, interviewees who had indicated their organizations currently have succession plans were invited via email to participate as Case Studies. A document titled “Scope of Work” (Appendix I) was attached to each email invitation and outlined the research in general and how the Case Studies would be executed specifically.

The research objective of the Case Studies was to assess how public gardens utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries. In

terms of format, each Case Study included a series of selective, recorded interviews within that organization. Persons of interest within each organization to be interviewed included the garden's Executive Director, a Board member most closely associated with the succession plan, a senior leader other than the Executive Director most closely associated with the succession plan, and any other pertinent persons involved in plan, if recommended by the garden. Case Studies were conducted in person.

In preparation for the Case Studies, sets of discussion questions were created in semi-structured format for each interview classification including Board members (Appendix J, first page), Executive Directors (Appendix J, second page), senior leaders (Appendix J, third page), and other persons of interest as recommended by each case study garden (Appendix J, fourth page). Questions 1-7 for Executive Directors were sourced from William J. Rothwell's 2010 book *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*.

Until this point, all research methods, including the Screening Tool, the Interviews, and the Focus Group had been anonymous with no direct quotes attributed to individuals or organizations. Therefore, attention was called to a section within the scope of work referred to as the "degree of recognition". It specified that Case Studies could be used to provide quotes verbatim. Concerning the sensitive nature of succession planning and the potentially private staffing details that could have potentially risen in interviews, the following degree of recognition was utilized: a garden's participation as a Case Study allows the organization's succession planning experience to be fully recognized, but anonymous in nature (i.e. garden name and staff names will not be listed); details such as geographic location (i.e. Mid-Atlantic, Pacific), budget size (small, medium, large), and position titles (i.e. Executive

Director, manager) may be referenced; it is the organization’s prerogative to define the extent to which succession-planning documentation may be referenced (i.e. all names in documents must be redacted vs. available to share in published materials in its entirety); and, finally, the garden name may be listed as a resource among all gardens that have contributed to this research though they will not be highlighted specifically as Case Studies. Despite this option, all Case Studies decided to allow their names and titles to be featured in this research.

All five gardens approached to participate as Case Studies willingly agreed to participate (See Table 5). Email correspondences between the primary researcher and participating garden directors, supported by data from Interviews, determined Board and staff members to be interviewed as well as interview dates and times. Case Studies were recorded using QuickTime Player version 10.4 and transcribed using Wreally Studio Incorporated’s Transcribe software. Due to the intensive nature of the Case Studies, an extensive analysis and discussion is expected to address the application of succession planning principles in a variety of Association member gardens.

Table 5 Five Association institutional member organizations participated as Case Studies, each of which had an established or developing succession plan

Garden	Positions Interviewed	Geographic Region
John J. Tyler Arboretum	Board Chair Executive Director Office Manager	Mid-Atlantic
The North Carolina Arboretum	Board Member Executive Director Chief Business and Operations Officer Senior Director, Mission Delivery Director For Human Resources	Southeast

Green Bay Botanical Garden	Former Board Chair Board Vice Chair Board Director Executive Director Director of Development Director of Horticulture	Mid-west
Desert Botanical Garden	Board Member: Transition Committee Executive Director Director of Development Deputy Director	Interior West
Descanso Gardens	Board Member: Transition Committee Chair Board Member: Transition Committee Executive Director	Pacific

* Four out of the five gardens had annual operating budgets between \$1-10 Million. 1 garden had an annual operating budget between the range of \$151,000-\$999,999.

Alternative Case Study

An Alternative Case Study was conducted in addition to the Case Studies. Mt. Cuba Center, a Mid-Atlantic public garden, is in the early stages of developing its succession plan and, therefore, preferred to share its progress as of October 2016 through a 60-minute interview with the Executive Director and Human Resources Manager. The differences between the Case Studies and the Alternative Case Study approach include the absence of a Board member interview and that the interview did not follow the exact format of the Case Study discussion questions. However, the discussion yielded much of the same information queried in the Case Studies. While this data was not collected in an identical manner to the Case Studies, the committee viewed the data as relevant to the field of public horticulture and elected to include it within this research.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The results of the combined Screening Tool, Interviews, Focus Group, and Case Studies data yielded information about the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the American Public Gardens Association (the Association) membership. The results represent data most relevant to the scope of this project, as decided by the author and the Thesis Committee.

Screening Tool

The research objective of the Screening Tool was to identify potential research participants and to gather a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens within the Association membership. The Screening Tool questions can be found in Appendix C and the results of the survey can be found in Appendix D.

Of the 86 responses to Question 1: “Does your organization have a succession plan in place?” 19 responded ‘yes’, 63 responded ‘no’, and 4 responded ‘unsure’.

Of the 82 responses to Question 2: “Have you had to exercise your succession plan in the past 5-10 years?” 18 responded ‘yes’, 57 responded ‘no’, and 7 responded ‘unsure’.

Respondents who answered ‘yes’ to Question 3: “Would you be willing to discuss your organization's experiences (such as developing a succession plan, identifying critical competencies, conducting an executive-level search, and/or creating professional development opportunities for senior staff, etc.)?” were invited

to provide their name, organization, and preferred contact information. This allowed research participants to self-identify, ending the survey's previous anonymity. Of the 82 responses to Question 3, 46 responded 'yes' and 36 responded 'no'. It should be noted that while 46 responded 'yes', nine did not provide contact information.

Screening Tool Summary

In summary, the Screening Tool was successful in achieving its research objectives including the identification of potential research participants and building a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens. After the Screening Tool closed, Interviews were scheduled with 33 of the 37 respondents who self-identified as willing to discuss their organization's experiences with succession planning and provided their contact information. The remaining four respondents were unresponsive to interview requests.

Interviews

The research objectives of the Interviews were to provide greater insight to the responses of the Screening Tool and to gain an understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan. The Interview questions, which were organized into three parts, can be found in Appendix E and were posed to the 33 interviewees who participated in the Screening Tool and one who had not originally participated in the Screening Tool; this individual was identified by the Thesis Committee as a representative of a potential Case Study garden.

Data collected during the Interview process, which was audio-recorded and transcribed, was coded using NVivo, qualitative data analysis software. In addition to the participants' direct responses, supplementary data emerged through thematic

content analysis, a process through which reoccurring themes identified as significant are coded.

Parts I and II of Interviews

Part I provided orientation to the interview process and, therefore, did not yield data. Part II, a series of baseline questions, requested organizational information such as the length of the current Executive Director’s tenure, organizational structure, the number of staff, and whether the organization had a Human Resources Department.

Table 9 indicates Part II responses.

Table 6 Responses to Part II of the Interviews including data on each organization’s current executive director’s tenure, organizational structure, number of staff, and human resources department

Garden Attributes		Percentage of Responses
Current Executive Director’s Tenure	5 Years or Less	41%
	6-15 Years	35%
	16-30+	24%
Organizational Structure	Independent	59%
	Institution of Higher Education	26%
	Municipal	15%
Number of Staff	10 or Less	35%
	11-50	50%
	51-100+	15%
Human Resources Department	Yes; Director's Responsibility	21%
	Yes; Designated Individual	35%
	Yes; Higher Function	32%
	No	12%

Tenure

The length of the current Executive Director's tenure was queried to provide insight as to where an organization may be in its Leadership Life Cycle. According to the leadership literature, "Leadership has a life cycle. There is a time when a leader is "born," a time when he or she grows, matures, and finally reaches legacy" (Orr 2014). Part II indicates 41% of participants had tenure of five years or less, 35% of participants had tenure of 6-15 years, and 24% of participants had tenure of 16-30+ years. According to the responses, the average tenure is 10.72 years.

Organizational Structure

The Association membership is varied in terms of organizational structure. Organizational structure was queried to provide insight as to the degree of administrative control an organization may have in its approach to succession planning. Part II indicates that 59% of participating organizations are independent, that is, not affiliated with an institution of higher education (i.e. college, university) or municipality, 26% are affiliated with an institution of higher education, and 15% are affiliated with municipalities.

Number of Staff

The number of staff within each organization was queried to provide insight as to what influences an organization's approach to succession planning. Part II indicates that 35% of participating organizations have less than 10 employees, 50% of participating organizations have 11-50 employees, and 15% of participating organizations have 51-100+ employees.

Human Resources

Succession planning, though primarily the responsibility of the Board, is a subject often associated with human resources. The presence of a Human Resources Department was queried to provide insight as to how likely succession planning is to arise as a critical issue in long-term organizational development. Part II indicates that 21% of participating organizations allocate human resources as the Executive Director's responsibility, 35% of participating organizations have a designated individual responsible for human resources, 32% of participating organizations have a Human Resources Department through an affiliation, and 12% of participating organizations do not have a formalized human resources presence.

Part III of Interviews

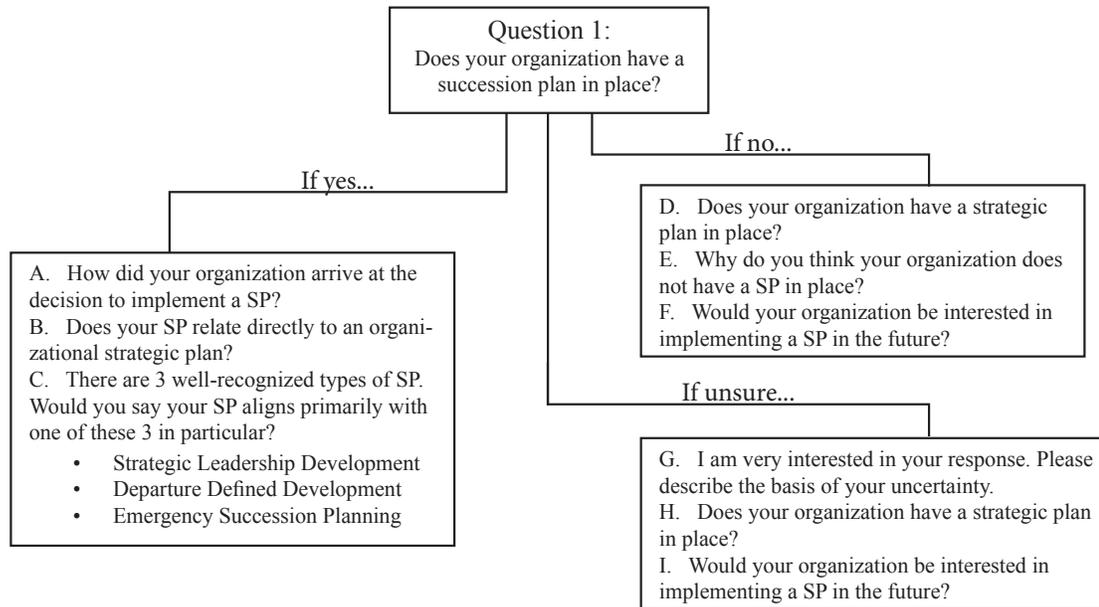
Part III discussed the first two questions posed within the Screening Tool:

1. Does your organization have a succession plan in place?
2. Have you had to exercise your succession plan in the past 5-10 years?

Part III included follow-up questions based upon the interviewee's Screening Tool responses, providing flowchart-like structure. For instance, different follow-up questions were prepared for those who had answered "yes" to question 1 than for those who had answered "no". Because the interviews were semi-structured, not every question was asked and answered in the same order, allowing for more natural discussion between researcher and participant. The following data is qualitative in nature and the product of thematic content analysis, captured in NVivo, to form collective answers.

Screening Tool Question 1: Does your organization have a succession plan (SP) in place?

Figure 1 Discussions about Screening Tool Question 1 included follow-up questions



Respondents who answered “yes” to Question 1, indicating their organization had a succession plan, were asked three follow-up questions:

- A. How did your organization arrive at the decision to implement a succession plan?
- B. Does your succession plan relate directly to an organizational strategic plan?
- C. There are 3 well-recognized types of succession planning. Would you say your succession plan aligns primarily with one of these 3 in particular?
 - Strategic Leadership Development
 - Departure Defined Development
 - Emergency Succession Planning

A. How did your organization arrive at the decision to implement a succession plan?

The first follow-up question elicited two primary responses: the desire to improve upon past leadership transition processes and the desire to build leadership throughout the organization. Some organizations felt the most recent leadership transition or transitions could have been orchestrated with more clarity and structure. For instance, organizations whose former leaders had been in place for multiple decades had not needed to engage in a transition before and, therefore, felt ill-prepared to execute the task effectively.

The second primary response, which is not mutually exclusive from the first, stems from lessons learned in past transitions to extend leadership throughout the organization and a desire to build leadership capacity. A shared opinion was that when an Executive Director is relied upon too heavily, the transition of a single person can greatly impact an organization. Responding organizations indicated a need to change their approach to leadership by more appropriately distributing responsibilities and empowering employees at multiple levels.

B. Does your succession plan relate directly to an organizational strategic plan?

The second follow-up question yielded primarily affirmative responses. Seen as a measure in risk management and organizational development, some viewed succession planning as a way to find new leadership while others viewed succession planning as a long-term, capacity-building tool, rather than a replacement plan focused solely on the Executive Director. Some organizations indicated a desire to more closely associate their succession plans with strategic plans, but have intentionally delayed this step, because the succession plan was not yet shared with the whole organization.

C. There are 3 well-recognized types of succession planning. Would you say your succession plan aligns primarily with one of these 3 in particular?

- *Strategic Leadership Development*
- *Departure Defined Development*
- *Emergency Succession Planning*

The third follow-up question yielded inconsistent results. The majority of respondents indicated their motivation for creating a succession plan stemmed from a previous leadership transition; therefore, their first approach to succession planning emphasized Departure Defined Development. For many, this form of succession planning had not previously been documented and was dealt with on an as needed basis. However, over time, some of the respondents' succession plans matured to include aspects of Emergency Succession Planning and Strategic Leadership Development. Such decisions were inspired by a desire to shift from a reactive culture to a proactive planning culture.

Respondents who answered “no” to Question 1, indicating their organization did not have a succession plan, were asked three follow-up questions:

- D. Does your organization have a strategic plan in place?
- E. Why do you think your organization does not have a succession plan in place?
- F. Would your organization be interested in implementing a succession plan in the future?

D. Does your organization have a strategic plan in place?

The first follow-up question yielded mostly affirmative answers. Despite differences in length, most within a 3-10 year range, strategic planning was a regular practice to most and a new initiative to few. Regarded as a best practice for nonprofit

organizations, the strategic planning process proved to be a useful, yet resource-intensive experience. Incorporating a succession plan, many felt, could be a viable next step, but only in the future, when the strategic planning process became more routinely maintained.

E. Why do you think your organization does not have a succession plan in place?

The second follow-up question yielded varied reasons. First, those affiliated with an institution of higher education or a municipal facility felt restricted by affiliation regulations; most felt if their organization were independent, that they would have a succession plan in place. Independent respondents cited their own challenges including being both personally uneducated in the succession planning process and uncomfortable broaching the subject with their respective Boards. Finally, some organizations simply had not given thought to the idea of formalizing a plan, especially if it was relatively young and new to the Association membership.

F. Would your organization be interested in implementing a succession plan in the future?

The third follow-up question yielded a majority of affirmative responses. A common reason cited for this interest included the anticipation of a high volume of tenured employees planning to retire in the near future; this included and extended beyond the Executive Director position. Additionally, those interested in succession planning conveyed they finally felt their organization had recovered from the effects of the recession, which, for many, included organization-wide restructuring, loss of personnel, and financial instability. A minority of responses did not express interest in

implementing a succession plan in the future, because they felt human resources had higher priorities to maintain.

Respondents who answered “unsure” to Question 1, indicating they were uncertain whether their organizations had a succession plan, were asked three follow-up questions:

- G. I am very interested in your response. Please describe the basis of your uncertainty
- H. Does your organization have a strategic plan in place?
- I. Would your organization be interested in implementing a SP in the future?

G. I am very interested in your response. Please describe the basis of your uncertainty.

After discussing their uncertainty, respondents who initially answered “unsure” to Screening Tool Question 1, indicated their organizations did not have succession plans in place.

H. Does your organization have a strategic plan in place?

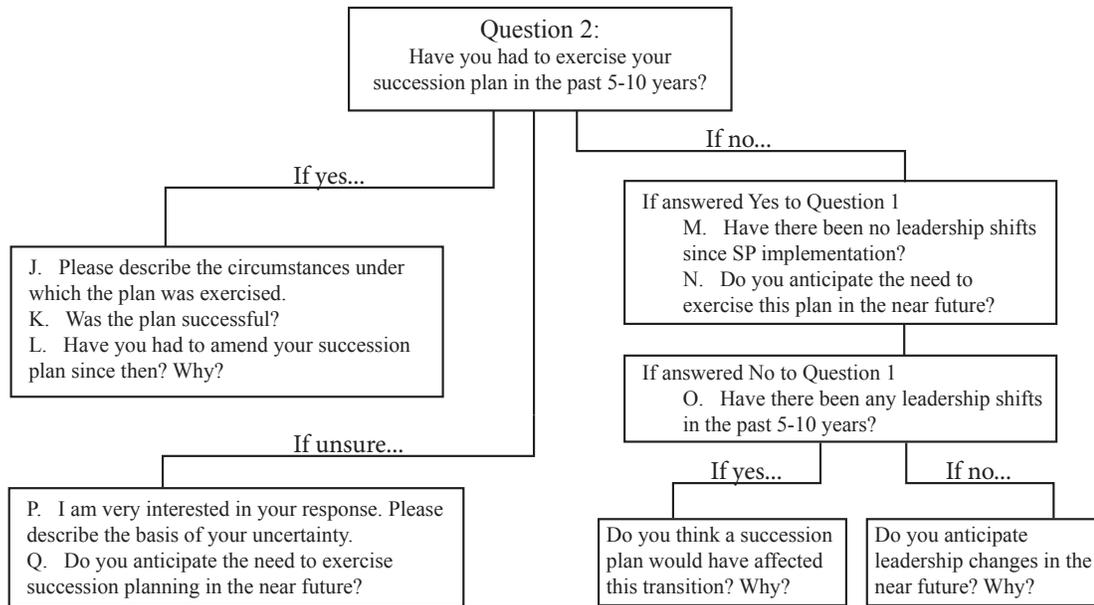
Responses were similar to those outlined in follow-up question D.

I. Would your organization be interested in implementing a succession plan in the future?

Responses were similar to those outlined in follow-up question F.

Screening Tool Question 2: Have you had to exercise your succession plan in the past 5-10 years?”

Figure 2 Discussions about Screening Tool Question 2 included follow-up questions



Respondents who answered “yes” to Question 2, indicating they have had to exercise their succession plan in the past 5-10 years, were asked three follow-up questions:

- J. Please describe the circumstances under which the plan was exercised.
- K. Was the plan successful?
- L. Have you had to amend your succession plan since then? Why?

J. Please describe the circumstances under which the plan was exercised.

The first follow-up question yielded responses indicating continuous edits and updates to the plan, rather than testing the effectiveness of the plan during a transition. This negates the second follow-up question (K) and answers the third follow-up question (L).

Respondents who answered “yes” to Question 1, and “no” to Question 2, indicating they have a succession plan, but have not had to exercise it in the past 5-10 years, were asked two follow-up questions:

- M. Have there been any leadership shifts since succession plan implementation?

N. Do you anticipate the need to exercise this plan in the near future?

M. Have there been any leadership shifts since succession plan implementation?

The first follow-up question yielded a unified response: each organization's formalized succession plan was less than three years old and had yet to be tested under the circumstances of a leadership transition.

N. Do you anticipate the need to exercise this plan in the near future?

The second follow-up question yielded affirmative responses; this included and extended beyond the Executive Director position. While some succession plans were written specifically for an anticipated executive transition, others acknowledged the potential for transition at any given time and prepared for such an event through Strategic Leadership Development.

Respondents who answered "no" to Question 1, and "no" to Question 2, indicating they did not have a succession plan and have not had to exercise it in the past 5-10 years, were asked three follow-up questions:

O. Have there been any leadership shifts in the past 5-10 years?

- If yes: Do you think a succession plan would have affected this transition? Why?
- If no: Do you anticipate leadership changes in the near future? Why?

O. Have there been any leadership shifts in the past 5-10 years?

Respondents indicating there had been a leadership shift in the past 5-10 years responded in two ways. First, those affiliated with an institution of higher education

did not feel a succession plan would have been possible given affiliation regulations and, therefore, a plan would not have affected the leadership transition. This was also true for organizations that had initially appointed an interim leader who eventually assumed the role permanently.

Conversely, independent organizations speculated a succession plan might have provided clarity to the transition process and could have potentially avoided gaps between leaders. The latter was featured prominently in transition accounts, many of which would have preferred the exiting leader to assist in the transition of the successor. The majority of respondents without succession planning experience indicated uncertainty in regards to how impactful a succession plan may or may not have been.

Respondents who answered “unsure” to Question 2, indicating they were uncertain whether their organizations had exercised their plans, were asked two follow-up questions:

P. I am very interested in your response. Please describe the basis of your uncertainty

Q. Do you anticipate the need to exercise succession planning in the near future?

P. I am very interested in your response. Please describe the basis of your uncertainty.

After discussing their uncertainty, respondents who initially answered “unsure” to Screening Tool Question 1, indicated their organizations did not have succession plans in place.

Q. Do you anticipate the need to exercise succession planning in the near future?

Responses were similar to those outlined in follow-up question O.

Summary of the Interviews

In summary, the Interview method was successful in achieving its research objectives to provide greater insight to the responses of the Screening Tool and to gain a preliminary understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan. After the Interviews were completed, interviewees who indicated their organizations currently did not have succession plans were invited to participate as Focus Group participants at the 2016 Association annual conference in Miami, Florida. Interviewees who indicated their organizations currently have succession plans were invited to participate as Case Studies.

Focus Group

The research objectives for the Focus Group included gaining an understanding of participant perception of succession planning as it does or does not relate to public gardens; participant position of not having a formal plan including, but not limited to, barriers or reservations on approaching the subject; and what would be most helpful for future transitions. The Focus Group Planning document, which outlines the roles of the primary researcher and Thesis Committee member Richard King, can be found in Appendix F and the participant waiver can be found in Appendix G. The Focus Group questions, which were semi-structured and organized into 3 parts, can be found in Appendix H.

Data collected in the 60-minute session, which was audio-recorded at the 2016 Association annual conference in Miami, Florida and later transcribed, was coded using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. In addition to the eight participants' direct responses, supplementary data emerged through thematic content analysis, a process through which reoccurring themes identified as significant are coded.

Part I of Focus Group: Engagement Questions

Part I included two “Engagement questions” to make participants feel welcome and begin the discussion. They include:

1. Please introduce yourself (name, position, organization) and answer the question, “If you won the lottery tomorrow, currently valued at \$110 million, would you quit your job?”
2. When you think about succession planning, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

Question 1: Please introduce yourself (name, position, organization) and answer the question, “If you won the lottery tomorrow, currently valued at \$110 million, would you quit your job?”

The first question was intended to provide introduction, to create an open, relaxed environment, and to introduce the concept of leadership transition in a positive, non-threatening way. Seven out of eight participants responded that they would maintain their position rather than retire; the outlier vowed to support the garden in other ways. The widely shared reason for this response was reiterated multiple times: the participants genuinely enjoyed their jobs and “have never been in it for the money”.

Question 2: When you think about succession planning, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

The second question elicited apprehensive responses that indicated uncertainty and doubt in succession planning effectiveness. Discussion surrounding the dangers of relying too heavily on a formalized plan highlighted the need for flexibility and the agreement that, at best, succession planning provides a projection for future organizational needs. The participants characterized succession planning as an inflexible plan that outlined the chain-of-command and focused on talent replacement.

Part II of Focus Group: Exploration Questions

Part II included six “Exploration questions,” which included a hypothetical scenario and other discussion questions focused on experiences among participants:

3. The following is a hypothetical scenario regarding unexpected leadership change:
 - After 30 years of successfully leading a nonprofit organization, the CEO is looking forward to retirement. His informally assumed predecessor, a Development Officer who has worked with him for 10 years, suddenly elects to take a position with a different organization. With a combined 40 years of institutional knowledge soon to be gone, the CEO and Board are at a loss for how to plan for the organization’s future.
 - In this scenario, what concerns you most? Where would you begin?
4. Think back to an experience in your own career where there has been an unexpected change in leadership. Can you account for this experience?
5. What are the barriers or opportunities you see regarding succession planning?
6. How can we make the information on succession planning in public gardens more accessible?
7. How could we make succession planning a higher priority in our organizations? (Both from the standpoint of implementation or a simple initiation of discussion)
8. Leadership in many gardens felt they practiced succession planning as part of their organizational culture, rather than reliance on a formal document. What do you think of this practice? What do you like about it, what don't you like about it?

Question 3: The following is a hypothetical scenario regarding unexpected leadership change:

- After 30 years of successfully leading a nonprofit organization, the CEO is looking forward to retirement. His informally assumed

predecessor, a Development Officer who has worked with him for 10 years, suddenly elects to take a position with a different organization. With a combined 40 years of institutional knowledge soon to be gone, the CEO and Board are at a loss for how to plan for the organization's future.

- In this scenario, what concerns you most? Where would you begin?

This sparked a discussion, which began weighing the benefits of internal versus external hires and evolved into a discussion of communication. The first instinct of many was to immediately hire a search firm to guide the selection process. Most welcomed the opportunity of new leadership at multiple levels, especially since the outgoing leadership had seasoned tenure.

The rise in leaders with a breadth of experience, rather than specialists who have only ever worked in one organization, was a trend that lent itself to the necessity of external hiring; this concept was termed as a “generalist” within the Focus Group. Alternatively, one participant mused that if a strategic plan had recently been created, it could be advantageous for an internal candidate to assume the leadership role, at least in an interim capacity, to carry out this newly established vision. However, if a strategic plan was not in place, the organization may not have clear vision and direction, making the leadership selection process even more challenging.

Both sides of the discussion were unified on one major flaw within the scenario's organization: lack of communication. Having had stable leadership tenure for 30 years, it seemed surprising to the group that the Executive Director and the Board's conversation about the Development Officer's future never included the Officer. Additionally, the participants felt a larger conversation was missing: an assessment of strengths and weaknesses throughout staff levels.

The group identified two issues. First, rather than relying on the career path of one staff member, the Board and Executive Director should have proactively identified multiple possibilities for a successor; if only one internal option was suitable, steps to engage in an external search should have been identified beforehand. Second, rather than hinge the future of an organization on one or two people, create layers of resilience by developing staff members at all levels; this way, in the event of a transition, there are many pillars to support the organization. This discussion was the foundation for discussion in Question 5.

Question 4: Think back to an experience in your own career where there has been an unexpected change in leadership. Can you account for this experience?

This discussion became an extension of the previous question in that it brought forth an example of internal succession. In this example, the participant had been a member of the staff when the leader of his organization had exited the leadership role. Despite his lack of interest in seeking the leadership position, the participant was asked to fulfill the role in an interim capacity. The Board engaged in a nationwide search, but was unsuccessful in identifying a new leader. In the meantime, the interim leader had kept the organization on track, successfully facilitating the organization's strategic planning efforts during this transitional period. The Board eventually came to the decision that while it had done its due diligence in reviewing the external talent available, that the best fit for the position turned out to be the interim leader. When the decision was made to change his status from interim to permanent, the whole organization felt confident in the selection simply because the Board took all options into account. The lesson, he explained, is the next leader is not necessarily a question

of internal or external candidates, but rather a question of what qualities are needed to carry the organization forward.

Question 5: What are the barriers or opportunities you see regarding succession planning?

This yielded responses similarly expressed in the Interviews. The majority of the participants led organizations affiliated with either an institution of higher education or a municipal facility; therefore, they were required to abide by the hiring regulations of those affiliations. Perceiving succession plans as inflexible and linear, for many it was a challenge to even speculate how a succession plan might be possible for their organizations, especially if more than one position vacated simultaneously. This led to a discussion of whether formalized plans were as useful as informal plans, which was Question 6 in this session. Many group members agreed that during times of low transition, that a formalized succession plan could work; however, many expect their organizations to lose three or more staff members to retirement in the near future and questioned the usefulness of a formalized, linear plan. Ultimately, it was agreed upon that a formalized succession plan could be a projection at best, and the most effective way to ensure readiness for a transition is to continuously develop staff at all levels.

Question 6: How can we make the information on succession planning in public gardens more accessible?

This yielded three primary suggestions. The first was to provide an anecdotal understanding of the extent to which other gardens are thinking about it as well as their approaches to succession planning. Another suggestion included a survey summary categorized by size so that gardens could observe approaches taken by

gardens of similar scale and resources. The final suggestion, which elicited the most enthusiasm from participants, was a panel session at a future Association conference.

Question 7: How could we make succession planning a higher priority in our organizations? (Both from the standpoint of implementation or a simple initiation of discussion?)

This elicited responses in line with the previously highlighted importance of staff development at every level. One participant recalled a point of discussion during the most recent Directors of Large Gardens Meeting, an annual event. The question of where to find the next generation of leaders, a long-standing concern, was posed, implying there may be leadership transition crisis. The response posited by the participant outlined the need to look inward by taking personal responsibility, as a leader, to develop one's own staff at every job level, suggesting that leadership should be perceived as a future talent need and it is the leader's responsibility to prepare staff accordingly. The participant reasoned, this does not necessarily mean requiring staff to enroll in leadership courses, but rather, allowing each staff member to develop a spectrum of skills so that at any given time, they feel empowered to take the next step in their careers. While this approach may cause more frequent instances of short-term transition, the participant conceded, if this became standard practice throughout the Association membership, it would create long-term benefits for every garden, much like the aphorism "a rising tide lifts all boats". The group then began to discuss succession planning as a strategic, long-term process focused more on the readiness and capacity of an organization in the event of leadership transition.

Question 8: Leadership in many gardens felt they practiced succession planning as part of their organizational culture, rather than reliance on a formal document. What do you think of this practice? What do you like about it, what don't you like about it?

This was addressed in the discussion of Question 3.

Part III of Focus Group: Exit Question

Part III, the “Exit question” allowed any thoughts not previously addressed in the discussion to be brought forth by participants. There were no responses.

Summary of the Focus Group

In summary, the Focus Group was successful in achieving its research objectives including gaining an understanding of participant perception of succession planning as it does or does not relate to public gardens; participants’ positions of not having a formal plan including, but not limited to barriers or reservations on approaching the subject; and what would be most helpful for future transitions.

Case Studies

The research objective of the Case Studies was to assess how public gardens utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries. The results of this method are outlined as individual Case Studies, each beginning with a “Garden Profile” and followed by an explanation of how and why each garden utilizes succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity.

One or more of the following approaches to succession planning have been taken in each of the Case Studies:

- Strategic Leadership Development

- Strategic Leadership Development is “an ongoing process that identifies the core competencies, skills and knowledge needed by the organization in the next five years along with a plan to develop those competencies in your existing talent or to recruit new talent” (Price 2008).
- Departure Defined Development
 - Departure Defined Development is “a course of action that Boards and executives employ when an executive begins thinking about leaving an organization” (Price 2008).
- Emergency Succession Planning
 - Emergency Succession Planning is “a plan to address an unanticipated departure of an Executive Director, usually occurring with only a few days or weeks notice” (Price 2008).

An Alternative Case Study is featured after the Case Studies; while this data was not collected in an identical manner to the Case Studies, the committee viewed the data as relevant to the field of public horticulture.

Case Study 1: John J. Tyler Arboretum

Table 7 John J. Tyler Arboretum Case Study Profile

John J. Tyler Arboretum	
Approach to Succession Planning	Strategic Leadership Development Departure Defined Development Emergency Succession Planning
Annual Operating Budget	\$151,000-\$999,999
Geographic Region	Mid-Atlantic
Executive Director Tenure	1 Year; Predecessor 23 Years
Organizational Structure	Independent
Number of Staff	27 Full Time Employees
Human Resources Department	Yes; Designated Individual (Staff Member)
Succession Document Available	Yes; Appendix K

Context

Founded in 1944, the John J. Tyler Arboretum, more commonly known as the Tyler Arboretum, is located in Media, Pennsylvania. Former Executive Director Rick Colbert served as the arboretum's leader from 1991 through 2014. Throughout his 23-year tenure, Rick's leadership transformed the organization, introduced a new era of growth and development, and fostered a sense of community reaching beyond the arboretum gates.

Unfortunately, towards the end of his tenure, Rick's health began to decline. In anticipation of his departure as Executive Director, Rick tasked the then Board Vice President, Shipley Allinson, to create a succession plan so that the leadership transition might proceed as smoothly as possible. Like many within the Tyler community, the news of Rick's declining health had personally impacted Shipley Allinson, a long-time friend of the former Executive Director. Despite this personal challenge, Shipley accepted the task of building a succession plan for the arboretum, his first goal as incoming President of the Board.

The Process

With limited succession planning experience, the Board formed a committee, which began researching best practices and guides. However, in the midst of this process, the former Executive Director and beloved friend to many on the Board and beyond, Rick Colbert, passed away in November 2014; he was 58 years old. Despite the weight of the circumstances, the committee continued to pursue the task Rick had entrusted to them. The great loss of a leader, coupled with limited financial resources and time, led the committee to a conclusion: whoever led in an interim capacity must be intimately familiar with the organization and willing to accept a cost-effective

salary. Rather than hire an external interim, the Board asked Shipley, the current Board President, to serve as interim Executive Director, which he did for eight months on a voluntary basis.

Shipley's decision to forgo the Executive Director's salary made certain financial resources available. This allowed the committee to hire an executive search firm, which not only conducted a nationwide search, but also assisted in the development of the succession plan itself. Despite the personal and professional challenges present in this circumstance, the committee worked carefully to both document processes and to determine the appropriate successor rather than hire a quick solution. Certain updates had to be made before advertising the position, including the position description, which had evolved tremendously in practice, but not had been regularly documented. On April 17, 2015 the arboretum publically announced their newly selected Executive Director, Landscape Architect Cricket Brien, who began her tenure on May 11, 2015.

The Succession Plan

At the time of this research, the Tyler Arboretum succession plan was about one year old; the document, which was generously provided by Executive Director Cricket Brien, can be found in Appendix K. All quoted passages in this Case Study, unless attributed to another resource, have been sourced directly from this document. While this succession plan was originally designed for the Executive Director position, the plan addresses all three types: Strategic Leadership Development, Departure Defined Development, and Emergency Succession Planning.

Strategic Leadership Development

While the succession plan focuses primarily on the succession of the Executive Director, the document begins by introducing a “Succession Plan for Staff Other Than the Executive Director”. It states, “the Executive Director shall be responsible for planning and executing succession plans for key staff positions. The Executive Director will prepare and submit to the Board the plan to fulfill the functions of the senior staff position in the event of an unplanned vacancy”.

Since the original document was created, the organization’s approach to Strategic Leadership Development has evolved; Human Resources Office Manager Kathryn Ombam has noted a culture shift more inclusive of professional development opportunities as well as consistent evaluation systems, which provide regular opportunities for staff to discuss career goals and pathways.

Departure Defined Development

In the event of a planned departure, Tyler’s succession plan outlines three primary points:

1. Key Transition Knowledge
2. Ability to Obtain Third Party Authorizations
3. Development of Communications Plan

1. Key Transition Knowledge

By including select leadership such as the Board and the Human Resources Office Manager in the documentation of key knowledge as it relates to the Executive Director’s responsibilities, the organization is not solely reliant upon the Executive Director, increasing its flexibility in the event of a leadership transition. The plan states, “the Office Manager, with the assistance of the Executive Director, shall

maintain a Transition Binder which has key information necessary to continue the operation of the Arboretum in the absence of the Executive Director” including an updated “organizational chart; staff, director, Board and key stakeholder information; financial information including Form 990’s; communications plan for an unplanned absence of the Executive Director; bank and other key third party relationships; status on pending projects; people accountable for the projects and other information that the Executive Director and Board president deem appropriate to include”.

2. Ability to Obtain Third Party Authorizations:

From a financial perspective, the plan identifies and empowers select leadership with access to banking information and other third party relationships, stating “the required authorizations and powers will be able to be assumed by the Board President, Treasurer and/or the interim Executive Director as appropriate under the circumstances, without authorization by the Executive Director”.

3. Development of Communications Plan:

In times of uncertainty, appropriately timed and authored communication with both internal and external stakeholders is imperative. “The purpose of the plan is to keep staff and all key stakeholders apprised of the situation and the Board’s actions regarding business continuity and filling the Executive Director vacancy”.

Emergency Succession Planning

The Tyler Arboretum plan states: “In the event of an unplanned vacancy of the Executive Director position, the first choice is to appoint an existing staff member as interim Executive Director per the procedures set forth below. In the event there is no

internal staff person the Board deems appropriate to serve as interim Executive Director, the Board may choose a Board member or conduct a search for an interim Executive Director. In the event a search is needed, the Executive Committee shall conduct the search and submit a candidate to the Board for its consideration”. Additional steps, complete with assigned responsibility, are outlined.

Before, During, and After the Search

In the event of a planned or unplanned leadership transition, the Board will take an active responsibility in searching for and selecting the new Executive Director. Before a Search Committee is formed, a full Board review of the job description, desired qualifications, salary range, and benefit package will be conducted. Beyond competencies and compensation, key questions with regards to organizational direction may include:

- “Do we want a different leadership model than in the past?
- Do we want to restructure the position in any significant ways or our expectations about key responsibilities of this position?”

Next, a Search Committee, led and selected by the Board President, will interview key stakeholders, establish a budget and timeline, consider hiring a recruitment firm, and set measures in place for the interview process. Regular communication on progress between the Committee and full Board is required, so that when the Committee recommends a candidate for Board consideration, all are informed.

Once the candidate accepts the Board President’s offer for the position of Executive Director, the Board is responsible for developing both a communications plan to inform all stakeholders of the decision as well as an onboarding plan for the

new leader. The onboarding plan will have “clear written performance objectives at periodic intervals over the first year...the new Executive Director shall be evaluated based on these performance objectives which will act as a guide for the person in the position and the Board. A 360 evaluation process is desirable to include in the evaluation process”. This is a crucial step in the leadership transition, which does not conclude as soon as the new Executive Director is hired. In addition to in-house support, Executive Director Cricket Brien has benefitted greatly from the advice and guidance of fellow public garden leaders and recommends seeking such connections during the transition period.

While the newly appointed Executive Director will have sole responsibility in the management of the organization, “if available, the departing Executive Director shall be retained for up to a two month time frame in a consulting role to assist and advice with fundraising and introductions to key stakeholders”. Thus, the exiting Executive Director will serve in an advisory capacity to the new Executive Director.

Next Steps

Since the original succession planning document was created, the organization’s approach to Strategic Leadership Development has evolved; Human Resources Office Manager Kathryn Ombam has noted a culture shift more inclusive of professional development opportunities as well as consistent evaluation systems, which provide regular opportunities for staff to discuss career goals and pathways.

In the midst of a comprehensive review of job descriptions for the succession plan resource document, Executive Director Cricket Brien feels a succession plan should include the most recent version of the organization’s strategic plan, as a guiding document addressing every aspect of operations, from staffing to capital

priorities. Also, in developing the binder, the succession planning effort may extend further beyond the Executive Director position to include more senior staff.

Key Takeaways from Tyler Arboretum Case Study

While interviewing Board President Shipley Allinson, he characterized the arboretum's circumstances as "unique" in that the Board was experiencing the weight of a Departure Defined turned Emergency Succession plan while creating the plan itself. As the organization's first experience with succession planning, arboretum representatives identified key takeaways gleaned in the process including:

- The onboarding process should not be underestimated. It should not be undervalued ... it is so critical to the success of your new leader.

- Shipley Allinson, Board President

- In my case, Board support and staff coaching – guidance, mentoring, encouragement, and patience – have been critical to my ability to succeed at Tyler, as I came from outside the public garden world. A resource that I have come to think somewhat necessary to my personal transition, and may be for others, is executive coaching that helps new leaders step into their roles as leaders of an organization – how best to work with staff, Board, external stakeholders, the community to inspire and galvanize a vision. Succession and transition takes several years, until a new leader fully "owns" his/her role, responsibilities, institutional priorities and has built the trust of the community to embrace their vision.

- Cricket Brien, Executive Director

- One of the most important parts of succession plan is how you communicate going forward, whether it's instantaneously or slowly.

- Shipley Allinson, Board President

- We were in the process of losing our leader when we realized we didn't have a plan. We did not want to hurry through it; we wanted to have a good one.

- Shipley Allinson, Board President

- An excellent thing to do is to remove all the intangible things, the emotions, from the situation so you can focus on what you can do tangibly and in what order it needs to happen to get the best and most relevant buy in from all constituents.

- Kathryn Ombam, Human Resources Office Manager

- I would really just relate it to any other planning. You have to make time.

- Kathryn Ombam, Human Resources Office Manager

- I'm convinced that no organization should be without one [a succession plan]. I really do think that in the public garden world, it just helps the transition to go smoothly, it provides the roadmap with the directions so you don't end up floundering, losing time, and creating hardships for any of the stakeholders.

- Shipley Allinson, Board President

- If I were to make a recommendation to other new leaders of organizations, it would be to identify a mentor outside the organization who can coach you and be a sounding Board; and to use the generous help that our public garden peers offer at every turn. I am astounded and grateful for the outreach and generosity of our public garden community at every level.

- Cricket Brien, Executive Director

Case Study 2: The North Carolina Arboretum

Table 8 The North Carolina Arboretum Case Study Profile

The North Carolina Arboretum	
Approach to Succession Planning	Departure Defined Development Emergency Succession Planning Strategic Leadership Development
Annual Operating Budget	\$1-10 Million
Geographic Region	Southeast

Executive Director Tenure	29 Years; Predecessor 1 Year (Interim)
Organizational Structure	Institution of Higher Education and Municipal Affiliation
Number of Staff	46 Full Time Employees
Human Resources Department	Yes; Designated Individual (Staff Member)
Succession Documents Available	Yes; Appendices L, M and N

Context

Established as an affiliate of the University of North Carolina by the State General Assembly in 1986, The North Carolina Arboretum is located in the Bent Creek Experimental Forest of the Pisgah National Forest and operates under a special use permit issued by the National Forests in North Carolina. Therefore, this arboretum is affiliated with an institution of higher education and a municipality. Given its complex bureaucratic ties, Executive Director George Briggs considers the arboretum fortunate not to have faced frequent leadership turnover. His predecessor, Dr. John Creech, served as part-time Interim-Executive Director in 1986 during the national search, which led to George in 1987. Therefore, in a sense, George is the first and only official Executive Director in The North Carolina Arboretum’s history.

The Process

Because of this leadership continuity, succession planning had not been a topic of discussion throughout the arboretum’s history. It was after the University of North Carolina system embarked on a strategic planning effort in 2013 that the arboretum undertook its most recent strategic planning process in response. Like many public gardens during the recession, the arboretum suffered financially and had to restructure its staff; as the arboretum recovered, the arboretum grew in complexity and size. To ensure its continued progression, the arboretum’s strategic plan included a goal of

reducing risk for the organization. A stated objective within that goal was “*Maintain leadership succession plan,*” which was intended to reduce risks associated with changes in leadership at every level of the organization.

The Succession Plan

The North Carolina Arboretum Succession Planning and Readiness document, which was generously provided by Executive Director George Briggs, can be found in Appendix L. During the Interviews, it was stated that the succession readiness culture had been established between 2010-2013; the process, however, was formalized in 2016. All quoted passages in this Case Study, unless attributed to another resource, have been sourced directly from this document.

Departure Defined Development/Emergency Succession Planning

The North Carolina Arboretum is affiliated with an institution of higher education; therefore, in the event of a planned or unplanned vacancy at the executive level, the arboretum must adhere to the regulations set forth by the University of North Carolina. The process is as follows:

- “The UNC President will present the Arboretum Board of Directors with a charge, outlining the qualities, skills and abilities he or she would like to see in the next Arboretum leader.
- The President may also instruct the Board as to the number of applicants that he or she will interview for her final hiring recommendation to the UNC system Board of Governors. The President may also delegate elements of the process to the Arboretum Board of Directors.
- The President in consultation with the Board may appoint an interim leader if necessary, and the Board of Directors may elect to

secure the services of a search firm in identifying, informing and processing candidates for the position.”

Despite the limitations of the University system, the arboretum builds readiness into its Board members as well as its staff; the latter is explained in Strategic Leadership Development. If called upon to serve as interim leader, the Chair of the Board possesses government work experience and would, therefore, be able to navigate the arboretum’s bureaucratic ties. Similarly, key governing roles on the Board are poised to contribute connections and experience in the event of a transition.

Strategic Leadership Development

In the late 1990s, the garden transitioned from its start-up phase to one of organizational development. Wanting to build a continuous improvement culture, the arboretum leadership evolved to include a Leadership Team, which distributed decision-making authority to five people, including the Executive Director and four others. The continuous improvement culture continues to exist today, as outlined in the 2020 Management Plan, found in Appendix M.

In 2013, arboretum leadership evolved again resulting in the concept of Strategy Council. “The three-person Strategy Council represents the oversight of the various elements of the Arboretum – mission delivery, public engagement and finance and operations. These three leaders operate as a team, in concert with the Executive Director, and have the responsibility and authority to make sound decisions collectively and individually in the best interests of the Arboretum.” Figure 3 represents the structure of the Strategy Council, which is intentionally separate from human resources; the full organizational chart can be found in Appendix N.

Figure 3 The Strategy Council Structure, adjacent to human resources



The decision to distribute authority throughout the Strategy Council not only allows the organization to be nimble in its decision making, but also ready in the event of a leadership transition. “A key role of the Strategy Council format is to serve as a source of management continuity while a new leader acclimates, as well as a source of trusted counsel and perspective in the hiring process.” Therefore, if the Executive Director elected to retire in a moment’s notice, the arboretum would lose little momentum. In fact, each of the Strategy Council members has served as Acting Executive Director when needed, a testament to its flexibility.

The design of the Strategy Council has become so central to the order of operations, that succession efforts have been put into place for the council as well. Because “all are state employees and as such, are subject to the proscribed advertising and hiring process characteristic of a public agency,” pre-selecting for a new or open position is not permissible. However, the arboretum invests in and professionally develops staff at all levels so that they may compete for a position. This falls within responsibilities managed by the Director of Human Resources, Amy Owenby, who reports directly to the Executive Director.

As an advocate for all staff members, Amy strives to remain separate from the Strategy Council, participating only in the occasional advisory role. Having worked previously in the University of North Carolina system for eight years, Amy is able to

bridge the connection between university policy and arboretum staff development. For instance, while she concedes that the inability to pre-select can be a challenge, Amy encourages coaching techniques, especially as a way to develop the millennial generation seeking career flexibility. From her perspective, one way to provide personal flexibility to the millennial and organizational flexibility to the arboretum is to introduce millennials to a variety of work experiences. If the arboretum retains the learner, the organization becomes more flexible in that more than one individual is equipped to step-up in an absence; if the learner leaves to take an external position, the field of public horticulture is enriched by the addition of a well-rounded professional. Additionally, it is possible they will return to the arboretum as well, again contributing to the flexibility of the organization.

Key Takeaways from The North Carolina Arboretum Case Study

Affiliated with both an institution of higher education and a municipality, the North Carolina Arboretum is required to abide by affiliation regulations. To bolster readiness in the event of a leadership transition, the arboretum has established methods conducive to continuity through cultivation of staff and Board. As the organization's first experience with discussing its succession strategies in depth outside of its own leadership and governance structure, arboretum representatives identified key takeaways gleaned during the process of this study including:

- I think if there was a lot of turnover in the leadership, it would have been very chaotic, because it's a long learning curve to deal with what is entailed in our [bureaucratic] processes.

- *George Briggs, Executive Director*

- The concept of having a Strategy Council, reducing the size of the team from 4 to 3, has resulted in our becoming much more nimble in how we manage and more expedient in making decisions.

- *George Briggs, Executive Director*

- One of the things that I have observed over many years during my career is that organizations that have a long time leader, particularly their first leader...when that leader has been in place for a long time and eventually leaves the organization, the person following them has a very difficult role to play, in my opinion. The organization has only known that one original leader. And so, when the new leader comes in and makes changes that are warranted, sometimes a lot of resistance ensues, because the culture has been set up and has acclimated to revolve around the habits of the original leader. I try to be very conscious of that fact in my role as that original Executive Director, and have tried to be mindful throughout my tenure here, even from the beginning during the 1980s. So, part of the basis for the former Leadership Team, and currently the Strategy Council, was to create a culture that is not solely dependent on one leader. I want the institution to be a managed, sustainable organization, and not “the George Briggs Arboretum.”

- *George Briggs, Executive Director*

- I want them [the Strategy Council] to make decisions. I want them to have both the responsibility and the authority to make sound decisions.

- *George Briggs, Executive Director*

- We had certain criteria [for the human resources position]. One of which was State and University awareness, but we also wanted someone to be able to walk into a room of HR directors from universities and hold credibility.

- *George Briggs, Executive Director*

- The newer generation prefers more flexibility, which is completely counterintuitive to what the baby boomers expect. So when I look at succession planning, I have to consider that.

- *Amy Owenby, Director of Human Resources*

Case Study 3: Green Bay Botanical Garden

Table 9 Green Bay Botanical Garden Case Study Profile

Green Bay Botanical Garden	
Approach to Succession Planning	Strategic Leadership Development Emergency Succession Planning Departure Defined Development
Annual Operating Budget	\$1-10 Million
Geographic Region	Mid-west
Executive Director Tenure	8 Years; Predecessor 3.5 Years
Organizational Structure	Independent
Number of Staff	15 Full Time Employees
Human Resources Department	Yes; Designated Individual (Board)
Succession Documents Available	Yes; Appendices O and P

Context

First opened to the public in 1996, Green Bay Botanical Garden is an independent nonprofit organization. Executive Director Susan Garot, whose background is in hospitality, has led the organization since 2008. The decision to begin a succession planning effort stemmed from a period of frequent leadership turnover within the organization's recent history. With the intent of attracting talent that could provide long-term leadership continuity, the garden completed a compensation analysis to ensure that the Executive Director's salary was competitive and attractive to the external market. Board member Julia Johnson, who works for a human resources and organizational consulting firm, completed the analysis pro bono. Similarly, Julia applied her professional resources through her company's succession management and talent assessment process, which she scaled to fit the garden's size and nonprofit status.

The Process

A draft outline of the process can be found in Appendix O. The process of creating the succession plan began by reviewing the organizational structure, identifying talent gaps, and evaluating staff alignment as it related to mission delivery. A planning effort such as this, Julia posited, can only be successful with a clear strategy and direction. As a result of the review, the positions identified as most consequential or mission-critical were the Executive Director, Director of Horticulture, Director of Development, and Manager of Finance and Operations positions. Beginning with the Executive Director position, a Key Position Planning Summary template was developed and completed. Next, the individuals in mission-critical positions followed suit with Key Position Planning Summary documents of their own. A joint process, multiple iterations of these summaries were completed by the individual and reviewed by Julia. Finally, the Board's Executive Committee approved the final versions of each document.

The Succession Plan

Green Bay Botanical Garden's succession plan exists in the form of Key Position Planning Summary documents for each mission-critical position, the keystone being the Executive Director position (Appendix P). All quoted passages in this Case Study, unless attributed to another resource, have been sourced directly from this document. While this succession plan was originally designed for the Executive Director position, the plan addresses all three types: Strategic Leadership Development, Emergency Succession Planning, and Departure Defined Development.

The document first identifies "Essential Position Competencies" and then "Secondary Competencies," which are largely drawn from the Executive Director

position description. Susan considers herself to be fortunate in that her Board conducts a performance review for the Executive Director position annually; this insures the position description is constantly up-to-date and that she is fulfilling her goals and responsibilities as the leader of the organization.

Strategic Leadership Development

The next component of the Executive Director's succession plan focuses on "Internal Candidate Identification," which first indicates whether an internal candidate is available to assume the position either immediately or after a two to three year development period. "Second, identify by priority preference the one or two internal candidates that could assume this position immediately. Third, identify those internal candidates that may be ready to assume this role after a period of professional development." In the event that an interim leader is necessary, this informs the Executive Committee, which ultimately has the authority to appoint a new leader, of the availability and readiness of internal staff.

Currently, one staff member has expressed moderate interest in leading in an interim capacity in the event of a vacancy. A cross-training plan, which is largely based on the aforementioned "Essential Position Competencies," has been developed so that in the coming three years, the Executive Director may professionally develop this staff member. The staff member has not been promised the position as successor, but is being developed professionally for personal and organizational flexibility. If this individual does not serve in an interim capacity, it will not be viewed negatively by the organization or as a failure of the succession plan; rather, his/her development is considered strategic strengthening of the organization.

In the Director of Development's Key Position Planning Summary, a staff member has been identified as interested in temporarily acting as or applying for the Director of Development in the event of a vacancy. Again, the position has not been promised to this individual; however, steps to develop the employee professionally, with concentration on the position's "Essential Position Competencies," have been identified so that the individual can compete for the position. Alternatively, this same individual has expressed interest in applying for a forthcoming internal position outside of the Development department. Because of this dual-interest, the employee is being developed in both capacities so that he/she is able to compete for the career path and position most desirable when the time comes. In addition to the previously mentioned staff member, the Executive Director is also able to temporarily operate as Director of Development.

Emergency Succession Planning

Continued within the Executive Director's Key Position Planning Summary, there is an Emergency Succession Plan. First, a communications plan has been developed to insure that appropriately timed and authored communications are relayed to Board, staff, and external constituents. If an Acting Executive Director is identified, he/she will lead the staff until a permanent replacement is found; if an Acting Executive Director cannot be identified, "a team approach to leading the organization will be implemented, overseen by the Executive Committee." The leadership team, including Director of Development, Finance and Operations Manager, and Director of Horticulture, will take individual segments of the Executive Director's job description.

Departure Defined Development

In the event of a planned departure, the Board will “begin the recruitment and hiring process six months prior to departure to provide overlap for onboarding and training of about three months.” This includes an analysis of the Executive Director’s job description, which will determine whether a reorganization of the position responsibilities would be appropriate to achieve specific goals and objectives.

Emergency or Departure Defined

In the event of a planned or unplanned departure, the Board will engage in an external recruitment process. This process requires a “Board selection committee, comprised of at least one member of the Executive Committee and one member with HR expertise.” Although the garden’s partnership with the local College does not in any way impact its administrative control as an independent nonprofit organization, the committee should still consider “including one staff member from the leadership team who will not be applying; utilizing the College’s [Northeast Wisconsin Technical College] Human Resources Department as a coordinating resource; and utilizing a professional recruitment firm as needed to appropriately source and select qualified candidates.” Finally, external postings should be advertised through the Association, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and Nonprofit Resource Group.

Next Steps

Currently, there is no prescribed time to regularly update the succession planning documents. However, with the addition of the Grand Garden, set to open in 2017, Green Bay Botanical Garden anticipates a level of staff expansion, which may impact future succession planning considerations. Presently, the succession planning

documents are actively used and able to evolve at any time in preparation of and in response to change.

Key Takeaways from Green Bay Botanical Garden Case Study

As the organization's first experience with formalized succession planning, garden representatives identified key takeaways gleaned in the process including:

- I feel really good about being in an organization that's thinking about this [succession planning], because as a smaller organization, when something happens, it's a huge impact.
- Cindy Berton, Director of Development
- I never want to identify an "heir apparent," because that creates all sorts of particular dynamics. I would prefer to have multiple opportunities for people to demonstrate that they can leave and be successful.
- Julia Johnson, Board Member
- I don't even want to start any discussion about organizational structure, role definitions, or anything to do with talent unless I know where we're going in terms of strategy, where the garden ultimately wants to end up. Because in the absence of knowing the direction and strategy of the garden, it doesn't even equate to try to create an organizational structure or any type of support programs to help us achieve our goals and missions.
- Julia Johnson, Board Member
- It was important that we talked about cross training and with some of the non-leadership staff to maybe develop individual plans with all the employees to say, "Should a position open up here, would you have an interest?"
- Susan Garot, Executive Director
- I think like any document it should be living and breathing and if it doesn't work, then we reserve the right to make changes to it.
- Susan Garot, Executive Director

Case Study 4: Desert Botanical Garden

Table 10 Desert Botanical Garden Case Study Profile

Desert Botanical Garden	
Approach to Succession Planning	Strategic Leadership Development Departure Defined Development Emergency Succession Planning
Annual Operating Budget	\$1-10 Million
Geographic Region	Interior West
Executive Director Tenure	15 Years
Organizational Structure	Independent
Number of Staff	107 Full Time Employees
Human Resources Department	Yes; Designated Individual (Staff Member)
Succession Documents Available	Yes; Appendices Q, R, and S

Context

Founded in 1939, Desert Botanical Garden is an independent nonprofit organization. Executive Director Ken Schutz, whose background is in business and science, has led the organization since 2001. The decision to begin a succession planning effort was made in October 2015, when the garden applied for and received a grant from Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust’s Good Governance Fund. During the Good Governance planning session, it became apparent that the garden was fulfilling all recommended best practices, except one: succession planning. As a result of the session, a daylong meeting was held to discuss how the Board could become more mission-driven, which led to discussions of building a succession plan. From the perspective of BoardSource, the garden’s primary succession planning resource, only the Executive Director position needed a succession plan, which a Board committee was tasked to create. However, during the planning process, the Board suggested each

of the Executive Director's direct reports needed succession plans as well. Each plan requires the approval of the Board's Succession Planning Committee.

The Process

Chair of the Succession Planning Committee, Marta Morando, whose background is in law, was the chief author of the Executive Director's plan. After the committee's first meeting on the subject, which Marta described as intense yet efficient, Marta drafted an outline based on discussion points. The committee met three more times to refine and shape the plan until it was completed in March 2016. The entire process required four meetings.

The Succession Plan

Desert Botanical Garden's initial succession plan (Appendix Q) focused solely on the Executive Director position and outlined two possible scenarios: Non-Emergency (Departure Defined Development) and Emergency (Emergency Succession Planning) which were approved by the Succession Planning Committee in March 2016. Then, succession plans were created for each of the Executive Director's direct reports. The Strategic Leadership Development approach has been taken to expand this effort and develop staff members at all levels. All quoted passages in this Case Study, unless attributed to another resource, have been sourced directly from this document. While this succession plan was originally designed for the Executive Director position, the plan addresses all three types: Strategic Leadership Development, Departure Defined Development, and Emergency Succession Planning.

Departure Defined Development

“The purpose of this [Non-Emergency] Succession Plan is to promote the stability of the Desert Botanical Garden (the ‘Garden’) through management continuity in circumstances where the Executive Director plans a future retirement or departure date.” The plan outlines a series of actions and the parties responsible for each action, including:

- i. Timeline for Search Process
- ii. Selection of Search Firm
- iii. Responsibilities of Succession Planning Committee
- iv. Appointment and Responsibilities of Search Committee
- v. Communication Plan
- vi. Selection of Final Candidate
- vii. Transition Planning
- viii. Annual Update
- ix. Approval of Succession Plan

i. Timeline for Search Process

“Promptly upon the announcement of a retirement or departure date by the Executive Director, the Succession Planning Committee shall establish a timeline for the executive search process set forth in this Plan.”

ii. Selection of Search Firm

While creating this plan, the Succession Planning Committee identified a selection of search firms (Appendix Q, third page) to be considered when seeking a new Executive Director. While it is the responsibility of the Succession Planning

Committee to interview and evaluate any firms considered, a budget with firm costs and expenses must be submitted to and approved by the Executive Committee and the Finance Committee.

iii. Responsibilities of the Succession Planning Committee

The Succession Planning Committee is the primary force responsible for a leadership transition; however, part of this responsibility includes checks and balances in the forms of other parties. For instance, before the Executive Director position is advertised, “the Succession Planning Committee shall work with the Executive Director and the search firm to update the formal job description and list of Incentive Plan goals for the current fiscal year in order to match the Garden’s current and future needs with the leadership experience and skills desired in the successor Executive Director. Attention shall be given to those executive requirements and responsibilities called for by the Garden’s strategic plan.” Next, the search firm and Succession Planning Committee will cooperatively develop a candidate profile, including essential competencies and salary information. Finally, “the Succession Planning Committee and Executive Director shall work with the search firm to launch a networking and outreach campaign to reach stakeholders who can refer potential leaders.”

iv. Appointment and Responsibilities of Search Committee

The Succession Planning Committee is not the Search Committee; rather, it may be composed of “Board, staff, volunteers, funders and other community stakeholders to promote a cross-section of roles and viewpoints and to ensure broad support for the process.” Ultimately appointed by the Executive Committee, the Chair

of the Search Committee is responsible for providing regular updates to appropriate parties.

v. Communication Plan

The full Communication Plan (Appendix Q, fourth page outlines everything from who will contact which parties and when to talking point considerations. This process begins “as soon as possible after the Executive Director is ready to announce his or her retirement or departure date” and continues through the orientation of the new Executive Director.

vi. Selection of Final Candidate

A list of the Search Committee’s top candidates will be presented to the Executive Committee for consideration. Upon the selection of a final candidate, the approval of the full Board of Trustees is required. “In consultation with the Chair of the Personnel Committee and the Human Resources Manager, the Board President is authorized to finalize a written offer to the selected candidate with appropriate legal review.”

vii. Transition Planning

The succession planning process does not end with the hiring of a new Executive Director; rather, an orientation will be designed and facilitated by members of the Search, Succession Planning, and Executive Committees. Additionally, milestones are put in place to identify the progress of the transition. For instance, “Promptly following hiring, the Executive Committee and successor Executive Director shall agree on a 90-day ‘onboarding’ and transition plan to provide support

and direction about priorities.” Also, “within 30 days of hiring, the successor Executive Director shall prepare written goals for the first 12 months for approval by the Executive Committee.”

viii. Annual Update

“The Succession Planning Committee and Executive Director shall meet annually following the adoption of this Non-Emergency Succession Plan to update the Plan as needed in light of all the circumstances.”

ix. Approval of Succession Plan

“This Non-Emergency Succession Plan shall be approved by the Executive Committee and presented to the Board of Trustees for review and final approval.”

Emergency Succession Planning

“The purpose of this Emergency Succession Plan is to promote the stability of the Desert Botanical Garden through management continuity in the event of the sudden unavailability of the Executive Director (e.g., due to illness or injury) that is expected to be prolonged beyond one month.” The plan outlines a series of actions and the parties responsible for each action, including:

- i. Implementation of Plan
- ii. Succession Planning Committee
- iii. Role of Interim Executive Director
- iv. Communication Plan
- v. Oversight and Transition
- vi. Annual Update

vii. Approval of Emergency Succession Plan

i. Implementation of Plan

To initiate the plan, the Board President must be notified of the Executive Director's sudden unavailability, allowing the Executive Committee to proceed with or modify this plan as circumstances dictate. In the event of a permanent vacancy, the Succession Planning Committee will initiate the Non-Emergency Succession Plan, which will require a search. "Until an Interim Executive Director is appointed... the Garden's senior staff and the Executive Assistant shall report to the Board President or his/her designee."

ii. Succession Planning Committee

The Succession Planning Committee is responsible for recommending an appropriate Interim Executive Director, based on outlined criteria, to the Executive Committee, which has the authority to approve and appoint the recommendation.

iii. Role of Interim Executive Director

"The Interim Executive Director shall have all of the responsibilities, accountabilities and authority of the Executive Director" with select outlined exceptions.

iv. Communication Plan

The full Communication Plan (Appendix Q, Page 10). It outlines everything from who will contact which parties and when to talking point considerations. This process begins by identifying a "DBG Spokesperson for Communications Prior to

Appointment of Interim Executive Director” and continues through the announcement of the Interim Executive Director.

v. Oversight and Transition

The Executive Committee and Interim Executive Director will work in concert to support one another and the organization by means of a formalized transition plan complete with agreed upon goals, communications, and feedback. Additionally, Board officers may be asked to supplement the Interim’s knowledge of key organizational subjects (i.e. finance).

vi. Annual Update

“The Succession Planning Committee and the Executive Director shall meet annually following the adoption of this Emergency Succession Plan to update this Plan as needed in light of all the circumstances.” Also, potential interim options will be identified.

vii. Approval of Emergency Succession Plan

“This Emergency Succession Plan shall be approved by the Executive Committee and presented to the Board of Trustees for review and final approval.”

Strategic Leadership Development

As an extension of the Executive Director’s succession plan approved in March 2016, senior leaders completed both Non-Emergency and Emergency succession plans for their own positions in November 2016. However, the approach to these plans is not identical. For instance, Director of Operations MaryLynn Mack is second in command to the Executive Director and responsible for multiple

departments including Human Resources, Event Services, Information Technology, Guest Services, and Security (see partial organizational chart in Appendix R). In the event of the Executive Director's emergency departure, it is possible that MaryLynn could serve as interim Executive Director. However, in the event of MaryLynn's emergency departure, there may be a combination of individuals identified to serve in her stead, possibly including consultants who are not Garden employees, but rather highly involved with a current Garden project. In the event of a planned departure, an internal review of competencies and potential candidates would be completed to inform the search committee.

Beyond the senior management level, programs to develop staff are in place. As head of the Human Resources Department, MaryLynn believes sustainability of people makes for a better institution. For instance, the Legacy Leadership Academy is a 12-month program open to all employees except senior management. It is very competitive; only six or seven participants may participate each year. Designed and instructed by MaryLynn and a consultant, the class provides leadership training including honing interpersonal skills and transactional skills, understanding how to run an effective meeting, and strategic planning.

Another way to develop employees is through the garden's new human resources performance management system called Advancing Excellence, which is accompanied by software. Advancing Excellence requires all supervisors to meet quarterly with their employees to discuss professional goals and career advancement. "SMART" goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) are co-developed to act as a road map to reach the employee's ambitions. Rather than a one-sided evaluation of a subordinate by his/her superior, the employee being evaluated is

able to enter progress he/she has made into the system; in response, the supervisors are able to make comments, provide accolades, etc. At the end of the year, the built-in point system shows whether or not the goals were achieved, which has the capacity to yield a monetary incentive.

The goal of Advancing Excellence is to provide frequent opportunities for honest discussion and to develop organization professionals so that they may be competitive for internal and external positions. When asked whether Garden leadership was concerned about developing employees who may leave the organization, the response was there is no concern. In fact, as outlined in the Garden's Mission, Vision, Values, and Organizational Culture document (Appendix S), "the Garden accepts the risk of being a leader in its field—some of its best and brightest might be recruited away if the Garden cannot provide them with increasing responsibility."

Next Steps

Desert Botanical Garden employs people from four generations including baby boomers, generation x, generation y (millennial generation), and generation z. From MaryLynn's perspective, as the Garden becomes more inclusive of multiple generations in the workforce, it is increasingly important for staff to learn how to communicate with one another. As a result, MaryLynn has started to incorporate a strength-finding component into employee orientation. This component allows members of different generations to understand personal strengths and gap that could be professionally developed as well as their fellow employee's.

Incorporating this conversation from the start allows all new employees to begin their careers at the Garden with a similar understanding of the culture. "We are

good today. We can be better tomorrow. The quest for ‘advancing excellence’ is never ending” (Appendix S, Page 1).

Key Takeaways from Desert Botanical Garden Case Study

As the organization’s first experience with formalized succession planning, garden representatives identified key takeaways gleaned in the process including:

- It is clearly part of best practices now that every nonprofit organization should have a succession plan. I mentioned I sit on the Museum Accreditation Board and, while it's not required as a document, it's [succession planning] something that comes up more and more often from the peer-review.

- *Ken Schutz, Executive Director*

- I think the notion that there's just not enough time to do it is not a good enough reason. I do think that it can be an unpleasant or a frightening topic and people avoid it. The Board avoids it, because they think it's sounding an alarm to the Director and they don't want that person to think, “Well, it's time we got somebody new.” And for a director to say to the Board, “You know, I really here wish we were doing succession planning as a best practice,” could sound like code for, “I'm thinking of leaving; you better figure out what you're going to do after I'm gone.” Both of those would be the wrong signal to send; both could be incorrect. You almost need an outside source to sort of alert you to the fact that you should be doing this.

- *Ken Schutz, Executive Director*

- The Board feels very reassured that the plan is so detailed. It’s really a how-to, step-by-step plan, and that's really the most important thing.

- *Marta Morando, Succession Planning Committee Chair*

- Yes, I highly recommend it [the garden’s approach to succession planning]. I think sometimes as an industry, we have a tendency to be not as forward-thinking as we should be.

- *MaryLynn Mack, Director of Operations*

- If you know your garden, or your institution well, the management structure, it does not take that much time [to create a succession plan].
- *Marta Morando, Succession Planning Committee Chair*
- Ken's culture, and mine is, we just want to build really strong leaders and if they move to another botanical garden that just makes us stronger as institution in the field. Because the reality is that we cannot keep everyone.
- *MaryLynn Mack, Director of Operations*

Case Study 5: Descanso Gardens

Table 11 Descanso Gardens Case Study Profile

Descanso Gardens	
Approach to Succession Planning	Departure Defined Development
Annual Operating Budget	\$1-10 Million
Geographic Region	Pacific
Executive Director Tenure	11 Years; Predecessor 1 Year
Organizational Structure	Independent
Number of Staff	53 Full Time Employees
Human Resources Department	Yes; Designated Individual (Staff Member)
Succession Document Available	No

Context

Descanso Gardens evolved from a private estate to a public garden in 1953. Located on land owned by Los Angeles County, the garden is managed by the Descanso Gardens Guild, which formed in 1957, incorporated in 1960, and achieved an independent nonprofit organization in 1962. Executive Director David Brown, whose background is in nonprofit management, has led the organization since 2005. In

Fall 2016, David publically announced his intentions to retire in August 2017. The decision to begin a succession planning effort stemmed not only from David's planned departure, but also as an exercise to improve upon past leadership transition efforts.

Prior to David's tenure, Descanso had experienced a difficult five-year period in which it sought, unsuccessfully, to hire a new Executive Director. The new Executive Director would be the second hired by the Guild following its change in status in 1993 from support organization to the contract managers of the garden. The first Executive Director had been hired in 1995 and, while his tenure was deemed successful, he elected to leave his position in 2000 to accept a position at another nationally significant public garden. Almost immediately following his departure, the Board commenced with a conventional search with the assistance of a local firm.

The process brought several issues and differences of opinion among Board leadership to light, some of which were never resolved. Without unity in cause and vision, the Board, with the help of the search firm, settled upon an exceptionally broad, yet highly detailed set of requirements in the position description. Finalists were interviewed and a final selection made, but when the position was offered, the finalist declined. The search continued and in 2003, a new Executive Director was hired. However, when it became apparent that it was not a good fit between individual and organization, his tenure ended less than one year later.

David Brown was contacted in spring of 2005. At the time, David was doing nonprofit consulting work following a 15-year presidency of a local college of art and design. He had been contacted in the very early stages of the first search, but had not pursued the opportunity. Now, he believed he was contacted for his consulting expertise and experience, not as a candidate for the Executive Director position. After

one meeting with the Board of Trustees, now under new leadership, it became clear to both him and the Board that there might be an opportunity and a fit not as a consultant, but as a candidate for the position.

The Trustees seemed to resonate with his knowledge of nonprofit management and strategic planning, and the conversation evolved toward specific goals for the position including creating a clear, institution-wide understanding of identity; unifying staff and Board around a clear direction; developing a long-range vision for the institution; and creating the outline of a plan for getting there. The Board ultimately offered the Executive Director position to David, which he accepted in 2005.

The obstacles and challenges faced during this difficult 5-year period clearly inform the process which Descanso is currently undertaking. It was with this history in mind that David strategized not only when he would retire as Executive Director, but also how he would exit the leadership position. An important lesson David wishes to impart upon the organization, as well as other public gardens, is this: “It is the Board’s responsibility to use the opportunity of an opening at the CEO position to calmly, thoroughly, honestly, and strategically fulfill its responsibilities as the keepers of the mission and the providers of governance continuity.” This is the context with which Descanso Gardens’ most recent leadership transition has begun.

The Process

Because Descanso did not have an existing succession plan in place, the organization is using this experience to document helpful procedures and, in turn, initiate a succession planning effort through its findings. In 2014, David had made the Board aware of his intentions to retire in the near future. As referenced in the literature, Departure Defined Development is “a course of action that Boards and

executives employ when an executive begins thinking about leaving an organization” (Price 2008). According to Board Chair Tim Morphy, such early notice of his departure was greatly appreciated by the Board in that it allowed the organization to undergo a full transition process rather than just an executive search.

The first step was to create a Transition Committee comprised of both current Board members as well as a former Board chair who had substantial nonprofit Board experience, including transitions. The Committee met several times over the summer of 2016 and began to describe the process in three “Acts”. Act I, which had concluded at the time of this research, served as an internal review and posed questions like:

- What has the current Executive Director achieved during his tenure at Descanso?
- How does this influence what the future of the garden may look like?
- What do we really need in an Executive Director?

The team synthesized this information to not only understand the exiting Executive Director, but also what kind of Executive Director should be sought out. For instance, the Board concluded that the next Executive Director does not necessarily need to be a horticulturist. In fact, the Board viewed David’s background in nonprofit management, specifically as it related to art organizations, as the reason why the Garden’s new light installation, *Enchanted: Forest of Light*, was a success. His vision brought the new ideas that may not have ever been considered if not for his unique background. The minutes from each meeting during Act I were recorded and will serve as the basis for future succession planning initiatives.

The next step, Act II includes the search itself. Before this could begin, it was important that internal stakeholders be informed of David’s planned retirement.

Therefore, a plan of communication was developed, which began by informing senior leadership, then all staff, then philanthropic donors, and, finally, the membership.

Only afterwards were press releases written with the help of Communications staff.

Act III includes onboarding the new Executive Director. The process for this is currently being developed, but hinges largely on the nature of the successor. Some of the questions that will guide this onboarding process include:

- Is the successor internal or external?
- If internal, which stakeholder introductions will be necessary?
- If external, how well does he/she know the area? Does he/she need to relocate?
- What kind of staff structure will the successor need?

Act III also includes supporting the incoming Executive Director so that he/she is able to transition appropriately on a personal and organizational level; it is important that Descanso accepts its new Executive Director. One of David's accomplishments, according to Board Chair Tim Morphy, was the creation of a staffing structure, with positions filled by people of ever-increasing capability; this has continuously increased the organization's strength and ability during David's tenure. Because of this, it is of high significance that this leadership transition is considered successful with regards to staff at every level.

With this in mind, during Act I, the Transition Committee decided to dedicate the annual Board retreat solely to this subject. Beginning with a regular Board meeting, the staff was invited to join for lunch, during which the Committee discussed its progress to date. Afterwards, David and his staff were invited to leave and the Committee continued to meet for the rest of the day. Here, the Committee received a

variety of Board input on the subject and later received more from select staff. This exercise was insightful as it provided multiple perspectives and highlighted the priorities of many parties.

Additionally, a primary objective of this meeting was to decide whether to engage a search firm so that Act II could soon begin. Two approaches were considered: outsource the search to a firm or take on the search internally, but hire an individual to help manage the process. Once the transition committee decided to engage a professional recruiting consultant, it considered and interviewed a number of firms. Based on the committee's internal analysis, it selected the firm most closely aligned with the needs of the organization. Incidentally, the firm selected had recently completed a CEO search for a prominent public garden in northern California. The committee felt this provided an advantage in that the firm may already have a sense of the talent available for the director's position at Descanso, which is located in southern California. The Transition Committee made the recommendation to engage this search firm to the full Board of Trustees, and the Board approved the recommendation.

The Succession Plan

At the time of this research, no formalized succession plan had been complete. However, the process has been recorded for future Board members so that they may refer to the current Board members' thought processes. Transition Committee Board member Leah McCrary explained that because the organization will continue to evolve, it is important that this documentation should be utilized as a reference point, rather than a hard and fast standard to be replicated in the future. Constant reevaluation of the organization is necessary in a time of transition so that decisions may be informed by the past, but made for the future.

Next Steps

Descanso is currently in Act II of the transition: the search. The Committee hopes to have a successor confirmed by June 2017. This will conclude Act II and commence Act III: onboarding. To account for the successor's personal and professional needs, it is expected that the successor will need some time between accepting the position and arriving at the Gardens. Because David intends to retire in August 2017, this provides the opportunity to overlap, if necessary. From David's perspective, he plans to support the transition in any way possible; however, he recognizes there cannot be two leaders and, therefore, hopes for as brief an overlap as possible. Instead, an orientation led by Board members will help the incoming Executive Director to become acclimated into his/her new organization.

Key Takeaways from Descanso Gardens Case Study

As the organization's first experience with formalized succession planning, garden representatives identified key takeaways gleaned in the process including:

- It is the Board's responsibility to use the opportunity of an opening at the CEO position to calmly, thoroughly, honestly, and strategically fulfill its responsibilities as the keepers of the mission and the providers of governance continuity.

- David Brown, Executive Director

- The question becomes do you have the capacity and time to do it. I think we are very fortunate to have David's departure time line that we were able to do it in a timely and thoughtful manner.

- Tim Morphy, Board Chair

- I know the process will probably be different for every organization, but I think one of the things we really learned from David Brown is you don't need to be a horticulturalist to be an Executive Director of a public garden. And it doesn't mean that a horticulturalist can't be a

good Executive Director, but it does mean that you need to broaden your scope.

- *Tim Morphy, Board Chair*

- It's easier to take a visionary and allow them to get up to speed on gardens than to take someone who's an expert at Gardens and turn them into a visionary.

- *Tim Morphy, Board Chair*

- Everything is documented through minutes. We also decided we really needed to understand where we were as an organization and what we want going forward.

- *Leah McCrary, Transition Committee Chair*

- It [the succession planning process] needs constant reevaluation, because the organization changes, the people change. Will there be an obvious heir apparent? Will the organization be a much more nationally known organization? Will the organization be in desperate need of an endowment? That we cannot imagine right now. We hope [future] Board members will look at what we've done and say, "This worked; this didn't work. Here's what we really need to do going forward."

- *Leah McCrary, Transition Committee Chair*

Alternative Case Study: Mt. Cuba Center

Table 12 Mt. Cuba Center Garden Alternative Case Study Profile

Mt. Cuba Center	
Approach to Succession Planning	Strategic Leadership Development
Annual Operating Budget	\$1-10 Million
Geographic Region	Southeast
Executive Director Tenure	3.5 Years; Predecessor 13 Years
Organizational Structure	Independent
Number of Staff	49 Full Time Employees
Human Resources Department	Yes; Designated Individual (Staff Member)
Succession Documents Available	Yes; Appendices T, U, V, and W

Context

Opened to the public 2002, Mt. Cuba Center's history as an estate garden began in 1935 when the Copeland family bought and transformed the existing farmland into naturalistic gardens. Executive Director Jeff Downing, whose background is in economics and education programming in public horticulture, is the organization's third director. His predecessor held tenure for 13 years and the first director for 16 years. The decision to begin a succession planning effort stemmed from a goal in the organization's most recent strategic plan. Though a finalized succession plan has not yet been completed, the organization was able to share its progress thus far as well as its approach towards the subject.

The Process

As a relatively young public garden without organizational precedent to uphold, Human Resources Manager Colleen Kilroy considers this blank slate to be a double-edged sword. On one hand, it allows the organization to build a succession planning effort from scratch, rather than try to repurpose remnants of former planning initiatives. On the other hand, there is a lot of work to be done. Colleen views this planning process as comprehensive with multiple phases: understanding the way things are now, understanding existing internal talent, and then identifying what the organization will need in the future.

Job Validation

At the time of this research, the organization was just beginning its planning initiative and, therefore, was focused on evaluating the current status of organizational

functions. An exercise completed to inform this process was job validation, which included each employee re-writing his/her job description to determine the core, central functions of this position. For instance, while the leadership level might define five to six core functions, other positions may define three to five. While the exercise may seem elementary, Colleen posited, the results are valuable in that the articulation of each role presents a clear vision of what the organization currently expects of its employees. Additionally, as a cooperative exercise, it includes staff in every step of the planning process with the hope that employees feel ownership of and buy-in for the plan. This lays the foundation for later phases, so that nuances such as unique positions, those who wear multiple hats, can be identified. It was important to build a baseline before embarking on the next steps.

Labor Gap Analysis

As a result of the job validation exercise, each manager and director was able to articulate a personal understanding of his/her role. From these discussions, a new organizational structure was mapped out, allowing gaps to become visible within departments. Additionally, staffing needs were classified into tiers, listed from lowest to highest:

- Functional: Staffed appropriately to meet bare minimum expectations
- Operative: Staffed with the ability to function with moderate efficiency
- Strategic: Staffing with a future-focused mentality on fulfilling strategic commitments (usually means new positions to fulfill gaps)

- Advanced: Staffed to operate efficiently and effectively to fulfill strategic commitments well with a proactive focus on transitional leadership, career management, and succession planning.

After completing the exercise, Colleen considers Mt. Cuba's status as residing between the Strategic and Advanced tiers, because the organization not only understands its current state, but also actively seeks to understand future organizational needs and how to address them.

Next Steps

The next steps for Mt. Cuba's succession planning effort include identifying key and critical positions, creating accessible conversation, monitoring incumbent positions, creating talent identification and performance management systems, and creating synergy to establish a culture of planning.

Identify Key and Critical Positions

Having completing its first steps towards succession planning through job validation and labor gap analysis, the organization's next phase will include identifying the key and critical positions, which can be identified by a combination of subject matter expertise and institutional knowledge. Colleen plans to approach this step cautiously as she anticipates needing to dissolve pre-conceived notions related to the task.

First, the distinction between succession planning and replacement planning should be clear; the intent of this initiative is not to identify back-ups for each position. Additionally, the key and critical position classification should not automatically be applied and limited to top organizational executives. Rather, the criteria for key and critical positions should focus on those with the potential for

knowledge transfer issues. For instance, while Mt. Cuba Center prides itself on its ability to provide developmental opportunities for staff, it also makes for highly competent and desirable talent. If an employee in a key and critical position is lost to an external job opportunity, for instance a gardener with intimate institutional knowledge of his/her section, a plan needs to be in place to facilitate that transfer of knowledge.

Accessible Conversation

In order to regulate group meetings where sensitive subjects may be discussed, such as the identification of key and critical positions, Colleen maps out conversations in advance, including thoughtful questions, in hopes that it will make the subject as approachable as possible. Because these types of discussions are new to the organization, it is critical that staff members feel comfortable and have buy-in throughout the process.

Another approach Colleen recommends is to introduce subjects and tools one step at a time, rather than introduce them all at once. For instance, while in-person discussion of key and critical positions helps to begin the dialogue, it is a subjective process. Matrices and position forms, which remove subconscious bias and result in more objective evaluations, should be incorporated after these initial discussions so that by the time the forms are introduced, staff members are comfortable to take the next step. At this point in the process, Mt. Cuba Center has begun to explore existing templates, but has yet to tailor or adopt any to the organization. For instance, Appendix T is an example of a template designed to outline key and critical position competencies, skills, and success factors.

Identify Incumbent Positions

Two aspects of incumbent positions to be monitored are marketability and proximity to retirement. Marketability, as it relates to young professionals, is often overlooked and a mistake Mt. Cuba Center does not want to make. Given the close network of public horticulture professionals, especially in the Mid-Atlantic region, it is critical to realize that young talent is poachable and tends to seek experience in multiple organizations. While important to consider, Jeff suggested, losing talent to external opportunities is not necessarily a fault. In fact, he considers talent development to be an organizational responsibility, which should not only benefit Mt. Cuba Center, but also the Association membership. Employees should seek external advancement opportunities and, if one day they return, the organization will be enriched by their experiences. Appendix U is an example of a template designed to monitor position impact and vacancy risk.

When reviewing incumbent positions that may soon be vacant due to retirement, it will be important to evaluate whether or not it makes sense to refill such positions. Appendix V is an example of a template designed to track proximity to retirement. Often times, Jeff explained, seasoned employees in smaller organizations wear many hats, because they have evolved with the organization. Therefore, when a position becomes vacant due to retirement, instead of searching for a candidate with the same unique abilities, alternatives should be explored.

Options include dividing and advertising the position as two or more full time specialized positions, contracting needs out, or, in some cases, eliminating the position altogether if it no longer serves the mission. As the garden continues to grow in organizational capacity, this evaluation may occur more frequently, especially if resources are available to hire more employees with specialized talents.

Though Mt. Cuba Center does not seem to have reached this point just yet, Colleen suggested such decisions will impact the organization's structure, increasing the need for flexibility. One way that Mt. Cuba Center has increased flexibility has been to develop its volunteer base. In the past year alone, the number of volunteers increased from 17 to 70. In concert with the recent increase in organizational capacity, volunteers support staff and in some cases temporarily fill talent gaps.

Talent Identification and Management

The ability to define competencies for positions throughout the organization is critical to guide and manage the employees' careers by developing them for future positions. This step, which Mt. Cuba Center intends to take in the future, resembles Strategic Leadership Development, which is "an ongoing process that identifies the core competencies, skills and knowledge needed by the organization in the next five years along with a plan to develop those competencies in your existing talent or to recruit new talent" (Price 2008).

Colleen describes the human resources perspective as somewhat intuitive and, therefore, in need of objectivity. While it may be easier to evaluate whether or not an employee is ready to advance with an objective form like Appendix W, it is more advantageous to have a conversation with the employee to discuss what development steps could be taken to reach the next level. Without the career development planning and management, Colleen posited, the succession plan will not be sustainable.

Performance Management

In order to develop employees and hold them accountable to expectations, it is important that a clear performance management system is in place. Previously, Mt.

Cuba's system has operated in the form of a typical annual performance review. However, Colleen hopes to advance a more agile system that encourages supervisors to meet more frequently with staff for coaching sessions. To begin this effort, each leadership team member is reading the same coaching book as a way to both develop personal coaching skills and also realign thought processes to be less focused on traditional performance evaluation and more on staff development.

Synergy and Culture

From Mt. Cuba Center's perspective, each component of this succession planning process is critical to its sustainability. While each new step may add a layer of complexity to the previous one, eventually the pieces will integrate to create a cohesive, synergistic process. As a relatively young public garden with no succession planning precedent to uphold, leadership in concert with human resources has been fortunate to be able to thoughtfully strategize each move; however, it has also been a challenge to convey each move's significance in relation to the ultimate vision to staff along the way. Despite this challenge, Colleen posited, staff buy-in is critical to the sustainability of the plan, because it ultimately fosters a culture of succession planning, which is a long-term goal.

Key Takeaways from Mt. Cuba Center Case Study

As the organization's first experience with a succession planning process, garden representatives identified key takeaways gleaned in the process including:

- One of the biggest takeaways for succession planning is the fact that it's really part of a larger workforce planning issue.

- *Colleen Kilroy, Human Resources Manager*

- One thing that confuses the general public is the notion of having to put a name behind each position, which isn't succession planning; it's replacement planning.

- *Colleen Kilroy, Human Resources Manager*

- Especially since this [process] is brand new for our organization, it's something that we want to introduce so that it is accessible to our staff members.

- *Colleen Kilroy, Human Resources Manager*

- Key critical positions are a combination of expertise combined with Mt. Cuba Center-specific internal organizational knowledge.

- *Jeff Downing, Executive Director*

- For this iteration of our strategic plan, we actually made succession planning through organizational development its own stand-alone goal, which is pretty unique. But given where we're at, it's front-and-center to our staff. We are trying to communicate it in that way. We have to do some of these things that might seem tedious or might seem like they don't have a whole lot of relevance up front to get to the end game of developing as an organization.

- *Colleen Kilroy, Human Resources Manager*

- We have a number of related and synergistic aspects; they're all in formation and they all have to land in a cohesive whole. But because they are being thought about in an integrated way from the outset, I feel like we have an advantage.

- *Jeff Downing, Executive Director*

Summary of the Case Studies

In summary, the Case Studies were successful in achieving the research objective to assess how public gardens utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

In an effort to understand the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the American Public Gardens Association (the Association), the following supporting objectives guided this research:

1. Identifying potential research participants and gathering a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens through the Screening Tool
2. Providing greater insight to the responses of the Screening Tool and gaining an understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan through the Interviews
3. Understanding the positions of organizations without succession plans through dynamic discussion
4. Assessing how public gardens utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries through Case Studies

Supporting Objective 1: Identifying potential research participants and gathering a baseline of data regarding succession plans among public gardens through the Screening Tool

The Screening Tool was successful in achieving its research objectives. The results of the Screening Tool, which reached 569 Association member directors and main contacts and yielded 86 responses in January 2016, indicate that only 21.95% of participating organizations had a succession plan in place. Therefore, succession planning is not commonly practiced throughout the Association membership.

Compared to other nonprofits surveyed in the Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM) *2006 Succession Planning Survey*, the Screening Tool indicates that the percentage of Association membership with a succession plan (21.95%) trends less than the percentage of nonprofit organizations with a succession plan (32%) (Martin 2006).

However, as evidenced by the 37 participants who provided their contact information in response to Screening Tool Question #3, thereby agreeing to participate further in this research, there is an interest in discussing the subject of succession planning among the membership. Upon considering the scarce representation of succession planning as a topic of interest in previous public garden studies, such as Andrew J. Pulte's 2007 survey of 448 public garden Executive Directors, which only elicited 4 responses explicitly requesting information on succession planning (Pulte 2008), it is plausible that the membership's interest in succession planning may have increased over the past ten years.

The question of why interest in succession planning may have increased in the last decade could be explored in future research. Additionally, the *2006 Succession Planning Survey* is not a perfect comparison study, because its participants included nonprofits outside of the Association membership. This comparison was drawn, because there is more succession planning research for nonprofits than for public gardens and because over half Association member gardens hold nonprofit status. For the purposes of this research, it serves as a reflection of a larger research group in which public gardens may be included until additional research is conducted within the Association membership.

Screening Tool Conclusion

In conclusion, though succession planning is not commonly practiced throughout the Association membership, there is an interest in discussing the subject.

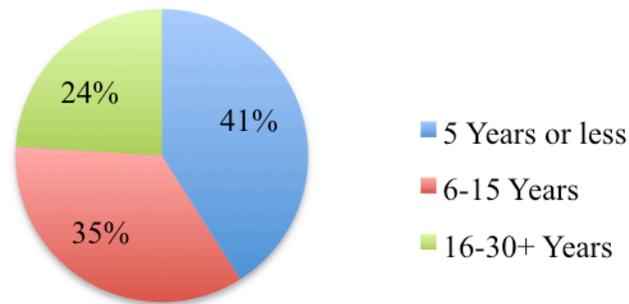
Supporting Objective 2: Providing greater insight to the responses of the Screening Tool and gaining an understanding as to why an Association member garden did or did not have a succession plan through the Interviews

The Interviews, which were conducted remotely by the researcher and included self-identified, voluntary participants from the Screening Tool, was successful in achieving its research objectives. Key insights include current Executive Director's tenure, organizational structure, number of staff, the existence of Human Resources Department, and trends among organizations with and without succession plans. Each of these insights is discussed below.

Current Executive Director's Tenure

The inquiry about the length of the current Executive Director's tenure was posited to provide insight as to where an organization may be in its Leadership Life Cycle. According to the leadership literature "Leadership has a life cycle. There is a time when a leader is 'born,' a time when he or she grows, matures, and finally reaches legacy" (Orr 2014).

Figure 4 The majority of participants reported their Executive Directors had tenure of five years or less



It was hypothesized that an Executive Director with a tenure of five years or less may be in the process of transitioning into his/her role with the intent to take on new challenges (Orr 2014). The Interviews indicated 41% of Executive Directors had tenure of five years or less, supporting the 2014 BoardSource study, *Leading with Intent*, which projected “25% of CEOs intend to leave their post within the next 2 years” (BoardSource 2015). Because the BoardSource study was conducted in 2014, the 2-year projection applies to 2016, the year in which this thesis research was conducted. In conclusion, the majority of Executive Directors in this research had recently transitioned into their roles as of 2016.

It was hypothesized that Executive Directors with tenure of 6-15 years may either continue in their roles or begin to consider a leadership transition. A leader continuing in his/her role focuses on professional productivity and achievement (Orr 2014). A leader considering a transition during this tenure range supports the literature *Leading With Intent*, which states the average tenure of a nonprofit Executive Director is 9.3 years (BoardSource 2015). In comparison, the average tenure among Executive Directors featured in this thesis research is 10.72 years and, therefore, slightly longer than the national average. In fact, 44% of the Executive Directors featured in this research have tenure of 9.3 years or longer.

The Interviews indicated 35% of participants had tenure of 6-15 years. It is plausible that the Association membership has been less inclined to practice

succession planning, because its leadership retention has generally been higher than most nonprofits, meaning there could have been less frequent instances of leadership transition in the past. Indeed, “there are countless reasons to postpone planning for an executive transition. Executives may be reluctant or ambivalent about bringing up the uncomfortable topic of leaving. Board members may feel overwhelmed at the prospect of replacing a tenured or founding executive” (Price 2008).

It was hypothesized that Executive Directors with tenure of 16-30+ years may continue in their roles, but are more likely to consider a leadership transition and “think less about achievement and more about legacy” (Orr 2014). The Interviews indicated 24% of participants had tenure of 16-30+ years. Given that the national average tenure projected by BoardSource is 9.3 years, the average tenure of executives in this study (10.72 years) is higher than the national average, and 59% of participants have tenure of 6+ years, it is plausible that BoardSources’ projection that “50% of Boards will be confronted with replacing a CEO within the next 5 years” (BoardSource 2015) is in concert with these findings. This indicates a high probability of increased leadership transitions in the near future within the Association’s membership.

To summarize, while most participants indicated their Executive Directors had transitioned into their positions in the last five years (41%), it is plausible that this trend of turnover will continue beginning with Executive Directors whose tenure exceeds the national average tenure of nonprofit leaders (9.3 years), which includes 44% of the Executive Directors featured within this study.

Organizational Structure

The inquiry about organizational structure was used to provide insight as to the degree of administrative control an organization might have in its approach to succession planning. The Interviews indicated that 59% of participating organizations are independent, that is, not affiliated with an institution of higher education or a municipality. Alternatively, 26% are affiliated with an institution of higher education and 15% are affiliated with municipalities and, therefore, are required to abide by the hiring regulations of those affiliations. Nearly half of the participating organizations are affiliated with a higher function, meaning nearly half may have little administrative control over their approach to succession planning.

For organizations affiliated with an institution of higher education, the institution holds the authority to select a new Executive Director, giving the garden little control in the selection process. “There are legally prescribed roles for the regents, the system president, the faculty, the non-faculty staff and the students, it’s impossible for any administration to do the sort of succession planning that is common in private organizations” (Witt/Kieffer 2008).

For organizations affiliated with municipalities, pre-selecting successors for any position is strictly forbidden. “Situations where one individual is ‘pre-determined’ as the successor long before the person being succeeded leaves with no competitive selection process could be considered ‘pre-selection’ or ‘pre-positioning’ and are to be avoided in the public sector” (Branham et al. 2011). This pre-selection is perceived as a barrier to succession planning, but is actually more closely related to replacement planning, which the literature indicates as distinctly different. Replacement planning is a form of risk management that typically focuses “attention on each organizational unit—division, department, or work group—and asking the manager of each unit to

identify up to three people from inside the organization as possible backups” (Rothwell 2010).

On the contrary, succession planning “is proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from within the organization through planned development activities. It should be regarded as an important tool for implementing strategic plans” (Rothwell 2010). Research solely dedicated to succession planning for affiliated organizations would be highly beneficial and could be conducted in the future.

Affiliated organizations viewed independent organizations as having more freedom to pursue succession planning, a notion echoed by academic literature stating, “it’s impossible for any administration to do the sort of succession planning that is common in private organizations” (Witt/Kieffer 2008). Though it may be inferred that the 59% of participants classified as independent have a higher degree of administrative control and, therefore, are more likely to have a plan in place, participant responses did not support this theory. Instead, the theme that succession planning is a challenge, because each organization is “unique” is one that spans both independent and affiliated organizations within this thesis research.

To summarize, while there is no one-size-fits-all model, the reluctance to incorporate succession planning because an organization considers itself to be unique indicates respondents’ lack of understanding of succession planning itself. In fact, the literature states, each “succession plan will be a unique reflection of your organization. Succession plans are as different from each other as the organizations for which they are developed” (Community Foundations of Canada 2017). An organization’s

approach to succession planning should be informed by its structure to establish an achievable plan that works in concert with institutional regulations.

Number of Staff

The inquiry about the number of staff was included to provide insight as to the organization's approach to succession planning. According to the Community Foundations of Canada, "because many nonprofits are small (with fewer than 10 employees) and because they may be facing other organizational challenges, thinking about who the next Executive Director might be or what would happen if the director of finance suddenly left is not high on their priority list" (Community Foundations of Canada 2017). Conversely, there are some for whom it is a concern. CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and the Meyer Foundation's publication *Daring to Lead 2006* states, "executives at small organizations felt particularly vulnerable; one participant said, 'We are a very small organization and there's no backup support. If I were to leave, there is really nothing there'" (Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred 2006).

Organizations with less than 10 staff members may want to consider alternatives to succession planning, such as DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) Charting, a process that develops cross-training and assessment tools based on individual employee responsibilities at a scale more appropriate for small organizations (Rothwell 2016). As the Interviews indicated, 35% of participating organizations had less than 10 employees and, therefore, may wait to consider succession planning until their staff numbers increase. Of the 35% of participating organizations with less than 10 employees, 31% indicated they had a succession plan in the Screening Tool; however, further discussions in the Interviews revealed that only 7% actually had succession plans. This trends less than SHRM's *2006 Succession*

Planning Survey, which indicated that 19% of small organizations had plans (Martin 2006).

It was hypothesized that organizations with 11- 50 staff members may have concerns that “the organization has such weak bench strength that it is not possible to promote from within” (Rothwell 2010). The Interviews indicated that 50% of participating organizations have 11-50 employees. Despite surpassing the capacity threshold appropriate for succession planning, organizations in this range defied the literature by considering themselves too small, often a product of their young age, to consider succession planning. According to the literature “some nonprofits have so few positions that they may not have the ability to offer opportunities for advancement; employees with the potential and the desire to advance their careers may move to larger organizations as a result” (Community Foundations of Canada 2017).

Respondents who considered themselves to be too small theorized succession planning could be a strategy sought in the future, but only after increasing in organizational capacity and maturity. Of the 50% of participating organizations with 11-50 employees, 25% indicated they had a succession plan in the Screening Tool. This trends slightly higher than SHRM’s *2006 Succession Planning Survey*, which indicated that 23% of medium-sized firms had plans (Martin 2006).

It was hypothesized that organizations with 51-100+ staff members may have greater ability to incorporate succession planning based on SHRM’s *2006 Succession Planning Survey*, which indicated that large organizations are more likely to have succession plans than small organizations (Martin 2006). The Interviews indicated that

15% of participating organizations have 51-100+ employees. Within this percentage, number of staff was not seen as a barrier to succession planning.

Rather, perceived barriers included monetary resources, time, organizational structure, and lack of experience with succession planning. The literature verifies these concerns, citing “few decision makers are willing to invest time, money, or effort in any activity that they believe will yield few benefits. It is thus essential to tie Succession Planning and Management issues directly to pressing organizational problems and to the organization’s core mission” (Rothwell 2010). Of the 15% of participating organizations with 11-50 employees, 40% indicated they had a succession plan in the Screening Tool. This trends slightly higher than the SHRM’s *2006 Succession Planning Survey*, which indicated that 36% of large firms had plans (Martin 2006).

To summarize, given that 65% of the participating organizations had 11+ staff members, it is plausible from Rothwell’s perspective of capacity alone, that an approach to succession planning is more likely to be possible for the majority of participating organizations. However, resistance to the idea of succession planning appeared in each staff range, an area of interest for future research.

Human Resources Department

The inquiry about whether an organization had a Human Resources Department was posited to provide insight as to how likely succession planning is to arise as a critical issue in long-term organizational development. The Community Foundations of Canada suggests that a benefit of a successful plan is the “alignment between your organization's vision and your human resources that demonstrates an

understanding of the need to have appropriate staffing to achieve strategic plans” (Community Foundations of Canada 2017).

It was hypothesized that organizations in which there is a designated individual responsible for human resources may be more equipped to focus attention on workforce needs, such as succession planning, than those that allocate human resources responsibilities to the Executive Director, their affiliated organization, or those that lack a Human Resources Department. Indeed, “succession planning and management and leadership development figure prominently on the agenda of many top managers. Yet, despite senior management interest, the task often falls to Human Resources Management (HRM) and Workplace Learning and Performance (WLP) professionals to spearhead and coordinate efforts to establish and operate strategically oriented succession programs and to avert succession crises” (Rothwell 2010).

The Interviews indicated that 35% of participating organizations have a designated individual responsible for human resources rather than including human resources as the Executive Director’s responsibility. In an interview, William J. Rothwell makes the case that in the event of a vacancy it is helpful to have a human resources professional, because “CEOs don't like to do two jobs more than anyone else does, so they pressure the Human Resources Department to recruit another person as quickly as possible” (Rothwell 2016).

To summarize, given that Executive Directors have limited time and many responsibilities and that affiliated organizations have limited administrative control in their Human Resources Departments and leadership selection processes, it is plausible that the organizations with succession plans in this study are among the 35% that have

a designated individual responsible for human resources. This concept is true for organizations featured in the Case Studies, classified as Supporting Objective 4.

Organizations with Succession Plans

Two key themes found throughout interviews with organizations with succession plans include a conscious shift from reactive to proactive cultures and limited experience with succession planning.

Widely accepted as a best practice for nonprofit organizations, “experience has proven to us that the strategic plan is the starting point for success in any or all of these initiatives because strategic planning provides the museum staff and Board with the opportunity to determine the optimal future for the museum and the changes required to achieve it” (Lord and Markert 2007).

From this strategic planning vein, organizations with succession plans have applied a similarly progressive approach in relation to organizational capacity and development. This is supportive of the literature, which states that succession planning “is proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from within the organization through planned development activities. It should be regarded as an important tool for implementing strategic plans” (Rothwell 2010).

Frequently motivated by the desire to improve upon past transition efforts and build leadership throughout the organization, a shift from reactive to proactive cultures manifested within each organization with a succession plan. The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Executive Transition Monograph Series *Building Leaderful Organizations: Succession Planning for Nonprofits* states, “while each [approach to succession planning] has different characteristics and is appropriate for different organizations and situations, all promote a strategic, proactive approach to ensuring

that nonprofits nurture, identify, and recruit the leadership they need to succeed” (Wolfred 2008). Motivated by these two desires, it is important to consider that all plans were characterized as “new” or “untested,” indicating that succession planning is fairly novel to the Association membership.

To summarize, while organizations with succession plans have adopted approaches in line with what the literature recommends for a successful plan, it may be premature to classify them as successful as they have yet to be validated by experience. Their primary motivations stemmed from the desire to improve upon a previous leadership transition experience.

Organizations without Succession Plans

Many organizations that participated in the Interviews and did not have succession plans are poised to embark on a plan in that they have a strategic plan, are open to the idea, and feel the most stable since the height of the recession. This could mean that those who postponed their retirement when the recession hit in December 2007, further delaying a major leadership shift (Norton and Linnell 2015), may soon consider retirement again. Yet there is an absence of confidence in both understanding and facilitating the succession planning process.

This is a natural response according to *Daring to Lead 2006: A National Study of Nonprofit Executive Leadership*, which states, “the term ‘succession plan’ is not universally understood, nor is the nature of succession planning activities” (Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred 2006). Furthermore, according to *Building Leaderful Organizations: Succession Planning for Nonprofits*, “until succession planning becomes as routine in the nonprofit sector as strategic planning and revenue

diversification, it will require extra effort on someone's part to get it going. Typically, the process starts—usually with some anxiety” (Wolfred 2008).

Even so, nearly every organization without a succession plan expressed the desire to see a public garden example, if only to better comprehend the resources required and the potential impact.

Given that this research presents examples of public garden succession plans through the Case Studies featured in Chapter 4: Results, further research could be completed to discern whether the availability of these examples has inspired organizations without succession plans to pursue succession planning in the future.

To summarize, while many participants without succession plans are poised to embark on a plan, there is an absence of confidence in both understanding and facilitating the succession planning process.

Interviews Conclusion

In conclusion, the Interviews indicate that while factors such as organizational structure, number of staff, and the presence of a Human Resources Department should influence an organization's approach to succession planning, no factor should preclude an organization from adopting a plan. Organizations without succession plans are uncertain of its costs, processes, and impacts. Conversely, organizations with succession plans have characterized the process as positive, but are unable to quantify their plans' success, as they are untested. Despite whether organizations do or do not have succession plans, the Association membership will continue to face leadership turnover in the near future and, therefore, need to effectively manage executive transition.

Supporting Objective 3: Understanding the positions of organizations without succession plans through dynamic discussion in the Focus Group

The Focus Group method was successful in achieving its research objectives. Key themes from the Focus Group include: mischaracterization of succession planning as replacement planning, the need for communication, and the rise of the “generalist” leader. Each of these concepts is discussed below.

Mischaracterization of Succession Planning as Replacement Planning

A key theme that emerged throughout the Focus Group was the mischaracterization of succession planning as replacement planning. It is common for these terms to be thought of as synonymous; they are not.

Replacement planning is a form of risk management that typically focuses “attention on each organizational unit—division, department, or work group—and asking the manager of each unit to identify up to three people from inside the organization as possible backups” (Rothwell, 2010).

On the contrary, succession planning “is proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from within the organization through planned development activities. It should be regarded as an important tool for implementing strategic plans” (Rothwell, 2010).

Of the eight Focus Group participants, five came from affiliated organizations and three came from independent organizations. One possible reason for this mischaracterization may stem from the additional challenges that affiliated organizations face, including having less administrative control in the transition and hiring processes.

The undesirable aspects of replacement planning, which were attributed to their perception of succession planning, included its short-term nature and

inflexibility. Because replacement planning identifies definitive backup personnel without the discussion of long-term strategies to develop talent individually and the organization as a whole, its short-term nature did not suit the participants. It is not unexpected that these nonprofit leaders preferred a long-term strategy as “the chief executives, Executive Directors, and presidents who head nonprofits generally tend to serve long tenures—terms measured in decades rather than in years” (Ingersoll and Gamble 2017). This research exhibits this point well, as the average tenure of a public garden leader as 10.72 years, which is slightly longer than the nonprofit leadership national average, 9.3 years (BoardSource 2015).

The Focus Group perceived succession planning to be inflexible, focusing solely on the replacement of senior leadership. On the contrary, *Building Leaderful Organizations: Succession Planning for Nonprofits* suggests, “the organization should look at how leadership can be cooperatively shared throughout the organization to reduce dependency on the top staff leader and take advantage of staff development opportunities made possible by the impending departure” (Wolfréd).

The Focus Group’s perception of inflexibility is largely contrasted by the Case Studies addressed in Supporting Objective 4, most of which claim their succession plan has increased individual staff flexibility and organizational flexibility. This is supported by the literature which states, “an organization that gives ongoing attention to talent-focused succession planning can be more nimble and flexible, having the skills and capacity at hand to meet whatever challenges may arise” (Wolfréd 2008).

The Focus Group reached a milestone towards the end of the session when discussing the question: How could we make succession planning a higher priority in our organizations? The 2017 Third Sector New England study, *Essential Shifts for a*

Thriving Nonprofit Sector, states, “succession planning has been a hot topic in the nonprofit sector for many years, with funders, sector leaders and capacity builders regularly making the case that organizations should make it a priority. Even as the sector faces a looming leadership transition, New England nonprofits appear unprepared for the challenge of finding and grooming future leaders” (Norton and Linnell 2015). This trend extends beyond New England and is of national significance as exhibited by the literature *Building Leaderful Organizations* which is based on *Daring to Lead 2006*’s national finding that “succession planning is not a top priority for most nonprofit leaders” (Wolfred 2008).

The question was met with a discussion surrounding the need to develop the next generation of public horticulture leaders through a strategic, long-term process focused on the readiness and capacity of an organization in the event of upcoming leadership transitions than the Executive Director alone. This description is highly applicable to the definition of succession planning for the purposes of this research, which is “a comprehensive, continuous process of ensuring the organization’s readiness and capacity to respond to a planned or unplanned change in top leadership and senior management positions. A succession plan is woven into the organization’s overall strategic plan and includes developing replacement talent within the organization, as well as identifying externally available talent sources.”

It is also reminiscent of the leadership literature which states, “ultimately, your success as a leader is the extent to which you have built leadership, or the next generation of leaders” (Ulrich, 2009). The discussion indirectly indicated a desire for succession planning; however, the deeply rooted mischaracterization of succession planning as replacement planning discouraged the group from recognizing it as such.

That succession planning is interpreted and implemented in many different ways is not surprising as *Daring to Lead 2006: A National Study of Nonprofit Executive Leadership* states “the term ‘succession plan’ is not universally understood” (Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred 2006).

To summarize, while the mischaracterization of succession planning as replacement planning is a common occurrence, succession planning’s long-term nature and desire to increase flexibility were desirable traits among the Focus Group.

The Need for Communication

The need for clear communication appeared as a key theme throughout the Focus Group session, and was notably present while discussing the hypothetical scenario outlined in the Exploration Question 1:

- After 30 years of successfully leading a nonprofit organization, the CEO is looking forward to retirement. His informally assumed predecessor, a Development Officer who has worked with him for 10 years, suddenly elects to take a position with a different organization. With a combined 40 years of institutional knowledge soon to be gone, the CEO and Board are at a loss for how to plan for the organization’s future.
- What concerns you most? Where would you begin? What would you do next?

The Focus Group posed solutions to remedy this scenario. First, the organization could have and possibly should have identified multiple interim successors; this is reminiscent of the literature, which states, “best practice organizations resist the tendency to designate an heir apparent and focus on identifying and developing multiple potential successors for a range of positions” (Groves 2007). Communicating how these options are assessed and selected is as important as outlining how they will be developed professionally. Individual

Development Plans (IDPs), which require strategy and discussion in their design “help individuals narrow the gap between their present work requirements/performance and future work requirements/potential” (Rothwell 2010) and may be one way to outline professional development.

Second, the Executive Director should have had proactive conversations with the Board. Indeed, the actions exhibited in the hypothetical scenario are in line with the literature, which states, “more often than not, nonprofit executives and Boards avoid discussion about succession planning” (Price 2008). However, “the better practice is for the Board, in partnership with the Executive Director, to see succession planning as an essential governance responsibility related to its duty to provide for staff leadership. This has greatest impact on agency outcomes when it’s done as a piece of a larger strategic planning effort” (Wolfréd 2008).

Third, the Focus Group suggested the organization should have been creating layers of resilience by developing staff members at all levels; this is reminiscent of the literature, which recommends providing, “learning opportunities and professional development for nonprofit leaders and staff, such as scholarships to attend trainings, conferences and professional association events, as well as resources to develop internal learning capacity” (Norton and Linnell 2015). To strengthen lines of communication between the Executive Director, Board, and staff, “the first step in crafting a leader development culture is to make the case for it” (Adams 2010b); in other words, have a transparent discussion about the future needs of the organization and how a succession plan might bridge those connections.

Without identifying it as such, the solutions offered closely resemble characteristics of a succession plan. The Focus Group’s mischaracterization of

succession planning as replacement planning eclipsed the true nature and benefits of having a succession plan, which encourages communication and transparency. This is a natural response according to *Daring to Lead 2006: A National Study of Nonprofit Executive Leadership*, which states, “the term ‘succession plan’ is not universally understood, nor is the nature of succession planning activities” (Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred 2006).

To summarize, the Focus Group identified communication as a critical aspect of leadership transitions, which is also a key component of succession planning.

The Rise of the “Generalist”

Another key theme was that the leadership among the Association membership today comes from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. This “generalist” leader, meaning well rounded with a breadth of experience in multiple disciplines, has become more desirable as gardens grow and become more organizationally complex. This is supported by the literature, which states, “to meet the challenges, today’s nonprofit executives need to demonstrate a wide range of behaviors. They also need to have a wide repertoire of knowledge, skills, and experiences, and know when to apply their array of skills, as the situation dictates. They must make sure that business operations run smoothly without displacing the relationship-based approach to nonprofit leadership, or losing sight of the vision and mission” (Crawford 2010).

Additionally, the trend to hire leaders from fields other than public horticulture, such as hospitality or business, has risen. Assistant Professor of Public and Nonprofit Management at the University of Southern California David F. Suarez’s *Street Credentials and Management Backgrounds: Careers of Nonprofit Executives in an Evolving Sector* “investigates the professional backgrounds and nonprofit

experience of leaders in the sector” (Suarez 2009). He found that in response to “mounting pressures to become more efficient and businesslike,” nonprofit leadership is changing and that “some nonprofit executives have spent most of their careers in the public sector or the business sector” (Suarez 2009). This, the Focus Group suggested, is all the more reason that a linear, replacement approach would not be viable, as there is a desire to incorporate fresh perspectives from outside the field.

Given that this trend reappears with the Case Studies addressed in Supporting Objective 4, further research could be conducted to discern whether this prominent trend has continued as a characteristic of public garden leaders.

To summarize, while leadership transitions are a common discussion within the subject of succession planning, the rise of the generalist trend presents a transition in what kind of leaders may be desirable among the Association membership.

Focus Group Conclusion

In conclusion, while there is a desire to increase the readiness of Association organizations in the event of leadership transitions through long-term objectives, increased flexibility, effective communication, and generalist leaders, succession planning was not understood among Focus Group participants as the strategy to accomplish this objective.

Supporting Objective 4: Understanding how a public garden can utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries through Case Studies and an Alternative Case Study

Case Studies

The Case Studies were successful in achieving the research objective to understand how a public garden might utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries. The John J. Tyler Arboretum, The North Carolina Arboretum, Green Bay Botanical Garden, and Desert Botanical Garden have established plans; Descanso Gardens and Mt. Cuba Center, an Alternative Case Study, are examples of developing plans.

Comparing Succession Plans

The National Council of Nonprofits lists ten planning tenants in their article “Succession Planning for Nonprofits”:

1. “Gain the commitment of Board and staff to manage transition intentionally.
2. Identify current challenges and those that lie ahead, and the corresponding leadership qualities that are needed to navigate the challenges successfully.
3. Consider whether placing an interim leader at the helm is the right path for your nonprofit.
4. Draft a timeline for leadership successions that are planned.
5. Adopt an Emergency Leadership Transition Plan to address the timely delegation of duties and authority whenever there is an unexpected transition or interruption in key leadership.

6. Identify leadership development opportunities for staff and Board members to expand their leadership skills so that the organization will have a "deeper bench" of future leaders.
7. Cross-train current staff to minimize the disruption from unexpected staffing changes.
8. Make plans to adequately support newly-placed employees, such as with coaching, mentoring, and defining goals.
9. Communicate: What will your organization say to stakeholders before, during, and after a transition of leadership? Thoughtful communications are needed in order to support the staff and organization during the transition process.
10. Onboard deliberately: Help new Board chairs and chief staff leaders feel confident and find their own voices” (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

These tenants will be used to objectively compare and contrast the Case Studies’ succession plans. It should be noted that this is only one set of criteria among many available against which to compare these nonprofit succession plans and not an evaluation any one plan’s effectiveness, especially since none have been tested and one has yet to be completed. Based on this specific set of criteria:

- All gardens gained the commitment of board and staff; identified current and future challenges; made plans to adequately support newly-placed employees; and onboarded deliberately.
- Most gardens considered whether placing an interim leader at the helm was the right path for their nonprofit; adopted an Emergency Leadership Transition Plan; identified leadership development opportunities for staff and Board; and had communication plans for before, during, and after the transition.
- Only one garden drafted a timeline for planned leadership succession and cross-trained staff.

Discussion of each tenant as it relates to the Case Studies is outlined with references to specific plans identified by their respective appendices.

It should be noted that while The North Carolina Arboretum is affiliated with the University of North Carolina (UNC), “The North Carolina Arboretum Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports the Arboretum’s mission to cultivate connections between people and plants” (The North Carolina Arboretum 2017). According to the Society’s Guidestar profile, Executive Director George Briggs is the principal officer; therefore, the arboretum may be compared to other nonprofits.

1. Gain the commitment of Board and staff to manage transition intentionally (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 13 Each Case Study’s Board and staff involvement within their succession planning processes

Organization	Board	Staff
John J. Tyler Arboretum	Full Board Executive Committee Search Committee	Executive Director Office Manager
The North Carolina Arboretum	Full Board UNC Board of Governors	Executive Director Chief Business/Operations Officer Senior Director, Mission Delivery Director For Human Resources Public Engagement Director
Green Bay Botanical Garden	Full Board Executive Committee Search Committee	Executive Director Director of Development, Marketing, & Communications Director of Horticulture
Desert Botanical Garden	Full Board Succession Planning Committee Finance Committee Search Committee	Executive Director Deputy Director Director of Development
Descanso Gardens	Full Board Transition Committee	Executive Director Invited staff input

Each Case Study satisfied this point. To insure the sustainability of their plans, each organization gained the commitment of their Board and, in some cases, Board

committees committed exclusively to succession planning. This is supported by the literature, which states, “as the ultimate guardian of the community’s investment in the agency, it is the Board’s duty, regardless of its practices to date, to attend to succession planning —and long before leadership issues create a crisis for the agency” (Wolfred 2008).

The degree to which each organization’s staff was included in the planning process varied. For instance, in each Case Study, the Executive Director was involved in a capacity that would not interfere with the selection of a new Executive Director in the event of a transition. This is supported by the literature, which states, “don’t ask the outgoing CEO to be a member of the search committee. It may seem like a respectful gesture and a good way to bring intimate organizational knowledge to the committee table. But this has proven to be problematic, particularly with candidates who, when interviewing, will feel uneasy or awkward talking openly with the Board about financial, personnel and organizational issues with the outgoing CEO sitting in the room” (Kittleman & Associates 2017).

Instances of appropriate Executive Director involvement exhibited in the Case Studies included the promotion and encouragement of the succession-planning process and willingness to “implement process[es] to develop key staff members and promote a culture that encourages professional development” (Quick 2009). This is reminiscent of many of the Case Studies’ Strategic Leadership Development approach to succession planning, which is “an ongoing process that identifies the core competencies, skills and knowledge needed by the organization in the next five years along with a plan to develop those competencies in your existing talent or to recruit new talent” (Price 2008).

The level of staff involvement, beyond that of the Executive Director, varies according to the needs of each Case Study organization. The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City’s *Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit* suggests, “an effective succession-planning process requires collaboration between Board members, the incumbent executive and key staff members”(Quick 2009). At the time when this data was gathered, many of the Case Study organizations had not shared the full details of their succession plans with their entire staff. The Society for Human Resource’s article *Point-Counterpoint: Should You Tell Employees They’re Part of a Succession Plan?* highlights the differing viewpoints on staff involvement.

On one hand, “transparent succession plans reinforce the company’s message to employees that their skills and experience are valued. They create the trust and buy-in needed to help the company retain top performers and reduce turnover and recruitment costs” (LaMarche and Ruyle 2015). On the other hand, “labeling employees [as successors or high potential employees] can create entitlement and tension” (LaMarche and Ruyle 2015).

To summarize, while all Case Studies gained the commitment of Board and staff to manage transition intentionally, each took a customized approach in line with organizational needs.

2. Identify current challenges and those that lie ahead, and the corresponding leadership qualities that are needed to navigate the challenges successfully (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 14 Each Case Study’s current challenges and those that lie ahead

Organization	Identify Current and Future Challenges
John J. Tyler Arboretum	Shipley’s decision to forgo the Executive

	<p>Director's salary made certain financial resources available. This allowed the committee to hire an executive search firm, which not only conducted a nationwide search, but also assisted in the development of the succession plan itself. This succession plan was created as a measure to meet transitions in which a voluntary Interim-Executive Director may not be available.</p>
The North Carolina Arboretum	<p>While the Arboretum's leadership continuity has been a benefit, experience has shown that new leaders following in the footsteps of long-term, entrepreneurial, successful departing leaders can face certain additional transition challenges than those following leaders with shorter or less originating roles. A key role of the Strategy Council format is to serve as a source of management continuity while a new leader acclimates, as well as a source of trusted counsel and perspective in the hiring process.</p>
Green Bay Botanical Garden	<p>The decision to begin a succession planning effort stemmed from a period of frequent leadership turnover within the organization's recent history. With the intent of attracting talent that could provide long-term leadership continuity, the garden completed a compensation analysis to ensure that the Executive Director's salary was competitive and attractive to the external market for the current and future leadership.</p>
Desert Botanical Garden	<p>"The Succession Planning Committee shall work with the Executive Director and the search firm to update the formal job description and list of Incentive Plan goals for the current fiscal year in order to match the Garden's current and future needs with the leadership experience and skills desired in the successor Executive Director. Attention shall be given to those executive requirements and responsibilities called for by the Garden's strategic plan" (Appendix Q).</p>
Descanso Gardens	<p>Because Descanso did not have an existing succession plan in place, the organization is using this experience to document helpful procedures and, in turn, initiate a succession planning effort through its findings. In seeking a new leader, the</p>

Garden seeks a visionary rather than someone whose expertise is horticulture.

Each Case Study satisfied this point by viewing succession planning as a tool to prepare for future challenges through leadership development.

Today, Tyler Aboretum recognizes there may not be someone like Board President Shipley Allinson, who had the time, the ability to forgo a salary, and a tenured relationship with the organization, to serve as Interim Executive Director in the event of a future transition. Therefore, its succession plan (Appendix K) specifies the Board’s first choice is to appoint an existing staff member as Interim-Executive Director in the event of an unplanned departure and necessitates that key staff members be developed to proactively meet this challenge well before it arises. This approach is supported by the literature, which characterizes succession planning as “proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from within the organization through planned development activities” (Rothwell 2010).

The North Carolina Arboretum recognizes that its current Executive Director, George Briggs, is the first and only official Executive Director in the Arboretum’s history. George recognized that “a founder’s or long-term executive’s professional identity is generally tightly intertwined with that of the agency he or she has created or served (Wolfred 2008) and has worked consciously to counteract this phenomenon, commonly known as “Founders Syndrome,” by distributing responsibility among his Strategy Council.

In fact, George explicated this during the Case Study saying the purpose of the Strategy Council “was to create a culture that is not solely dependent on one leader. I want the institution to be a managed, sustainable organization, and not ‘the George

Briggs Arboretum.” The Arboretum’s Succession Planning and Readiness document (Appendix L) is a representation of its culture and readiness mindset. It is reminiscent of the literature, which states, “good succession planning includes...an organizational culture that encourages the growth of new leaders, and adequate preparation for the planned departure of an executive” (Adams 2010b).

Unlike Green Bay Botanical Garden and Descanso Gardens’ succession plans, which were both motivated by the desire to improve upon past leadership transition experiences to meet future challenges, the Desert Botanical Garden views its succession plan (Appendix Q) as an opportunity for organizational and strategic planning. In the event of a planned departure, it explicitly states the need “to match the garden’s current and future needs with the leadership experience and skills desired in the successor Executive Director. Attention shall be given to those executive requirements and responsibilities called for by the Garden’s strategic plan.” The literature supports this, stating succession planning “should be regarded as an important tool for implementing strategic plans” (Rothwell 2010)” and that “experience has proven to us that the strategic plan is the starting point for success in any or all of these initiatives because strategic planning provides the museum staff and Board with the opportunity to determine the optimal future for the museum and the changes required to achieve it” (Lord and Markert 2007).

To summarize, all Case Studies identified current challenges and those that lie ahead, and considered the corresponding leadership qualities that are needed to navigate the challenges successfully relevant to their organizations.

3. Consider whether placing an interim leader at the helm is the right path for your nonprofit (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 15 Each Case Study’s decision whether to place an interim leader

Organization	Interim Philosophy
John J. Tyler Arboretum	“In the event there is no internal staff person the Board deems appropriate to serve as interim Executive Director, the Board may choose a Board member or conduct a search for an interim Executive Director” (Appendix K).
The North Carolina Arboretum	“The UNC President in consultation with the Board may appoint an interim leader if necessary” (Appendix L).
Green Bay Botanical Garden	“The Executive Committee has the ultimate authority to name interim and permanent replacements for the Executive Director. A natural alliance with the leadership team of Director of Horticulture, Director of Development, and Finance & Operations Manager should be formed” (Appendix P).
Desert Botanical Garden	“Until an Interim Executive Director is appointed... the garden’s senior staff and the Executive Assistant shall report to the Board President or his/her designee” (Appendix Q).
Descanso Gardens	Have asked staff member to serve as interim leader in the past. To be determined in newly developing plan.

Nearly each Case Study satisfied this point by including the option to have an Interim-Executive Director if it is warranted; Descanso Gardens’ succession plan is currently developing and its decision to consider an interim leader has yet to be determined. However, the organization has turned to a staff member to serve as Interim-Executive Director in the past.

Although the Case Studies have not definitively stated their intention to place an interim leader, “research suggests that a skilled interim Executive Director helps nonprofits to emerge stronger, more fiscally sound, and with higher levels of optimism” (North Carolina Center for Nonprofits 2012).

In cases like Descanso Gardens, in which an internal interim leader was appointed by default rather than by strategic consideration during the organization’s search for a new Executive Director, there may not have been enough of a disconnect between the departing Executive and the first successor, who departed from the organization in less than one year. “To provide time and space for those attachments to dissolve with the departure of a particularly dominant and charismatic leader, some agencies have found it very helpful to bring in an interim ED. The failure to provide for an interim breathing period is one primary reason that so many EDs who succeed founders survive less than two years. They unintentionally become interim executives” (Wolfred 2008). Unfortunately, this was the outcome Descanso experienced when its first Executive Director vacated his position in 1995.

Not having a succession plan in place essentially cost Descanso Gardens money and time when the organization experienced a difficult 5-year period in which it sought, unsuccessfully, to hire a new Executive Director. After an initial offer for the Executive Director position was declined, the consultant-led search continued, and in 2003 a new Executive Director was hired. However, it was not a good fit and his tenure ended less than one year later, recalling the literature’s term “interim executive” (Wolfred 2008). This is supportive of the literature which states, “Figuring out how much succession planning costs is relatively easy... What's harder to figure out is how much it costs your organization not to invest in intentional succession planning and the

leadership development that goes along with it (Turnage 2015). Descanso views its costly past as a learning opportunity and plans to document its current succession planning process.

To summarize, all Case Studies with established succession plans have incorporated the option to place an interim leader and one Case Study currently developing its plan is considering its decision.

4. Draft a timeline for leadership successions that are planned (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 16 Each Case Study’s timeline for planned succession

Organization	Timeline for Leadership Succession
John J. Tyler Arboretum	No predetermined timeline; “In the event of an unplanned departure, the Board President should outline the succession plan, timeline and steps including staff involvement” (Appendix K).
The North Carolina Arboretum	No predetermined timeline.
Green Bay Botanical Garden	“Begin the recruitment and hiring process six months prior to departure to provide overlap for onboarding and training of about 3 months” (Appendix P).
Desert Botanical Garden	No predetermined timeline; “Promptly upon the announcement of a retirement or departure date by the Executive Director, the Succession Planning Committee shall establish a timeline for the executive search process set forth in this plan” (Appendix Q).
Descanso Gardens	To be determined with development of forthcoming succession plan

Only one of the Case Studies, Green Bay Botanical Garden, satisfied this point with a drafted timeline. Others, such as the Tyler Arboretum and the Desert Botanical Garden, have specified the need for a timeline within their plans, the nature of which will be determined when a key position becomes vacant.

Another term for a planned leadership succession is Departure Defined Development, which is “a course of action that Boards and executives employ when an executive begins thinking about leaving an organization” (Price 2008). This approach to succession planning “is especially recommended for the longer-tenured Executive Director (generally ten years or more) who has a relatively definite departure date in mind. Typically, that date is two to three years out” (Wolfred 2008).

Organizations like The North Carolina Arboretum may not have a defined timeline, because it must abide by UNC regulations. In the case of Tyler Arboretum, its first succession plan, which was an instance of Emergency Succession Planning, was time sensitive due to the unfortunate circumstances of its Executive Director’s untimely passing. However, there was a conscious effort for the committee to work carefully in documenting its processes and determining the appropriate successor rather than hire a quick solution. This may have influenced its decision not to predetermine a timeline; although, Tyler Arboretum’s succession plan (Appendix K) addresses the need for a timeline recognizing that “time will be of the essence”.

As a general rule for nonprofits, the literature recommends “the work required by these agencies to ensure a successful hand-off to new leadership requires at least eighteen months of preparation prior to the scheduled departure. However, stretching the work over more than three years gives it too little immediacy to inspire sustained interest and commitment to the process” (Wolfred 2008).

To summarize, while only one Case Study drafted a timeline for leadership successions that are planned, two have included the necessity for a timeline to be established in the event of a planned transition, which will be determined at the time of the transition.

5. *Adopt an Emergency Leadership Transition Plan to address the timely delegation of duties and authority whenever there is an unexpected transition or interruption in key leadership (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).*

Table 17 Each Case Study’s stance on Emergency Leadership Transition Plans

Organization	Emergency Leadership Transition Plan
John J. Tyler Arboretum	“In the event of an unplanned vacancy of the Executive Director position, the first choice is to appoint an existing staff member as interim Executive Director per the procedures set forth below” (Appendix K)
The North Carolina Arboretum	“Each [Strategy Council member] has served at various times as the Acting Executive Director, and each has particular but broad skills and abilities that can be adapted to the needs of a new [interim] Executive Director” (Appendix L).
Green Bay Botanical Garden	“A team approach to leading the organization will be implemented, overseen by the Executive Committee, and the leadership team will take individual segments of the job description” (Appendix P).
Desert Botanical Garden	“The purpose of this Emergency Succession Plan is to promote the stability of the Desert Botanical Garden through management continuity in the event of the sudden unavailability of the Executive Director (e.g., due to illness or injury) that is expected to be prolonged beyond one month. The Garden’s Board of Trustees believes that due diligence in exercising its governance functions requires that it have an emergency executive succession plan in place” (Appendix Q).
Descanso Gardens	To be determined with development of forthcoming succession plan

Nearly each Case Study satisfied this point; Descanso Gardens has not yet determined its approach to an unplanned leadership vacancy. Another term for Emergency Leadership Transition Plan is Emergency Succession Planning, which is “a plan to address an unanticipated departure of an Executive Director, usually occurring with only a few days or weeks notice (Price 2008).

The Case Studies with Emergency Succession Plans have developed strategies enabling their organizations to move forward in the event of a leadership vacancy. According to CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, succession planning consists of “a set of activities that ensure no loss of momentum at the point of transition from a current leader to his or her successor” (CompassPoint Nonprofit Services 2017). The two options featured within the Case Studies include the option to call upon either senior staff leadership or Board leadership to serve as Interim-Executive Director.

Three of the Case Studies plan to initially call upon staff in the event that the Emergency Succession Plan is activated; however, none of the Case Studies identified an heir apparent. This is wise according to the literature, which states, “Many executives mistakenly believe that succession planning means grooming a successor. While there are many advantages to grooming an heir apparent, there are also pitfalls. Succession planning in the nonprofit sector requires broader thinking that provides opportunity for leadership development at all levels of the organization” (Price 2008). Green Bay Botanical Garden’s approach (Appendix P) has delineated that “a team approach to leading the organization will be implemented, overseen by the Executive Committee. The leadership team [Director of Development, Finance & Operations Manager, and Director of Horticulture] will take individual segments of the [Executive Director] job description.”

Tyler Arboretum’s succession plan states (Appendix K) “in the event there is no internal staff person the Board deems appropriate to serve as interim Executive Director, the Board may choose a Board member or conduct a search for an interim Executive Director”. This is supported by the literature, which states, “A current Board member may volunteer to serve as Interim Executive Director. This Board

member must have administrative experience and the time to devote to the role” (Moran 2016). Similarly, Desert Botanical Garden’s Emergency Succession Plan (Appendix Q) states, “until an Interim Executive Director is appointed...the Garden’s senior staff and the Executive Assistant shall report to the Board President or his/her designee.”

To summarize, each Case Study with an established succession plan adopted an Emergency Leadership Transition Plan to address the timely delegation of duties and authority whenever there is an unexpected transition or interruption in key leadership.

6. Identify leadership development opportunities for staff and Board members to expand their leadership skills so that the organization will have a "deeper bench" of future leaders (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 18 Each Case Study’s leadership development opportunities for staff and Board members to expand their leadership skills

Organization	Leadership Development Opportunities
John J. Tyler Arboretum	Since the original document was created, the organization’s approach to Strategic Leadership Development has evolved; Human Resources Office Manager Kathryn Ombam has noted a culture shift more inclusive of professional development opportunities as well as consistent evaluation systems, which provide regular opportunities for staff to discuss career goals and pathways.
The North Carolina Arboretum	The arboretum invests in and professionally develops staff at all levels so that they may compete for a position. This falls within responsibilities managed by the Director of Human Resources, Amy Owenby, who reports directly to the Executive Director.
Green Bay Botanical Garden	Executive Director needs to create training plan and identify key staff’s strengths to carry out duties

Desert Botanical Garden	As an extension of the Executive Director’s succession plan approved in March 2016, senior leaders completed both Non-Emergency and Emergency succession plans for their own positions in November 2016. Beyond the senior management level, programs to develop staff are in place. As head of Human Resources, Deputy Director MaryLynn Mack believes sustainability of people makes for a better institution. For instance, the Legacy Leadership Academy is a 12-month program open to all employees except senior management.
Descanso Gardens	To be determined with development of forthcoming succession plan

Nearly each Case Study satisfied this point. This is reminiscent of additional literature that refers to Strategic Leadership Development is “an ongoing process that identifies the core competencies, skills and knowledge needed by the organization in the next five years along with a plan to develop those competencies in your existing talent or to recruit new talent” (Price 2008).

A trend emerged among four of the five Case Studies: the progression of simple and reactionary succession plans evolved to become comprehensive and proactive succession plans. Table 23 shows these four Case Studies, which initially exhibited succession plans created to address Departure Defined Development scenarios. Then, an additional measure, Emergency Succession Planning, was included to proactively address a predominantly reactionary scenario. From there, the proactive planning culture expanded to include succession plans for senior leadership before incorporating efforts toward Strategic Leadership Development throughout the organization.

The Mack Center on Nonprofit Management in the Human Services’s report *Leadership Succession Planning: Implications for Nonprofit Human Service Organizations* identified a similar trend: “a review of the literature on the different

types of succession, drawing heavily from the for-profit sector, suggests that there is no single best approach to succession planning and implementation. Recent research does, however, call for an overarching shift from a traditional replacement-planning model to a more comprehensive succession management approach” (Austin and Gothard 2010).

Table 19 The majority of Case Studies incorporated multiple approaches to succession planning

Organization	Approaches to Succession Planning		
	Strategic Leadership Development	Departure Defined	Emergency Succession Planning
John J. Tyler Arboretum	X	X	X
The North Carolina Arboretum	X	X	X
Green Bay Botanical Garden	X	X	X
Desert Botanical Garden	X	X	X
Descanso Gardens		X	

Presently, Descanso Gardens is documenting its succession planning process during its current leadership transition, which began with a Departure Defined Development scenario. If/when the plan becomes formalized, it is plausible that the plan may progress as the others did to include one or more approaches to succession planning. This could be an area for further research.

To summarize, each Case Study with an established succession plan identified leadership development opportunities for staff and Board members to expand their leadership skills so that the organization will have a "deeper bench" of future leaders.

7. Cross-train current staff to minimize the disruption from unexpected staffing changes (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 20 Each Case Study’s stance on cross-training current staff members

Organization	Cross-training
John J. Tyler Arboretum	No predetermined cross-training
The North Carolina Arboretum	“Cross-train to minimize “one-deep” forms of leadership” (Appendix L).
Green Bay Botanical Garden	Currently, one staff member has expressed moderate interest in leading in an interim capacity in the event of a vacancy. A cross-training plan has been developed so that in the coming years, the Executive Director may professionally develop this staff member. The staff member has not been promised the position as successor, but is being developed professionally for personal and organizational flexibility.
Desert Botanical Garden	No predetermined cross-training; Programs are available to develop staff other than leadership
Descanso Gardens	To be determined with development of forthcoming succession plan

Only two of the Case Studies, Green Bay Botanical Garden and The North Carolina Arboretum, satisfied this point.

The Green Bay Botanical Garden has created cross-training plans for key staff members that have indicated interest in developing their competencies so that they may grow professionally as individuals and, if needed, may serve on an interim basis for the Executive Director and Director of Development positions. They have not, however, been promised these positions as heir apparents. This is supported by the literature, which states “While there are many advantages to grooming an heir apparent, there are also pitfalls. Succession planning in the nonprofit sector requires broader thinking that provides opportunity for leadership development at all levels of

the organization. If you are mentoring a young talent, just remember that that you are grooming a nonprofit leader – who may or not be your successor” (Price 2008).

The North Carolina Arboretum uses cross training as a way to increase organizational flexibility. The Focus Group perceived succession planning to be inflexible due to mischaracterization of succession planning as replacement planning. This is a common misperception as evidenced by the literature which features the notion that “the succession plan is too rigid to meet changing needs” as a perceived barrier to succession planning” (Quick 2009).

Due to its bureaucratic ties, The North Carolina Arboretum should be the most inflexible Case Study of the five and yet, its culture of continuous improvement and cross training provides personal flexibility to the organization, especially millennial generation and organizational flexibility to the arboretum by introducing them to a variety of work experiences. If the arboretum retains the learner, the organization becomes more flexible in that more than one individual is equipped to step-up in an the event of an absence or vacancy; if the he/she takes an external position, the field of public horticulture is enriched by the addition of a well-rounded professional.

Of course, it is always possible they will return to the arboretum as well. As referenced in the literature, “‘boomerangs’ (people who have left and come back) are just as valuable as people who stay” (Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman, 2009). This negates the notion that investing in talent with potential to leave is a fruitless effort. “Leaders who invest in tomorrow’s talent build for the future, create sustainability, and ensure a legacy” (Ulrich, Smallwood, and Sweetman 2009).

This is echoed by the Desert Botanical Garden, which does not have cross training explicitly sited within its succession plan, but makes an effort to develop staff

through programs that transcend departments, such as the Legacy Leadership Academy, a 12-month program open to all employees except senior management. While this may minimize the disruption from unexpected staffing changes, the garden’s motivation stems more directly from its Mission, Vision, Values, and Organizational Culture document (Appendix S), which states “the garden accepts the risk of being a leader in its field—some of its best and brightest might be recruited away if the garden cannot provide them with increasing responsibility.”

Incorporating cross training as a way to build resilience into an organization may also be contributing to the “generalist” trend discussed by the Focus Group. The “generalist” trend suggests that leadership that is well rounded with a breadth of experience in multiple disciplines. According to the Focus Group, the leadership among the Association membership today comes from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, which are not of traditional horticultural training. This trend was found among the Executive Directors exhibited in the Case Studies as exhibited in Table 25.

Table 21 Case Study Executive Directors hail from a variety backgrounds, some of which were outside the field of public horticulture

Organization	Executive Director	Background
John J. Tyler Arboretum	Cricket Brien	Landscape Architecture
The North Carolina Arboretum	George Briggs	Landscape Architecture
Green Bay Botanical Garden	Susan Garot	Hospitality
Desert Botanical Garden	Ken Schutz	Business and Science
Descanso Gardens	David Brown	Former President of local college of art and design and experience in nonprofit consulting

This trend has also been found throughout the nonprofit sector. Assistant Professor of Public and Nonprofit Management at the University of Southern California David F. Suarez’s *Street Credentials and Management Backgrounds: Careers of Nonprofit Executives in an Evolving Sector* “investigates the professional backgrounds and nonprofit experience of leaders in the sector” (Suarez 2009). He found that in response to “mounting pressures to become more efficient and businesslike,” nonprofit leadership is changing and “some nonprofit executives have spent most of their careers in the public sector or the business sector” (Suarez 2009).

Given the array of professional backgrounds and tenures combined with the variety of organizational structures, it is clear how and why each organization has taken a slightly different approach to succession planning to best suit their needs.

To summarize, while only two of the Case Studies with established succession plans cross-train current staff to minimize the disruption from unexpected staffing changes, each Case Study’s Executive Director exemplifies the generalist trend.

8. Make plans to adequately support newly-placed employees, such as with coaching, mentoring, and defining goals (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 22 Each Case Study’s plans to support newly-placed employees

Organization	Support Newly-placed Employees
John J. Tyler Arboretum	“The Board should establish an onboarding plan for the new Executive Director with clear written performance objectives at periodic intervals over the first year. These objectives should be mutually developed and clearly understood by the Board and the new Executive Director” (Appendix K).
The North Carolina Arboretum	Because the Arboretum cannot pre-select, Director of Human Resources Amy Owenby encourages coaching techniques, especially as a way to develop the millennial

	generation seeking career flexibility.
Green Bay Botanical Garden	The Director of Development has been mentoring, a staff member who has indicated interest in temporarily acting as or applying for the Director of Development in the event of a vacancy.
Desert Botanical Garden	Advancing Excellence, the garden’s new Human Resources performance management system, requires all supervisors to meet quarterly with their employees to discuss professional goals and career advancement. “SMART” goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) are co-developed to act as a road map to reach the employee’s ambitions.
Descanso Gardens	Act III includes onboarding and supporting the incoming Executive Director so that he/she is able to transition appropriately on a personal and organizational level; it is important that Descanso accepts its new Executive Director.

Nearly all of the Case Studies satisfied this point through efforts in coaching, mentoring, or defining goals. This is approached in different capacities and stages.

For instance, the Tyler Arboretum’s succession plan has an entire section dedicated to “Post Hire” of an Executive Director. Anecdotally, Cricket has praised Board President Shipley Allinson and Kittleman and Associates, the search firm engaged in her placement, for their willingness and ability to coach and mentor her in this new role. In a Case Study interview, Cricket said, “In my case, Board support and staff coaching – guidance, mentoring, encouragement, and patience – have been critical to my ability to succeed at Tyler, as I came from outside the public garden world. A resource that I have come to think somewhat necessary to my personal transition, and may be for others, is executive coaching that helps new leaders step into their roles as leaders of an organization – how best to work with staff, Board, external stakeholders, the community to inspire and galvanize a vision.” “Some of the best [nonprofit] Executive Directors have received terrific mentoring from their Board

of Directors, which can be passed on to senior staff. The Executive Director should make time for this responsibility. Executive Directors can also connect key staff with external mentors who are familiar with the organization” (Price 2008).

Coaching has increased in popularity as a method to onboard employees as cited in the literature: “Executive coaching — which in *Daring to Lead 2001* appeared to have little traction among nonprofit executives — is becoming a more frequent tool for sustaining and improving executive leadership. When asked if they had utilized executive coaching, 25% of survey respondents said yes — a remarkably high number. While coaching has gained in popularity, it is likely that the term ‘coaching’ is still used by executives to mean different things, including less formal mentoring relationships” (Bell, Moyers, and Wolfred 2006).

The North Carolina Arboretum, the Green Bay Botanical Garden, and the Desert Botanical Garden incorporates coaching, mentoring, and goal setting as facets of their organizational culture, which are more readily identifiable among existing staff rather than a newly placed executive. For instance, the North Carolina Arboretum Director of Human Resources, Amy Owenby encourages coaching techniques, especially as a way to develop the millennial generation seeking career flexibility. The literature states, “an organization that gives ongoing attention to talent-focused succession planning can be more nimble and flexible, having the skills and capacity at hand to meet whatever challenges may arise” (Wolfred 2008).

The Green Bay Botanical Garden has created mentorships among multiple senior leaders and supporting staff members as a result of the succession planning process. This is supported by the literature, which recommends organizations and management development professionals “develop the organization’s mentor network

by fully engaging all managers in mentoring relationships with direct reports and high potential employees in other work units...to effectively build their leadership pipeline” (Groves 2007).

Desert Botanical Garden uses “SMART” goals (Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely), a strategy endorsed by the literature, which states, “a goal is to pinpoint developmental gaps and then discuss ways to fill them by using developmental experiences, such as training or coaching (Rothwell 2010).

To summarize, each Case Study with an established succession plan made plans to adequately support newly-placed employees, such as with coaching, mentoring, and defining goals

9. Communicate: What will your organization say to stakeholders before, during, and after a transition of leadership? Thoughtful communications are needed in order to support the staff and organization during the transition process (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 23 Each Case Study’s plans for communication before, during, and after a transition of leadership

Organization	Communications
John J. Tyler Arboretum	“The external contacts shall include volunteers, major donors, members, community/government partners, institutional funders, key members of the arboretum community and the press. The communications plan shall also include staff communications. The nature of the communication and message to each recipient will be established by the Board President and interim Executive Director as appropriate under the circumstances” (Appendix K).
The North Carolina Arboretum	No predetermined communications plan.

Green Bay Botanical Garden	“A communications plan should include the following steps: Board chair notifies Board and staff, marketing staff notifies members via e-news of acting Executive Director/team, acting director/team continues until permanent replacement found” (Appendix P).
Desert Botanical Garden	Full Communication Plan available for Emergency and Non-emergency Succession Plan in Appendix Q.
Descanso Gardens	Before the search for a new Executive Director can begin, internal stakeholders were informed of David’s planned retirement. A plan of communication was developed, which began by informing senior leadership, then all staff, then philanthropic donors, and, finally, the membership. Only afterwards were press releases written with the help of Communications staff members. Communications in developing plan to be determined

Nearly each Case Study satisfied this point. Organizations like The North Carolina Arboretum may not have a defined communications plan, because it must abide by UNC regulations. The Tyler Arboretum, Green Bay Botanical Garden, and Desert Botanical Garden recognize the need and significance of a communications plan. This is in line with the literature, which states, “it is often said that it’s not possible to over communicate in times of uncertainty. That is never more true than during an executive transition. Departure defined transitions present a unique opportunity to shine a spotlight on the strengths of an organization, engage the public in the organization’s mission, and even attract new stakeholders. Recommendations include: Put your communication plan in writing; narrow the communication band; be mindful about the timing of communication; use a variety of communication vehicles; keep staff informed; respect the confidentiality of candidates (Price 2008).

Even in the development of a succession plan, Descanso Gardens has held the importance of communication in high regard by first communicating the exiting Executive Director’s transition with internal stakeholders and then sharing the news with external audiences.

To summarize, three Case Studies with established succession plans have a predetermined communications plan that determines what will the organizations will say to stakeholders before, during, and after a transition of leadership? The Case Study with a developing succession plan has abided by a process similar to those with established plans during the current transition.

10. Onboard deliberately: Help new Board chairs and chief staff leaders feel confident and find their own voices (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

Table 24 Each Case Study’s plans for deliberate onboarding Board chairs and chief staff leaders

Organization	Onboarding
John J. Tyler Arboretum	“The Board should establish an onboarding plan for the new Executive Director with clear written performance objectives at periodic intervals over the first year” (Appendix K).
The North Carolina Arboretum	“Place new hires into temporary positions, enabling interface and training with the incumbent before the actual transition of responsibility” (Appendix L).
Green Bay Botanical Garden	“Begin the recruitment and hiring process six months prior to departure to provide overlap for onboarding and training of about 3 months” (Appendix P).
Desert Botanical Garden	“Promptly following hiring, the Executive Committee and successor Executive Director shall agree on a 90-day “onboarding” and transition plan to provide support and direction about priorities” (Appendix Q).
Descanso Gardens	An orientation led by Board members will help the incoming Executive Director to become acclimated into his/her new organization. Because the current Executive Director intends to retire in August 2017, this provides the opportunity to overlap, if necessary, but hopes for as brief an overlap as possible.

Each Case Study satisfied this point to different degrees. Onboarding is critical to the transition of the new Executive Director. “It’s understandable that Board

members want to relax once the new Executive Director is in place, but stay in there at continued intensity for a while longer, and make sure the executive has the support [he or] she needs to get off to a great start. A new executive may be reluctant to ask Board members to do something, or may be new to the community or field as well.” (Masaoka and Wolfred 2012). Descanso Gardens views its previous leadership transition as a learning opportunity; this time, they plan to embark on a full transition process, including onboarding the new Executive Director, rather than solely completing an Executive search.

One strategy that some of the Case Studies, such as the Desert Botanical Garden and Descanso Gardens, are planning to use in the event of a transition is to insure there is overlap between leaders. According to one source, “knowledge transfer is a key component of the succession plan... whenever possible, ensure an overlap of time so the exiting employee can help orient and train the new employee” (Community Foundations of Canada 2017).

Conversely, “other Executive Directors and consultants disagree on how much overlap there should be between old and new leaders -- or if there should be any overlap at all. Carol Weisman, president of Board Builders, a fund-raising and governance consultant for nonprofit clients, in St. Louis, thinks the departing leader should just clear out” (Dickey 2002). Because Descanso’s outgoing Executive Director intends to retire in August 2017, this provides the opportunity to overlap, if necessary. From his perspective, he plans to support the transition in any way possible, but hopes for as brief an overlap as possible. Instead, an orientation led by Board members will help the incoming Executive Director to become acclimated into his/her new organization.

A compromise between these viewpoints could be to “ask the outgoing CEO to provide the new CEO with a list of key stakeholder names in the community for which the outgoing CEO may personally extend an introduction of the new CEO. Major donors, elected officials, civic and business leaders, stakeholder partner groups, and other nonprofit colleagues in the community are typical targets. However, it should be understood that it is in sole discretion of the new CEO to ask the outgoing CEO to get involved in this way. The Board can support this policy by making sure the outgoing CEO understands this nuance long before the new CEO is selected” (Kittleman & Associates 2017).

To summarize, each Case Study plans to help new Board chairs and chief staff leaders feel confident and find their own voices by onboarding deliberately.

Human Resources: A Unifying Element

The suite of case studies showcases a variety of approaches to succession planning, ranges in annual operating budget, geographic location, tenures held by current Executive Directors, organizational structures, and staff numbers. These differences uniquely inform each organization’s approach to succession planning, tailoring strategy to available resources. The single unifying factor across the suite was the presence of a designated individual responsible for human resources.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management’s *2006 Strategic HR Management* survey report, which surveyed for-profit, nonprofit organizations, and government organizations “in many organizations, HR has moved from merely an administrative role to that of a strategic partner and facilitator. Today, organizations are realizing HR’s potential to positively affect a wide range of activities such as

budgeting, talent management, succession planning, analysis of trends and forecasting” (Fegley 2006).

The presence of a designated individual responsible for human resources occurred in a variety of ways, from a Board member with a professional human resources background to a second-in-command Deputy Director, and yet it appears to be the key to the existence of the plan. This begs the question: What role does a human resources presence play in nonprofit succession planning? The literature claims that as “the ultimate guardian of the community’s investment in the agency, it is the Board’s duty, regardless of its practices to date, to attend to succession planning—and long before leadership issues create a crisis for the agency” (Wolfred, 2008).

However, “despite senior management interest, the task often falls to human resource management (HRM) and workplace learning and performance (WLP) professionals to spearhead and coordinate efforts to establish and operate strategically oriented succession programs and to avert succession crises. In that way, they fill an important, proactive role demanded of them by top managers, and they ensure that succession planning issues are not lost in the shuffle of fighting daily fires. ” (Rothwell 2010). Given that 21% of the Interview participants indicated their Executive Director was responsible for human resources activity, it is plausible that succession planning may not receive adequate attention within the Association membership.

A 2008 study by Purdue University title *Growing Your Own Leaders: Succession Planning in Libraries* recognized “a significant gap in management skills in two areas: human resource responsibilities and conflict resolution” and, therefore,

“suggested strategically planning around human resource development and succession planning” (Nixon 2008).

This is not to say that a human resources presence, whether a full department or a Board member with a human resources professional background, is the sole answer to implementing succession plans throughout the membership. “The business literature on the topic is clear on two essentials: succession planning only works if the top-level administrators are 100% behind it; and the program needs to be an open process. It cannot be done by the human resource department alone or by middle managers mentoring and grooming staff members reporting to them. The administration has to be deeply involved” (Nixon 2008).

Furthermore, succession planning “is rarely, if ever, taught in most undergraduate or graduate college degree programs—even in those specifically tailored to preparing HRM and WLP professionals. For this reason, HRM and WLP professionals often need assistance when they coordinate, establish, operate, or evaluate SP&M programs” (Rothwell 2010). This means that in addition to Executive Directors, human resources professionals are not always proficient in succession planning.

Therefore, “an effective succession-planning process requires collaboration between Board members, the incumbent executive and key staff members” (Quick 2009). The Case Studies often feature human resources professionals as those key staff members. “The planning should be completed and a plan adopted in advance of any departures. This will help create a strong foundation and conditions for a successful executive leadership transition. Furthermore, success depends on defined responsibilities among Board, the executive and staff. Properly outlining

responsibilities and communicating them prior to the planning process will help alleviate concerns among those involved” (Quick 2009).

The Case Studies feature collaborations among Executive Directors, Boards, and human resources professionals as exhibited in Table 29.

Table 25 A human resources presence exists in each organization’s plan

Organization	Responsible for Succession Planning		
	Executive Director	Board	Human Resources
John J. Tyler Arboretum	X	X	X
The North Carolina Arboretum	X	X	X
Green Bay Botanical Garden	X	X	X
Desert Botanical Garden	X	X	X
Descanso Gardens	X	X	X

To summarize, the collaboration of Board and staff, especially with regards to human resources professionals, exhibited within the Case Studies’ succession plans is in line with the literature’s recommendations for a successful plan.

Demystifying Perceived Barriers to Succession Planning

One of the barriers commonly cited by participants in both the Interviews and the Focus Group was lack of resources, namely money and time.

The absence of a human resources professional from an organization may not be an intentional decision; rather, financial resources may not be available to fund this as a staff position. One possible solution to this barrier is to recruit a human resources professional to the Board. “One committee that may be appropriate for the Board to consider is a Human Resources (HR) Committee” (Berger 2014). “Committee members might include the staff Human Resources Director (if there is one) or

Executive Director, and/or non-Board volunteers such as a human resources attorney” (Masaoka 2009).

In the cases of Desert Botanical Garden and Green Bay Botanical Garden, a lawyer and a human resource professional served respectively on the Boards and were the primary authors of their organizations’ formalized plans, a method that was both cost-effective as they served in a voluntary capacity and efficient in timing.

Some Interview and Focus Group participants felt their organizations did not have the time to dedicate to a planning process. According to the *Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit*, this is a common perception. The toolkit recommends organizations should “schedule time to develop and approve a succession plan. The executive and/or executive committee should schedule two meetings specifically to draft a succession plan. Then the complete Board should schedule one to two meetings to discuss and approve the succession plan” (Quick 2009). Desert Botanical Garden’s process was similar to this. After the committee’s first meeting on the subject, which Chair of the Succession Planning Committee Marta Morando described as intense yet efficient, Marta drafted an outline based on discussion points. The committee met three more times to refine and complete the plan. The entire process required four meetings.

Some Interview and Focus Group participants felt their organizations did not have the financial resources to dedicate to a planning process. In the case of Descanso Gardens, not having a plan in place cost the organization time and money. During the 5-year period in which it sought, unsuccessfully, to hire a new Executive Director, the organization paid for a consulting firm to conduct multiple searches, strained resources in asking a staff member to serve as Interim-Executive Director for an

extended period of time, and paid for the relocation of a new Executive Director who parted ways with the organization within one year. This is indicative of the literature, which states, “Figuring out how much succession planning costs is relatively easy... What's harder to figure out is how much it costs your organization not to invest in intentional succession planning and the leadership development that goes along with it (Turnage, 2015).

To summarize, the perception that succession planning is resource-intensive and, therefore, a barrier for organizations, is one that exists within the Association membership and beyond; however, the Case Studies demystify this perceived barrier through their experiences with the succession planning process.

Case Studies Conclusion

In conclusion, when objectively compared against the National Council of Nonprofits ten planning tenants for succession planning in nonprofits, the Case Studies are robust in nearly each of the criteria. Weaknesses among the Case Studies include drafting predetermined timelines for leadership successions that are planned and cross-training current staff to minimize the disruption from unexpected staffing changes. Additionally, Case Study organizations are not yet able to quantify the impact of their plans' successes, as they have not yet been tested by a transition.

Alternative Case Study

Mt. Cuba Center (MCC), like Descanso Gardens, is currently in the process of developing its succession plan strategy. It is considered to be an Alternative Case Study, because while this data was not collected in an identical manner to the Case Studies, the committee viewed the data as relevant to the field of public horticulture.

These same ten tenants listed by the National Council of Nonprofits will be used to objectively review MCC’s developing succession plan, beginning with Table 30 and followed by discussion on each point.

Table 26 An objective comparison of the Alternative Case Study

	MCC
1. Gain the commitment of Board and staff	X
2. Identify current and future challenges	X
3. Consider whether placing an interim leader	
4. Draft a timeline for planned leadership successions	
5. Adopt an Emergency Leadership Transition Plan	
6. Identify leadership development opportunities for staff and Board	X
7. Cross-train current staff	X
8. Make plans to adequately support newly-placed employees	X
9. Communicate: before, during, and after a transition of leadership	
10. Onboarding deliberately	

1. Gain the commitment of Board and staff to manage transition intentionally.

The decision to begin a succession planning effort stemmed from a goal in the organization’s most recent strategic plan, rather than the onset of a transition. This is in line with the literature, which states succession planning “is proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from within the organization through planned development activities. It should be regarded as an important tool for implementing strategic plans” (Rothwell 2010).

Between the Board’s vision and the course set by Executive Director Jeff Downing and Human Resources Manager Colleen Kilroy, the collaboration works to include staff throughout the process, which is not only critical to the sustainability of the plan, but also fosters a culture of succession planning, a long-term goal. This is in

line with the *Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit*, which recommends organizations “involve staff and Board members in the implementation of the succession development plans. Ensure that the plans are linked to the achievement of strategic and operational objectives. This helps talent easily identify their contribution while focusing on development” (Quick 2009).

2. Identify current challenges and those that lie ahead, and the corresponding leadership qualities that are needed to navigate the challenges successfully.

Through the job validation and labor gap analysis exercises, MCC has been able to identify key and critical positions. This term is interpreted differently by every organization, but generally applies to positions that are critical to organizational operations and would be imperative to fill in the event of a vacancy.

For most of the Case Studies, key positions are described as mission-critical and primarily include senior leadership. According to the literature, “key positions can be defined as those positions that are crucial for the operations of your organization and, because of skill, seniority and/or experience, will be hard to replace” (Community Foundations of Canada 2017). Mt. Cuba Center Executive Director Jeff Downing views key positions as “a combination of expertise combined with Mt. Cuba Center-specific internal organizational knowledge.”

This could include a gardener, who may not qualify as senior leadership, but has extensive knowledge of his/her garden and the institution. MCC’s Human Resources Manager has challenged the organization not to identify key positions by the title of an employee, but rather the knowledge, responsibilities, and role within the greater context of the organization. In nonprofits, key positions may include

individuals “pertinent to your organization, such as volunteers” (Community Foundations of Canada 2017).

The North Carolina Arboretum Human Resources Manager has similarly begun to consider extending the term to apply to specialized positions such as the Bonsai curator, though currently the organization’s Succession Planning and Readiness document focuses on senior leadership.

In conclusion, the term key position is highly subjective and, like succession planning, will be defined differently by each organization depending upon its needs and conditions.

3. Consider whether placing an interim leader at the helm is the right path for your nonprofit.

Mt. Cuba Center has yet to develop this policy.

4. Draft a timeline for leadership successions that are planned.

Mt. Cuba Center has yet to develop this policy.

5. Adopt an Emergency Leadership Transition Plan to address the timely delegation of duties and authority whenever there is an unexpected transition or interruption in key leadership.

Mt. Cuba Center has yet to develop this policy.

6. Identify leadership development opportunities for staff and Board members to expand their leadership skills so that the organization will have a "deeper bench" of future leaders.

Unlike the progression exemplified by the Case Studies, which generally evolved from Departure Defined, to Emergency Succession Planning, to Strategic Leadership Development, Mt. Cuba Center is currently developing a comprehensive

planning process that can most aptly be characterized as Strategic Leadership Development. The literature identifies this strategy to succession planning as the “Career Planning Approach: Succession planning and management is tied to strategic plans through individual career planning processes. In consultation with their organizational superiors and others, individuals examine their own career goals in light of the organization’s strategy. They can then make decisions about how they can best contribute to emerging organizational needs” (Rothwell 2010).

A ground up approach, each exercise builds upon the last. For instance, the exercise in job validation, which includes staff at all levels, helps to inform the labor gap analysis, which will inform the identification of key and critical positions, which will signal incumbent positions in need of support, etc.

While the ultimate goal is to create a culture of Strategic Leadership Development, MCC’s Human Resources Manager recognizes this may take some time. She works thoughtfully to make the process accessible to staff by introducing one component at a time. In this way, communication is clear, staff has buy-in throughout the process, and the organization moves together, incrementally, towards the ultimate goal. This is in line with the *Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit*, which recommends organizations “involve staff and Board members in the implementation of the succession development plans. Ensure that the plans are linked to the achievement of strategic and operational objectives. This helps talent easily identify their contribution while focusing on development” (Quick 2009).

7. Cross-train current staff to minimize the disruption from unexpected staffing changes.

Mt. Cuba Center has yet to develop cross-training plans, but may develop them as a result of the Labor Gap Analysis exercise.

8. Make plans to adequately support newly-placed employees, such as with coaching, mentoring, and defining goals (National Council of Nonprofits 2016).

In order to develop employees and hold them accountable to expectations, it is important that a clear performance management system is in place. Previously, Mt. Cuba Center's system has operated in the form of a typical annual performance review. However, Colleen hopes to advance a more agile system that encourages supervisors to meet more frequently with staff for coaching sessions. To begin this effort, each leadership team member is reading the same coaching book as a way to both develop personal coaching skills and also realign thought processes to be less focused on traditional performance evaluation and more on staff development. This is supported by the literature, which states, "an organization that gives ongoing attention to talent-focused succession planning can be more nimble and flexible, having the skills and capacity at hand to meet whatever challenges may arise" (Wolfred 2008).

9. Communicate: What will your organization say to stakeholders before, during, and after a transition of leadership? Thoughtful communications are needed in order to support the staff and organization during the transition process.

Mt. Cuba Center has yet to develop a communications plan; however, its current communications are focused primarily on internal stakeholders.

10. Onboard deliberately: Help new Board chairs and chief staff leaders feel confident and find their own voices

Mt. Cuba Center has yet to develop an onboarding process.

Alternative Case Study Conclusion

In conclusion, when objectively compared against the National Council of Nonprofits ten planning tenants for succession planning in nonprofits, the Mt. Cuba Center Alternative Case Study is robust in half of the criteria points; however, when the planning process is complete, there will be an opportunity to reassess its approach.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

At the conclusion of this study, it is important to reflect upon the original research objective: to understand the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the American Public Gardens Association (the Association) membership.

The Screening Tool provided insight to this objective at a highly superficial level by indicating that while succession planning is not commonly practiced throughout the Association membership, there is an interest in discussing the subject. Despite its superficiality, the increasingly comprehensive methods that followed, including the Interviews, the Focus Group, and the Case Studies, only served to support this finding. This was somewhat expected as the majority of Association member gardens are nonprofits and “most nonprofit organizations do not have a succession plan in place” (Price 2008). Indeed, the extent to which succession planning is practiced within the Association membership is limited; even organizations with succession plans are admittedly new to the process.

From this understanding, conclusions regarding the Association membership’s philosophy towards succession planning have emerged. Throughout the entire research process, from the Screening Tool to the Case Studies, the majority of gardens self-identified themselves as “unique” by virtue of their organizational structure, number of staff, and a host of additional conditions. Indeed, “every organization has its own unique leaders, culture and needs” (Price 2008). This characterization may be correct in every instance; however, it does not disqualify any garden from the ability to have a

succession plan. This self-characterization as “unique” appeared among organizations with and without succession plans; the discrepancy exists in how the organizations viewed succession planning.

For instance, organizations that mischaracterized succession planning as replacement planning suggested their organizational structures were “unique” and the inflexible nature of succession planning would not be able to support their dynamic needs. Conversely, organizations with plans viewed succession planning as means to strategically increase flexibility within their unique organizational structure by creating a culture of succession planning and readiness throughout the organization. Furthermore, the perception that succession planning is resource-intensive and, therefore, a barrier for organizations, is one that exists within the Association membership and beyond; however, the Case Studies demystify this perceived barrier through their experiences with the succession planning process.

This suggests that one reason succession planning may be a limited practice within the Association membership could be a lack of understanding of succession planning as a practical strategy for leadership continuity.

To adjust this perception, succession planning should be presented as a long-term organizational strategy with roots in human resources and a focus on both current and future needs. Furthermore, it must be understood as a solution rather than an uncomfortable subject so “that instead of avoiding this delicate issue, Boards will behave responsibly by teeing up the issue of succession planning for a direct discussion” (Chandler 2015).

The more succession planning is accepted as an accessible, proactive strategy within the Association membership, the more comfortable Boards and Executive

Directors may become with the subject, leading to increasingly open dialogue, strategy experimentation, and communication of trials and triumphs within the membership.

This has the potential to create a culture of leadership continuity focused on developing Association member professionals, the organizations they serve, and the Association membership as a whole.

Chapter 7

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study revealed areas for additional research and opportunities to improve this process if replicated in the future.

Additional Research

- The question of why interest in succession planning may have increased in the membership over the last decade could be explored.
- The studies within the Literature Review include nonprofits outside of the Association membership. This comparison was drawn, because there is more succession planning research for nonprofits than for public gardens and because many Association member gardens hold nonprofit status. For the purposes of this research, it serves as a reflection of a larger research group in which public gardens may be included until additional research is conducted within the field of public horticulture. This research presents examples of public garden succession plans through the Case Studies featured in Chapter 3. Further research could be completed to discern whether the availability of these examples has inspired those organizations without succession plans to pursue succession planning in the future.
- The “generalist” trend appeared in both the Focus Group and the Case Studies; further research could be conducted in the future to discern whether this prominent trend has continued as a characteristic of public garden leaders.
- Additional research solely dedicated to succession planning for organizations affiliated with institutes of higher education or municipalities would be highly beneficial. These gardens have less administrative control of their approach to succession planning as they are bound by affiliation regulations, which differ from one case to the next. The North Carolina Arboretum has cultivated a culture of readiness through staff development and the Strategy Council; however, this strategy may not apply to every affiliated public garden; therefore, more examples are needed.

- At the time of this research, each of the succession plans featured in the Case Studies was relatively new and had yet to be tested. As organizations without succession plans seek to learn the impact of such plans, it may be beneficial for the field to observe what has become of these plans and how have they evolved since the original research. Additionally, some of the succession plans featured in the Case Studies had already been revised to expand beyond the Executive Director's position and include more staff. It is plausible that Descanso Gardens, which is currently developing its processes, follows suit.

Opportunities for Improvement

- It may be beneficial to gather an increased amount of baseline information regarding the status of succession planning within public gardens through a survey. Of the 569 contacts the Screening Tool reached, only 86 participated in the survey. While random in nature, in that there was no control over who would respond, a greater representation of the membership could have been yielded from an increased number of responses. Strategies to accomplish this may include additional reminder emails and a wider window of time for participation. However, given the context of the overall research, complete with multiple, intensive methods, the number of responses suited the ability and time available to the researcher.
- Now that the succession planning conversation has been started within the field of public horticulture, future research could be pursued with less intensive methods of data acquisition (i.e. phone interviews vs. on-site Case Studies). However, the variety of hands-on approaches was valuable in this first data acquisition study as they indicated the commitment of the researcher to handle subject carefully and with sensitivity. For instance, initially gardens featured in Case Studies were hesitant to provide their full identities and opted to have their organization be represented anonymously. However, after conducting in-person Case Studies, each garden felt comfortable sharing their insights publically, identity included. The dismantling of succession planning as an uncomfortable subject in public horticulture is still in its early stages. Perhaps with additional research and conversation, the subject will become more accessible and require less intensive research methods.

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UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE IRB, EXEMPT LETTERS

Screening Tool Method

DATE: January 6, 2016

TO: Grace Parker
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [852040-1] Succession Planning in Public Gardens Screening
Tool SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: January 6, 2015

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE IRB, EXEMPT LETTERS
Interviews

DATE: February 18, 2016

TO: Grace Parker
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [872271-1] Semi-structured Conversation (Interview)
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: February 18, 2016

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE IRB, EXEMPT LETTERS
Focus Group

DATE: June 8, 2016

TO: Grace Parker
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [917744-1] Succession Planning Focus Group

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: June 8, 2016

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

**UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE IRB, EXEMPT LETTERS
Case Studies**

DATE: September 6, 2016

TO: Grace Parker
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [953716-1] Case Study Questions

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: September 6, 2016

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (2)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Appendix A

AMERICAN PUBLIC GARDENS ASSOCIATION EBLAST

Greetings [NAME],

As a garden leader, I've had the pleasure of personally speaking with you about the challenges of cultivating future leadership in our profession and the importance of succession planning for public gardens. In fact, the Professional Development Goal in our 2015-2020 Strategic Plan specifically states our intent to provide a roadmap to leadership at all levels.

With your help and input, we can begin to make great strides. Grace Parker, a first year Longwood Graduate Fellow, is directing her Master's Thesis toward succession planning. At this stage, Grace is seeking the following information:

1. Does your organization have a succession plan in place?
2. Have you had to exercise your succession plan in the past 5-10 years?
3. Would you be willing to discuss your organization's experiences?

Will you share your experience by taking two minutes to provide a yes or no response to these 3 simple questions through the link below?

Submit Your Response Here

(Survey closes February 1, 2016)

It's that easy. This is not a sales opportunity and your answers are 100% confidential. It allows Grace to gain baseline feedback on the state of our industry in regard to this important issue.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about this research, feel free to contact Grace Parker, Masters Candidate, at gbyrne@udel.edu. You may also contact the professor leading the broader research project she is working on:

Dr. James Flynn, jflynn@udel.edu.

I personally appeal for your participation in this research. Grace's research results will be broadly available and directly applicable to gardens of all sizes. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours,

Dr. Casey Sclar

Executive Director

American Public Gardens Association

Appendix B

SCREENING TOOL QUESTIONS

Survey Questions for Screening Tool

Method: Qualtrics©

Researcher: Grace Parker

Succession planning can be defined as

- A comprehensive, continuous process of ensuring the organization's readiness and capacity to respond to a planned or unplanned change in top leadership and senior management positions. A succession plan is woven into the organization's overall strategic plan and includes developing replacement talent within the organization, as well as identifying externally available talent sources.

1. Does your organization have a succession plan in place?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure

2. Have you had to exercise your succession plan in the past 5-10 years?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure

3. Would you be willing to discuss your organization's experiences (such as developing a succession plan, identifying critical competencies, conducting an executive-level search, and/or creating professional development opportunities for senior staff, etc)?
 - a. Yes (If so, please provide preferred contact email and phone number)
 - b. No

Appendix C

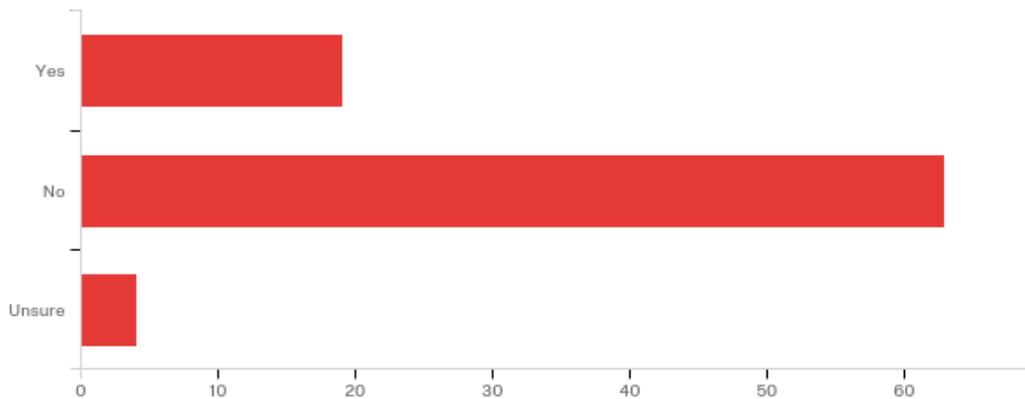
SCREENING TOOL RESULTS

Q1 - Succession planning can be defined as

- A comprehensive, continuous process of ensuring the organization's readiness and capacity to respond to a planned or unplanned change in top leadership and senior management positions. A succession plan is woven into the organization's overall strategic plan and includes developing replacement talent within the organization, as well as identifying externally available talent sources.

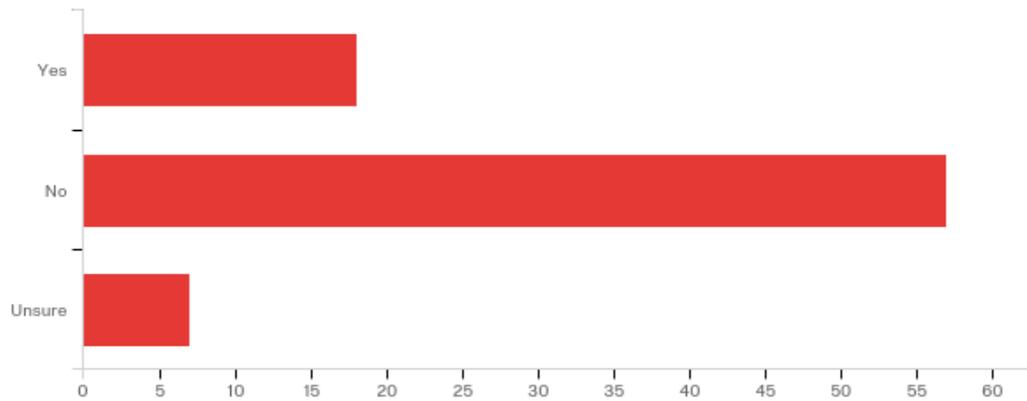
- Does your organization have a succession plan in place?

Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1.00	3.00	1.83	0.49	0.24	86



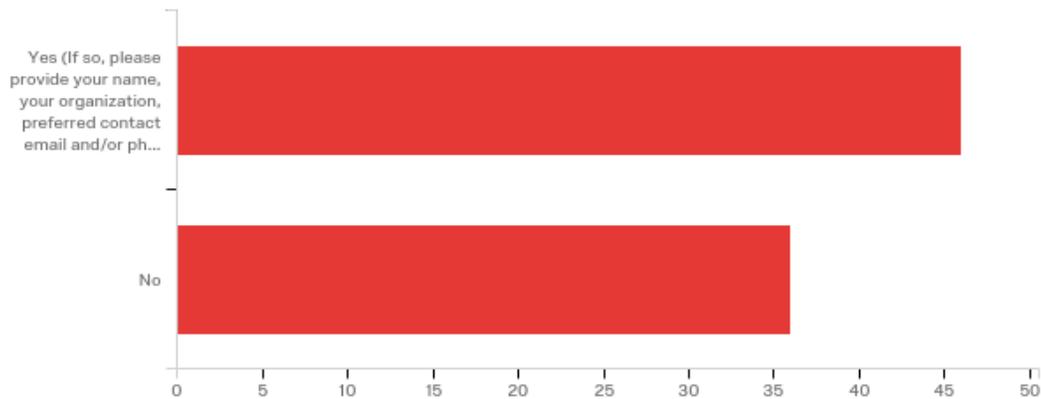
Q2 - Have you had to exercise your succession plan in the past 5-10 years?

Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1.00	3.00	1.87	0.54	0.29	82



Q3 - Would you be willing to discuss your organization's experiences (such as developing a succession plan, identifying critical competencies, conducting an executive-level search, and/or creating professional development opportunities for senior staff, etc)?

Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1.00	2.00	1.44	0.50	0.25	82



Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PART I: Explanation of conversation organization

- Thank participant for participation
- Remind them of the purpose(s) for the study
- Informed consent for recorded conversation
- Baseline questions
- Discussion of screening tool responses

PART II: Baseline questions (can be one word answers)

- Please describe the length of your current Executive Director's tenure.
- Describe your organizational structure, including the number of staff in each distinct unit.
- Does your organization have a Human Resources Department?
 - o If so, what duties are assigned to the HR department?
 - o If you don't have a stand-alone HR department, who is responsible for your HR activities?

PART III: Discussion of screening tool responses

Question 1: Does your organization have a succession plan in place?

- By succession plan, I mean... "A comprehensive, continuous process of ensuring the organization's readiness and capacity to respond to a planned or unplanned change in top leadership and senior management positions. A succession plan is woven into the organization's overall strategic plan and includes developing replacement talent within the organization, as well as identifying externally available talent sources".

If participant answered "Yes":

- How did your organization arrive at the decision to implement a SP?
- Does your SP relate directly to an organizational strategic plan?
- There are 3 well-recognized types of SP. Would you say your SP aligns primarily with one of these 3 in particular?

Strategic Leadership Development

- An ongoing process that identifies the core competencies, skills and knowledge needed by the organization in the next five years along with a plan to develop those competencies in your existing talent or to recruit new talent.

■
Departure Defined Development

- A course of action that Boards and executives employ when an executive begins thinking about leaving an organization.

Emergency Succession Planning

- A plan to address an unanticipated departure of an Executive Director, usually occurring with only a few days or weeks notice.

If participant answered “No”:

- Does your organization have a strategic plan in place?
- Why do you think your organization does not have a SP in place?
- Would your organization be interested in implementing a SP in the future?

If participant answered “Unsure”:

- I am very interested in your response. Please describe the basis of your uncertainty.
- Does your organization have a strategic plan in place?
- Would your organization be interested in implementing a SP in the future?

Question 2: Have you had to exercise your succession plan in the past 5-10 years?

If participant answered “Yes”:

- Please describe the circumstances under which the plan was exercised.
- Was the plan successful?
- Have you had to amend your succession plan since then? Why?

If participant answered “No”:

- If Q1/YES:
 - Have there been no leadership shifts since SP implementation?
 - Do you anticipate the need to exercise this plan in the near future?
- IF Q1/NO:
 - Have there been any leadership shifts in the past 5-10 years?
 - If yes: Do you think a succession plan would have affected this transition? Why?
 - If no: Do you anticipate leadership changes in the near future? Why?

If participant answered “Unsure”:

- I am interested in your response. Please describe the basis of your uncertainty.
- Do you anticipate the need to exercise SP in the near future?

Appendix E

FOCUS GROUP PLANNING DOCUMENT

Wednesday, June 8, 4:30-5:30
Cambridge Room, Intercontinental Hotel
Grace Parker – Welcoming and question facilitator
Rick King– Welcoming and time-keeper

Supplies (Grace to provide):

Printed sign	Pens	Sharpies
Printed waivers	Nametags	Recording device
		Water bottles

Objectives: Given that participants currently do not have a formal succession plan in place, the objectives for this Focus Group are to understand:

- 1) Participant perception of succession planning as it does or does not relate to public gardens
- 2) Participant position of not having a formal plan (barriers, reservations on the subject)
- 3) What would be most helpful for future transitions (succession planning or perhaps otherwise)

Schedule of the Day:

8:00AM GP to send out pre-scheduled email reminder to participants
4:00PM GP arrive at location to set up directional sign, waivers, chairs, name tags
4:15PM RK arrives at location; GP instructs how recording device will work
4:20PM Participants arrive: should sign waivers, pick up nametags, and have a seat
4:30PM GP to make introductory remarks

- Introduce facilitators: Grace and Rick
- Thank participants for participation
- Reiterate purpose of study
- Identify objectives of Gocus Group
- State there are no wrong answers, just discussion
- Explain ground rules: silence phones, speak one at a time, keep points as concise as possible to give everyone the opportunity to speak

Appendix F

FOCUS GROUP WAIVER

Succession Planning in Public Horticulture Focus Group

Conducted by Longwood Graduate Fellow, Grace Parker with support from Rick King, Thesis Committee member and past APGA Board member

Thank you for participating in this study regarding succession planning in public horticulture! This session will be recorded for later transcription.

The goal for this session is to have a productive discussion of participant experiences and opinions on the subject. Please know you are welcome to abstain from answering any questions that you would prefer not to answer.

When this research is published, it will not mention your identity or organization. The exception to this would be if I contact you directly seeking permission to include a direct quote from today's session.

If you have any questions about our study, please feel free to ask.

Thank you for assisting in this important research!

I am willing to participate in this Focus Group:

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Appendix G

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Part I: Engagement questions

1. (Round robin opener and ice breaker – GP & RK go first) Please introduce yourself (name, position, organization) and answer the question, “If you won the lottery tomorrow, currently valued at \$110 million, would you quit your job?”
2. When you think about succession planning, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Why?

Part II: Exploration questions

1. The following is a hypothetical scenario
 - a. After 30 years of successfully leading a nonprofit organization, the CEO is looking forward to retirement. His informally assumed predecessor, a Development Officer who has worked with him for 10 years, suddenly elects to take a position with a different organization. With a combined 40 years of institutional knowledge soon to be gone, the CEO and Board are at a loss for how to plan for the organization’s future.
 - b. What concerns you most? Where would you begin? What would you do next?
2. Think back to an experience in your own career where there has been an unexpected change in leadership. Can you account for this experience?
3. What are the barriers or opportunities you see regarding succession planning?
4. How can we make the information on succession planning in public gardens more accessible?
5. How could we make succession planning a higher priority in our organizations? (Both from the standpoint of implementation or a simple initiation of discussion?)
6. Leadership in many gardens felt they practiced succession planning as part of their organizational culture, rather than reliance on a formal document. What do you think of this practice? What do you like about it, what don't you like about it?

Part III: Exit question

1. Is there anything else you would like to say about succession planning as it may or may not relate to public gardens?

Appendix H

CASE STUDIES SCOPE OF WORK

Thesis Background Information

Thesis Committee Members:

Dr. James Flynn (Committee Chair) University of Delaware School of Public Policy

Dr. Casey Sclar, The American Public Gardens Association

Dr. Harvey White, University of Delaware School of Public Policy

Richard King, Kittleman & Associates

Research Objectives:

To understand the extent to which succession planning* is practiced within public horticulture.

*A comprehensive, continuous process of ensuring the organization's readiness and capacity to respond to a planned or unplanned change in top leadership and senior management positions. A succession plan is woven into the organization's overall strategic plan and includes developing replacement talent within the organization, as well as identifying externally available talent sources.

**This research recognizes not all case studies will "fit" this definition of succession planning verbatim.

Research Timeline:

July 2015	Began literature review
October 2015	Thesis proposal submission
January 2016	Surveyed American Public Gardens Association membership
February-April 2016	Interviewed 35 public garden leaders throughout the country
June 2016	Facilitated Focus Group with 8 public garden leaders without succession plans at the American Public Gardens Association annual conference in Miami, FL
August-December 2016	Will conduct 5 case studies with public gardens throughout the country with formal or informal succession plans
May 2017	Projected thesis defense and publication

Case Study Scope of Work

Research Objectives:

To understand how a public garden can utilize succession planning to address issues in leadership continuity, however formally or informally, through direct observation and semi-structured inquiries.

Case Study Format

- Each case study will include a series of selective, recorded interviews within an organization.
- Persons of interest within each organization to be interviewed include:
 - Garden Executive Director
 - 1 Board member most closely associated with the succession plan
 - 1 Senior leader other than the Executive Director most closely associated with the succession plan
 - Other pertinent persons involved in plan, if recommended by garden.
- Grace Parker will ideally conduct these recorded case study interviews in person; the Longwood Graduate Program will fund travel expenses.
- Interview questions will be prepared in advance and semi-structured in nature, allowing for flexibility in discussion.

Degree of Recognition

- Until this point, all Interviews have been confidential, with no direct quotes attributed to individuals or organizations.
- Going forward, recorded case study interviews may be used to provide quotes verbatim.
- Concerning the sensitive nature of succession planning and the potentially private staffing details that may arise in case study interviews, the following degree of recognition is proposed:
 - Allows organization's succession planning experience to be fully recognized as a case study, but anonymous in nature (i.e. garden name and staff names will not be listed).
 - Details such as geographic location (i.e. Mid-Atlantic, Pacific), budget size (small, medium, large), and position titles (i.e. Executive Director, Manager) may be referenced.
 - It is the organization's prerogative to define the extent to which succession-planning documentation may be referenced (i.e. all names in documents must be redacted vs. available to share in published materials in its entirety).
 - Garden name may be listed as a resource among all 30+ gardens that have contributed to this research (will not be highlighted specifically as case study).

Appendix I

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

Questions for Board Members

1. Please describe the length of your tenure with the organization.
2. Please describe your understanding of the organization's succession plan.
 - a. Was the plan modeled after an existing framework?
3. What is your involvement or role within the current succession plan?
4. How did the Board arrive at the decision to initiate a succession plan?
 - a. Did this plan come from an external organization/consultant?
5. Had you been involved with a succession planning process before your time on this organization's Board?
6. Is there a committee within the Board responsible for the succession plan's continued relevance and necessary updates?
7. Is the plan confidential in nature?
8. What have been the organizational benefits of having a plan in place?
9. What have been the organizational drawbacks of having a plan in place?
10. Would you recommend your organization's approach to succession planning to fellow public gardens?
11. Is there anyone else you feel I should speak with for this case study?

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

Questions for Executive Director

1. How, if at all, does your organization define key positions? What positions, if any, are given special attention in your succession-planning program and why?
2. How, if at all, does your organization identify, describe, or clarify the requirements of key positions? (For example, has your organization made an effort to identify job responsibilities, competencies, or success factors by level?)
3. How, if at all, does your organization assess current job performance for succession planning and management purposes? (Do you use the organization's existing performance appraisal system— or something else?)
4. Does your organization use replacement charts based on the current organization chart? (If not, why?)
5. How, if at all, does your organization attempt to integrate succession planning and management with organizational strategy? With human resource strategy?
6. How, if at all, does your organization identify high-potential employees (who are capable of advancing two or more levels beyond their current placement)?
7. How, if at all, does your organization establish individual development plans (IDPs) to plan, guide, and accelerate the development of high-potential employees?
8. What special problems, if any, has your organization encountered with succession planning and management? How have those been solved?
9. To the best of your knowledge, has the plan positively or negatively impacted the staff in day-to-day operations?
10. Would you recommend your organization's approach to succession planning to fellow public gardens?

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

Questions for Senior Leaders

1. Please describe the length of your tenure with the organization.
2. Please describe your understanding of the organization's succession plan.
3. What is your involvement or role within the current succession plan?
4. How, if at all, does your organization establish individual development plans (IDPs) to plan, guide, and accelerate the development of high-potential employees?

An individual development plan (IDP) results from a comparison of individual strengths and weaknesses on the current job and individual potential for possible advancement to future key positions. Preparing an IDP is a process of planning activities that will narrow the gap between what individuals can already do and what they should do to meet future work or competency requirements in one or more key positions. An IDP is a hybrid of a learning contract, a performance contract, and a career planning form.

- a. Does the formalization of the succession plan extend beyond top leadership?
5. As a senior leader, how, if at all, has this succession plan changed the way you manage supporting staff?
6. To the best of your knowledge, has the plan positively or negatively impacted the staff in day-to-day operations?
7. What have been the organizational benefits of having a plan in place?
8. What have been the organizational drawbacks of having a plan in place?
9. Would you recommend your organization's approach to succession planning to fellow public gardens?
10. Is there anyone else you feel I should speak with for this case study?

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

Questions for Other Persons of Interest

1. Please describe the length of your tenure with the organization.
2. Please describe your understanding of the organization's succession plan.
3. What is your involvement or role within the current succession plan?
4. How, if at all, does your organization establish individual development plans (IDPs) to plan, guide, and accelerate the development of high-potential employees?

An individual development plan (IDP) results from a comparison of individual strengths and weaknesses on the current job and individual potential for possible advancement to future key positions. Preparing an IDP is a process of planning activities that will narrow the gap between what individuals can already do and what they should do to meet future work or competency requirements in one or more key positions. An IDP is a hybrid of a learning contract, a performance contract, and a career planning form.

- a. Does the formalization of the succession plan extend beyond top leadership?
 5. As a senior leader, how, if at all, has this succession plan changed the way you manage supporting staff?
 6. To the best of your knowledge, has the plan positively or negatively impacted the staff in day-to-day operations?
 7. What have been the organizational benefits of having a plan in place?
 8. What have been the organizational drawbacks of having a plan in place?
 9. Would you recommend your organization's approach to succession planning to fellow public gardens?
10. Is there anyone else you feel I should speak with for this case study?

Appendix J

JOHN J. TYLER ARBORETUM SUCCESSION PLAN

Overview

The following is a plan to address emergency, interim and long term succession of leadership. The focus is on the succession planning for the Executive Director position.

Succession Plan for Staff Other Than the Executive Director

The Executive Director shall be responsible for planning and executing succession plans for key staff positions. The Executive Director will prepare and submit to the Board the plan to fulfill the functions of the senior staff position in the event of an unplanned vacancy. At various times in the process of succession, time will be of the essence. The Executive Director and Board shall meet as needed in person or by conference phone in order to promptly act in the succession process.

Preparation for Succession of the Executive Director

Key Transition Knowledge: The Executive Director, in consultation with the Board, will prepare an organizational chart depicting the roles of the staff and the reporting lines. The duties of each staff position shall be set forth in writing and each staff member shall have a periodic performance review, no less than annually. The Office Manager, with the assistance of the Executive Director, shall maintain a Transition Binder, which has key information necessary to continue the operation of the Arboretum in the absence of the Executive Director. The Transition Binder shall include the organizational chart; staff, director, Board and key stakeholder information; financial information including Form 990's; communications plan for an unplanned absence of the Executive Director; bank and other key third party relationships; status on pending projects; people accountable for the projects and other information that the Executive Director and Board President deem appropriate to include. The Transition Binder can be in paper and/or electronic form and shall be provided to the Board President by the Office Manager in the event the Executive Director has an unplanned absence.

Ability to Obtain Third Party Authorizations: The bank relationships and other key third parties authorizations shall be arranged so that in the event of the Executive Director's unplanned absence, the required authorizations and powers will be able to be assumed by the Board President, Treasurer and/or the interim Executive Director as appropriate under the circumstances, without authorization by the Executive Director.

Development of Communications Plan: The Board and Executive Director shall develop a list of the persons who should be contacted in the event of an unplanned absence of the Executive Director and the means of contact. The external contacts shall include volunteers, major donors, members, community/government partners, institutional funders, key members of the arboretum community and the press. The communications plan shall also include staff communications. The nature of the communication and message to each recipient will be established by the Board President and interim Executive Director as appropriate under the circumstances. The purpose of the plan is to keep staff and all key stakeholders apprised of the situation and the Board's actions regarding business continuity and filling the Executive Director vacancy.

Unplanned Leave – Interim Executive Director

In the event of an unplanned vacancy of the Executive Director position, the first choice is to appoint an existing staff member as interim Executive Director per the procedures set forth below. In the event there is no internal staff person the Board deems appropriate to serve as interim Executive Director, the Board may choose a Board member or conduct a search for an interim Executive Director. In the event a search is needed, the Executive Committee shall conduct the search and submit a candidate to the Board for its consideration.

- If the Executive Director position is vacant or expected to be vacant for 60 days or more, the Board shall appoint an interim Executive Director.
- The Executive Committee and the Executive Director (if available) will review current staff members and positions to determine who might be appropriate for the interim Executive Director position.
- Annually the Executive Committee shall discuss with the current Executive Director who on the staff might be most appropriate to fill the role of Executive Director, and which individual(s) and/or position(s) might provide management during a transition or unexpected leave.
- The Board shall review salary compensation and provide an adjustment for increased responsibilities during a transition.
- The Executive Committee and Board President shall take on more of an active oversight role with the organization during this interim period.
- The Board President will act as the external spokesperson for the organization.
- The Treasurer shall review the bank statements and review all financial activity on a bimonthly basis or more often if needed.
- The Executive Committee should carefully review the budget and year to date financials to determine if any changes should be made for the remainder of the fiscal year.

- The Board President shall act as the supervisor for the interim Executive Director. The Board President should expect to have weekly meetings in person or by phone with the interim Executive Director. If the Board President is the interim Executive Director, the Board Vice-President shall act in the supervisor role.
- The Board President should prepare a letter to all key funders and stakeholders announcing the interim Executive Director and providing an outline of the succession planning timeline and steps as part of the communications plan.
- The Board President shall meet with the full staff to announce the interim Executive Director position, the Board role and outline expectations for the transition time frame. The Board President should also outline the succession plan, timeline and steps including staff involvement.

Search to Fill the Position of Executive Director

In the event there is a vacancy in the Executive Director position, either planned or unplanned, the Board shall conduct a search for a new Executive Director. The Board has outlined the following search process and will review and update as needed. This search process is based upon the Board taking an active role in the search through a Search Committee with the Board making the final hiring decision.

The first step will be for the full Board to review the existing job description and qualifications. The Board should outline what skills, experience and background, expertise, management and characteristics they are seeking in the next Executive Director. The Board will also need to establish a salary range and benefit package for the position. This information will be used by the Search Committee to prepare a Position Guide for applicants to review and to guide the Search Committee in the search process.

Important categories for reviewing potential qualifications are the following:

- Management (human resource, financial, and program).
- Fundraising including marketing and public relations.
- Industry specific knowledge.
- Strategic thinking and communication skills, and leadership skills.

Key questions to ask in reviewing the job description include the following:

- Will the job be the same as what is currently being done?
- What do we want in an Executive Director?
- In what ways will it be different than the current structure - will it be different in year one, three to five years from now?
- Do we want a different leadership model than we have had in the past?
- Do we want to restructure the position in any significant ways or our expectations about key responsibilities of this position?

- What is our total compensation package? Can we make it attractive to people with different compensation priorities?

The Board shall establish a Search Committee. The Search Committee shall be chaired by the Board President or his/her designee. The Search Committee should be composed of at least five to seven other members who agree to manage the search process, interview candidates and recommend at least one but not more than three finalists for consideration by the full Board. A majority of the Search Committee shall be comprised of sitting Board members. The Board President may appoint other key stakeholders to the Search Committee.

As part of the process the Board and/or the Search Committee shall:

- Interview key stakeholders to determine their recommendations and comments. Stakeholders include funders, peer economic development leaders both in the region and nationally, former Board members, and community opinion leaders.
- Interview and seek staff input either as a group or in individual meetings to determine what would work best.

In consultation with the full Board, the Search Committee will:

- Consider using a recruitment firm or consultant to help with the search process and who may conduct some of the action items herein. Use of a qualified recruitment firm is strongly encouraged.
- Establish a budget and timeline for the process.
- Create a marketing plan for advertising the position. This would include key listings on industry websites, networking within the region with referral sources, and listing with the American Public Gardens Association.
- Complete a background check on each finalist.
- Set up a mailbox to receive all resumes and applications.
- Develop a marketing kit (email PDF) on Tyler and the position.
- Establish a process to screen and review all submitted resumes.
- Develop ranking criteria and selection process to interview candidates. (Could be initial phone search interviews by individual committee members, then joint in-person or phone interviews by several Search Committee members.)

The Search Committee will keep the Board informed on the progress, candidates and the interview process. The Board President shall keep the staff informed of the process as appropriate so that there is regular communication and updates to them. No confidences with the candidates, including their identity, shall be breached so as to protect their current positions.

The Search Committee shall recommend a candidate to the Board for the Board's consideration. If the Board requests to meet more than one candidate, the Search

Committee shall recommend up to three candidates. The Board will develop interview questions and an interview protocol. The Board President shall be authorized to make the offer to the selected candidate. Communication to the other candidates should also be undertaken by a Board member or the search consultant.

Post Hire

The Board shall develop a communication plan to announce the appointment of the new Executive Director. This should include the same audience for the communication plan during the interim process. A press release should be prepared and submitted to local press and distributed in the newsletter and on the website.

The Board should establish an onboarding plan for the new Executive Director with clear written performance objectives at periodic intervals over the first year. These objectives should be mutually developed and clearly understood by the Board and the new Executive Director. The new Executive Director shall be evaluated based on these performance objectives, which will act as a guide for the person in the position and the Board. A 360-evaluation process is desirable to include in the evaluation process.

The Board President will be responsible for developing an orientation to Tyler, the Board and key funders. If the person is from outside of the region, then the Board should be prepared to assist with introductions and key meetings.

Role of Departing Executive Director if Available

If available, the departing Executive Director shall be retained for up to a two-month time frame in a consulting role to assist and advice with fundraising and introductions to key stakeholders. This role will include maintaining grants and reports to all current funders. The departing Executive Director shall not be involved in the management of the organization. The departing Executive Director agrees to mentor the new Executive Director during this transition period. This includes sharing the Transition Binder, reviewing the strategic plan and all key programs, and assisting in other activities to ensure a successful transition.

Date of Board Approval of the Plan: November 16, 2015

Appendix K

THE NORTH CAROLINA ARBORETUM SUCCESSION PLANNING AND READINESS DOCUMENT



AN AFFILIATE INSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH CAROLINA

Succession Planning and Readiness

Introduction

During 2013 the Board of directors of The North Carolina Arboretum undertook strategic planning in response to strategic planning for the University of North Carolina. In that Arboretum plan the Board included a goal of reducing risk for the organization as the Arboretum grew in size and complexity. One of the stated objectives within that goal was “*Maintain leadership succession plan*” to reduce risks associated with changes in leadership at every level of the organization.

As opposed to simply being a “plan,” succession at The North Carolina Arboretum is viewed as a philosophy of organizational readiness at all times for both expected and unexpected developments in staffing that might otherwise disrupt organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Thus, the organizational management structure is built around team concepts that help ensure business continuity regardless of the threat. Of course, anticipating and addressing changes in leadership staffing are central to this philosophy.

Positions

Executive Director. As a relatively new organization blessed with continuity of leadership in various key positions, including the executive director position, there has been only one hiring of this position to date. As a leader in the 17-campus University of North Carolina system, reporting to the system President and to a Board of Directors, this position has a prescribed process for continuity based on the precedent of the first hiring process during the late 1980’s. The steps are typically as follows when a vacancy occurs:

The UNC President will present the Arboretum Board of Directors with a charge, outlining the qualities, skills and abilities he or she would like to see in the next Arboretum leader.

The President may also instruct the Board as to the number of applicants that he or she will interview for her final hiring recommendation to the UNC system Board of Governors. The President may also delegate elements of the process to the Arboretum Board of Directors.

The President in consultation with the Board may appoint an interim leader if necessary, and the Board of Directors may elect to secure the services of a search firm in identifying, informing and processing candidates for the position.

The composition of the Board of Directors plays a role in the succession readiness. Currently, the Chair of the Board is an executive leader and operational expert within a large federal agency with a sophisticated mission. The Board Chair and the Executive Director meet every two weeks to discuss issues and to keep the Chair abreast of current events and issues. Thus, the Chair is at any time only separated from operational knowledge and events by a matter of days. The Vice Chair, likewise, is a Senior Vice President of a large State Employees Credit Union with broad knowledge of state and organizational management. The Board Secretary is a County Commissioner in one of the state's largest counties, so the leadership structure of the Board of Directors is quite adequately qualified to administer an effective national search.

The Board of directors also includes the former leaders of two state university systems plus expertise in legal, development, economic development, and other areas of expertise germane to the Arboretum mission and context.

Strategy Council. The three-person Strategy Council represents the oversight of the various elements of the Arboretum – mission delivery, public engagement and finance and operations. These three leaders operate as a team, in concert with the Executive Director, and have the responsibility and authority to make sound decisions collectively and individually in the best interests of the Arboretum.

Consistent with our readiness mindset regarding succession, we have a similar approach to strategy, seeing it as a daily discipline rather than exclusively as a periodic planning process. We do both, realizing that the timing of strategic threats and opportunities do not always line up with the schedule of a more formal strategic planning process. Collectively, these three leaders are in constant assessment of

business conditions, threats, opportunities, operational challenges, and other aspects of excellence in management.

These three leaders also have regular interface with the Board of Directors through presentations to and engagement with the Board to foster effective execution of responsibilities and exchange of ideas. From an overall succession strategy, a particular form of risk is that the current executive director has been in place for almost 30 years, and the Senior Director of Mission Delivery almost as long. While the continuity has been a benefit, experience has shown that new leaders following in the footsteps of long-term, entrepreneurial, successful departing leaders can face certain additional transition challenges than those following leaders with shorter or less originating roles. A key role of the Strategy Council format is to serve as a source of management continuity while a new leader acclimates, as well as a source of trusted counsel and perspective in the hiring process.

Individually, these three leaders are also prepared to exercise whatever roles a search process dictates. Each has served at various times as the Acting Executive Director, and each has particular but broad skills and abilities that can be adapted to the needs of a new executive director. Because of the complexities of an organization within a university system, sited within federal land, positioned within state government, and serving a broad array of traditional and non-traditional mission areas and constituencies, the learning curve for a new Executive Director will likely be steep and long. The management effectiveness of the Strategy Council will provide the new leader with a set of internal mentors to assist in the transition. Of course, depending on the qualifications and educational requirements in posting the new position, these Strategy Council members may be effective sources of prospective applicants or applicants themselves.

Supervisory Positions. Each Strategy Council member supervises several leaders of various departments. All are state employees and as such, are subject to the proscribed advertising and hiring process characteristic of a public agency. These supervisors, because they oversee living and/or valuable assets, manage processes with high public accountability, or interface with high profile constituents, these leaders need continuity planning and readiness as much as any other area of leadership.

Because of the relatively routine change in these types of positions, particularly because we invest in growing the professional value of our staff, we use a variety of devices to bridge between leaders:

Place new hires into temporary positions, enabling interface and training with the incumbent before the actual transition of responsibility.

Utilize the services of retired former staff, once separation requirements are met, to augment as needed.

Hire in third party temporary employees or contractors to cover needs on an interim basis.

Name interim leaders from within, before the departure of the incumbent.

Look at each leadership transition as an opportunity for improving and updating the structure and responsibilities of the new hire.

Cross-train to minimize “one-deep” forms of leadership.

Volunteers. The Arboretum utilizes over 500 volunteers and a relatively large number of seasonal hires. This pool of people, many of whom are quite competent in Arboretum operations, assists us in locating skill sets that can be deployed on a short-term basis. Many of our volunteers have completed distinguished careers in business, government or education and have the ability to help “shore up” management areas until a new supervisor is hired and acclimated.

Philosophically, our volunteers are deployed as “unpaid employees,” and as such are trained and employed under the supervision of Arboretum employees. Many are well trained in strategic areas of the Arboretum and provide yet another measure of continuity in the case of unexpected openings in supervisory positions.

An ongoing mindset of readiness

Strategy Council meets once per week and has grown accustomed to managing transition successfully. Our agenda routinely includes consideration of positions likely to open due to promotion, hiring elsewhere, retirement or other developments. Ironically, an extended period of years involving dramatic budget reductions, layoffs, reorganization and other responses has greatly improved our ability to anticipate and respond to sudden changes. Conversely, our innovations and strategies to rebuilt revenue through services, programs, earned revenue centers, special events and other initiatives have further aided us in nimbly standing up and managing new endeavors.

The Arboretum’s commitment to a continuous improvement, process team culture, begun in the late 1990’s, has put in place an ability to manage multiple fronts both efficiently and effectively. We believe that this culture and readiness mindset, backed by prescribed state processes, positions us well to handle succession to new leadership at every level of the organization with a minimum of disruption to mission delivery, service to our citizens and business continuity.

September 2016; Revised 2017

Appendix L

THE NORTH CAROLINA ARBORETUM 2020 Management Plan

Mission:

Located in the inspirational Southern Appalachian Mountains, The North Carolina Arboretum cultivates connections between people and plants through creative expressions of landscape stewardship, including: Conservation, Education, Garden Demonstration, Research, Economic

Economic Impact

- Tourism
- Bent Creek Institute
- Olmstead Landscape Institute
- Pack Square Park
- Green Building/Landscape/
- Horticulture Industries
-

Education Impact

- Maximize income potential
- Professional education
- Arts and crafts
- Youth Education/STEAM
-

Guest Experience

- Maintain and improve guest experience facilities
- Customer service training/survey
- Develop a new iconic feature, activity or facility to enhance visitation and the overall guest experience
-

Resource Growth

- Share activities and results with UNC and legislators
- Planned giving and major gifts
- Membership revenue growth
- Volunteer programs
- Facility rental/wedding program refinement
- New traveling exhibit

- Grow visitation

Conservation Impact

- Integrated pest management
- Hemlocks
- Monarch butterflies
- Pollinators
- Tribal resources

Continuous Improvement

- Infrastructure
- Safety and security
- Human resources and staff enrichment
- Measurements of activity and impact
- Brand improvements/updates
- New/responsive website

Appendix N

GREEN BAY BOTANICAL GARDEN SUCCESSION PLANNING DRAFT

Steps to developing a succession plan:

Two plans needed:

- One for emergency vacancy
- One for planned succession

Steps:

1. Identify critical leadership and management functions of ED.
 - a. Vision & Strategy – working with Board and Board Committees to ensure strategies are consistent with mission and vision
 - b. Ensuring tactical success – working with staff and volunteers to ensure the annual business plan as well as day to day work plans are being accomplished
 - c. Relationships and communications – working with internal and external constituencies to ensure consistency in messaging
 - d. Financial – overseeing the budget process, ensuring compliance with current budget and reviews by the Board and finance continue to be followed
2. Agree which functions should be covered by acting director, the extent and limitation of his or her authority and functions a second manager should cover.
 - a. Key staff include: directors of development and horticulture; manager of finance and operations
3. Agree upon who has authority to appoint an acting director.
 - a. Board chair, with affirmation by Executive Committee
4. Agree upon standing appointee(s) to the position of acting director (with first and second back-ups) and compensation for the acting director(s).
 - a. Consider a team approach including some or all of key staff as identified in 2.a.
5. Develop a cross-training plan for the identified back-ups that ensures they develop their abilities to carry on the ED's key functions.
 - a. Executive Director needs to create training plan and identify key staff's strengths to carry out duties
6. Draft a communications plan to be implemented in the event of an emergency succession (who gets notified and how).
 - a. Board chair notifies Board and staff

- b. Marketing staff notifies members via e-news of acting executive director.
- 7. Outline procedures to be followed in the event that an emergency absence becomes a permanent unplanned absence.
 - a. Acting director/team continues until permanent replacement found.
 - b. Form a Search Committee comprised of 2-3 Board members, College HR Department, and possibly one or two key staff member(s).
 - c. Contact College Human Resources department for assistance in launching a search; screening and interviewing.
 - d. Consider contacting a placement firm for national search (Kittleman Search, 233 South Wacker Drive, 84th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606; 312.986.1166)

Board Role:

Assign a “committee” (minimum of 2 people, with one from the Executive Committee) to:

1. Review the job description and the core executive functions.
2. Provide comments on plan drafts developed by the ED.
3. Present the plan to the full Board for review and adoption.
4. Manage the transition.

Appendix O

**GREEN BAY BOTANICAL GARDEN KEY POSITION PLANNING
SUMMARY**

Completed By:

Date:

Position: Executive Director
Current Incumbent:

Essential Position Competencies:

1. Strategic vision and planning
2. Fundraising principals of cultivation, solicitation and stewardship of donors
3. Program planning, implementation and evaluation
4. Financial management, budgeting and forecasting
5. Risk management and legal issues
6. Human resources oversight
7. Community outreach and relationship building
8. Board recruitment, development and relations

Secondary competencies included:

1. Fundraising practices
2. Capital plant and equipment management

Internal Candidate Identification:

In the table below, first indicate if there is an internal candidate available within the Garden to assume your position either immediately or after a 2-3 year development period. Second, identify by priority preference the one or two internal candidates that could assume this position immediately. Third, identify those internal candidates that may be ready to assume this role after a period of professional development.

Internal Candidates Available (Y/N)	Internal Candidates Ready Immediately	Internal Candidates 2-3 Years
	1.	1.
	2.	2.
		3.

Interim Replacement: The Executive Committee has the ultimate authority to name interim and permanent replacements for the Executive Director. A natural alliance with the leadership team of Director of Horticulture, Director of Development, and Finance & Operations Manager should be formed.

Internal Candidates:

Emergency Plan: A communications plan should include the following steps:

- a. Board chair notifies Board and staff
- b. Marketing staff notifies members via e-news of acting executive director/team.
- c. Acting director/team continues until permanent replacement found.
- d. A team approach to leading the organization will be implemented, overseen by the Executive Committee. The leadership team will take individual segments of the job description:

Director of Development – With the Executive Assistant, manage all Board meetings and the following Board committees: Executive, Governance, Membership, Fund Development. Maintain all external communications for the organization. Oversee the marketing plan. Depending on the message, be the spokesperson, along with the Director of Horticulture, for the Garden. Conduct the official correspondence for the Garden.

Finance & Operations Manager – Manage the Finance & Endowment Committees of the Board. Oversee all of the human resources functions. Manage the Garden's risk.

Director of Horticulture – Manage the Education Advisory & Garden Development Committees of the Board. Maintain communication with the College (lesor).

- Planned Departure: Begin the recruitment and hiring process six months prior to departure to provide overlap for onboarding and training of about 3 months.
- Reorganization: Conduct an analysis to determine if a reorganization of the responsibilities of this position would be appropriate to achieve specific goals and objectives.
- External Hire: Engage in an external recruitment process:
 - a. Form a Board selection committee, comprised of at least one member of the Executive Committee and one member with HR expertise. Consider including one staff member from the leadership team who will not be applying.
 - b. Consider utilizing the College's Human Resources department as a coordinating resource.
 - c. Consider utilizing a professional recruitment firm as needed to appropriately source and select qualified candidates. Reach out to APGA for referrals (Kittleman Search, 233 South Wacker Drive, 84th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606; 312.986.1166).
 - d. External postings should go to APGA (American Public Gardens Association), AFP (Association of Fundraising Professionals), NPRG (Nonprofit Resource Group).
- Cross Training needed now: Board work – all three members of the leadership team have direct interaction with various Board committees and are regular attendees at the meetings.
- Executive Director should work more closely with interested successor in the coming three years to develop his/her skills in finances, fundraising and overall organizational management, developing an annual work plan for personal development.

Appendix P

DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN SUCCESSION PLANS

Non-Emergency Succession Plan for the Executive Director

Adopted _____, 2016

As Approved By Succession Planning Committee March 2, 2016

1. Purpose. The purpose of this Succession Plan is to promote the stability of the Desert Botanical Garden (the “Garden”) through management continuity in circumstances where the Executive Director plans a future retirement or departure date.
2. Timeline for Search Process. Promptly upon the announcement of a retirement or departure date by the Executive Director, the Succession Planning Committee shall establish a timeline for the executive search process set forth in this Plan.
3. Selection of Search Firm. The Succession Planning Committee shall develop a budget for the executive search, including search firm costs and expenses, and promptly forward it to the Executive Committee and Finance Committee. The Succession Planning Committee has identified a number of executive search firms which work with nonprofit organizations of the Garden’s size and complexity (list attached hereto). The Succession Planning Committee will interview and evaluate these firms, and any others subsequently identified, to select and retain a firm to conduct the search, with all contractual and financial terms subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.
4. Responsibilities of Succession Planning Committee. The Succession Planning Committee shall work with the Executive Director and the search firm to update the formal job description and list of Incentive Plan goals for the current fiscal year in order to match the Garden’s current and future needs with the leadership experience and skills desired in the successor Executive Director. Attention shall be given to those executive requirements and responsibilities called for by the Garden’s strategic plan. The search firm and Succession Planning Committee shall create a candidate profile with qualifications, competencies and interpersonal skills needed, and shall develop a salary range and benefit package for the position. In addition, the Succession Planning Committee and Executive Director shall work with the search firm to launch a networking and outreach campaign to reach stakeholders who can refer potential leaders.

5. Appointment and Responsibilities of Search Committee. The Executive Committee shall appoint a Search Committee to work with the retained search firm to identify potential candidates and conduct resume review meetings, interviews and reference/background checks. In constituting the Search Committee, the Executive Committee will consider members of the Board, staff, volunteers, funders and other community stakeholders to promote a cross-section of roles and viewpoints and to ensure broad support for the process. The Chair of the Search Committee shall regularly update the Executive Committee, Board of Trustees and senior staff on the status of the search process.

6. Communication Plan. The Communication Plan attached hereto will be implemented by the parties identified therein.

7. Selection of Final Candidate. The Search Committee shall identify a ranked list of no more than 3 final candidates and present this list to the Executive Committee for approval to begin final negotiations. Based on these negotiations and the interest of the candidates, the Search Committee shall identify and recommend a final candidate for approval by the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees. The final candidate's proposed compensation package shall be approved by the Executive Committee and presented to the Board of Trustees for review and approval. In consultation with the Chair of the Personnel Committee and the Human Resources Manager, the Board President is authorized to finalize a written offer to the selected candidate with appropriate legal review.

8. Transition Planning. Selected members of the Succession Planning Committee, the Search Committee and the Executive Committee shall plan a welcome and orientation for the successor Executive Director, including providing appropriate written orientation materials and facilitating meetings with Board members, staff, volunteers, funders and other Garden stakeholders, including the departing Executive Director. Promptly following hiring, the Executive Committee and successor Executive Director shall agree on a 90-day "onboarding" and transition plan to provide support and direction about priorities. Regular meetings will be scheduled every two weeks between the successor Executive Director and designated Executive Committee members to discuss key issues, report on progress in the transition plan, discuss the degree of mutual satisfaction with communication and support and provide feedback to the Executive Director. Within 30 days of hiring, the successor Executive Director shall prepare written goals for the first 12 months for approval by the Executive Committee.

9. Annual Update. The Succession Planning Committee and Executive Director shall meet annually following the adoption of this Non-Emergency Succession Plan to

update the Plan as needed in light of all the circumstances, including an update of the attachments (list of search firms, Communication Plan).

10. Approval of Succession Plan. This Non-Emergency Succession Plan shall be approved by the Executive Committee and presented to the Board of Trustees for review and final approval.

Attachments

- A. List of Potential Executive Search Firms
- B. Communication Plan

ATTACHMENT A LIST OF POTENTIAL EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRMS

·Kittleman & Associates, Chicago·Morris & Berger, Southern California·Phillips Oppenheim, New York and D.C.

ATTACHMENT B COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR NON-EMERGENCY SUCCESSION

Notify Trustees. The Board President and Executive Director should notify all other trustees as soon as possible after the Executive Director is ready to announce his or her retirement or departure date (the "Trigger Date"). Direct phone contact is preferable to email or voicemail messages. The primary purpose of this initial communication is to (i) advise the trustees of such planned departure date and the resulting implementation of the Garden's previously established Non-Emergency Succession Plan, and (ii) as appropriate, explore whether selected trustees are interested in serving on the contemplated Search Committee.

Communicate With DBG Staff. As soon as possible after the Trigger Date, the Executive Director should convene a brief meeting to share the news with staff.

1. The ED and Board President should lead the meeting.
2. Employees should be informed that a more extensive all-staff meeting will be conducted after a search firm is appointed, and the anticipated timing for such selection.
3. Be prepared to answer basic questions – who, when, where, why and how is a good framework for planning. If certain information is not available (such as the members of the search committee, the name of the search firm, the key attributes to be sought in the replacement ED, etc.), assure staff that you will share information as soon as it becomes available.
4. Remind staff that the Garden has developed and will be implementing its Non-Emergency Succession Plan, first put in place in 2016.

Consider Possible Communication to Other Key Stakeholders. Depending on the circumstances (including the anticipated timing for selection of a search firm and the appointment of a search committee), it may be appropriate to communicate with major donors and other key stakeholders regarding the various elements of DBG's previously established Non-Emergency Succession Plan. The retiring/departing ED and the Board President, in consultation with the Board's Succession Planning Committee, should also determine whether to ask selected major donors, VIGs and/or civic leaders to serve on the search committee.

Implement Recommendations of Selected Search Firm. As soon as possible after the search firm is selected, the President should convene a meeting of the Succession Planning Committee to review and implement, in consultation with the departing ED and other senior staff, the communication recommendations of such search firm. The Garden's Director of Marketing and the Chair of the Board's Marketing Committee should be asked to participate in any advertising-related discussions.

Issue Press Release Announcing Replacement ED. Within two business days of the appointment of the replacement ED, draft and issue a press release that includes (i) the Board's appointment of the new ED and his or her background/qualifications, (ii) the principal reasons why the particular successor ED was selected, (iii) a statement by the Board President that the new ED is the right choice for the Garden, given its current position, (iv) a statement by the new ED that the Garden's senior staff/management team is strong, that the Garden is well-positioned for the future, and expressing appreciation that the Board has selected him/her as new ED, (v) the reason(s) the departing ED decided to retire/leave, (vi) how the Board, senior staff (including the departing ED, if relevant) and others will support the transition process, and (vii) if relevant, details on other senior management changes that will take place. The Search Committee shall have principal responsibility for drafting the press release (in consultation with the Board President, departing and new EDs, and the Chair of the Board's Succession Planning Committee).

After New ED is Appointed, Communicate with All Key Stakeholders. As soon as possible after the new ED is appointed, (i) schedule and hold more extensive staff meetings that provide a forum for employees to ask questions and share their ideas about what the Garden can do to effectively manage the transition, and (ii) selected Board Trustees, the new ED and other specified persons shall communicate the change in leadership (including the Board's rationale for selecting the new ED) and fundamental components of the anticipated ED transition to the following key DBG stakeholders:

- Major Donors
- Key VIGs
- Senior DBG Staff

- All Trustees
 - Civic and Nonprofit Leaders
 - Media
1. A list of those persons responsible for contacting key stakeholders is attached as Schedule 1. In addition, as soon as possible after the Garden first announces the retirement or departure of its ED, the appropriate responsible parties shall prepare lists of the specific individuals to be contacted under each major category of stakeholder.
 2. The post-press release DBG communication to key stakeholders regarding the new ED should also include general information regarding (i) any changes in key DBG contact points, (ii) pending priorities reflected in DBG's then current strategic plan, (iii) how DBG trustees, senior staff and other stakeholders are supporting the replacement ED and transition, and (iv) the anticipated timing and format for future key stakeholder meetings with the new ED (including invitations as appropriate). The primary purpose of these communications is to educate key stakeholders (internal and external) about the transition and engage their support.
 3. Communication Elements:
 - √ Relevance. Ensure that statements are clearly tied to DBG's mission and strategic plan. Keep messages short, memorable and energizing.
 - √ Responsiveness. Listen to the stakeholders and note their questions and concerns. Address what you can immediately, and promptly follow-up with them about questions or issues that require further consideration.
 - √ Reinforcement. Repeat key messages frequently. Be consistent with words and actions. Seek face-to-face communication.

Consider Communication Training for New ED. Consider having the new ED obtain media training and being subjected to mock interviews.

Schedule Meet & Greet Opportunities for New ED. The Board President, Chair of the Board's Succession Planning Committee and the New ED should also discuss and plan introductory meetings with key stakeholders as contemplated by section 8 ("Transition Planning") of the Non-Emergency Succession Plan.

Key Stakeholders

- A. Major Donors
- B. Key VIGs
- C. Senior DBG Staff

Communication Responsibility

- Selected Trustees and DBG Director of Development
- Board President and VIG President
- Board President and/or his or her designee

D. Trustees (Present and Former)	Board President and selected members of Board's Executive Committee
E. Civic and Nonprofit Leaders	Selected Trustees and Senior DBG Staff
F. Media	DBG Director of Marketing and Chair of Board's Marketing Committee

DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN SUCCESSION PLANS

Emergency Succession Plan for the Executive Director

Adopted June 2, 2016

As Approved By Succession Planning Committee March 2, 2016

1. Purpose. The purpose of this Emergency Succession Plan is to promote the stability of the Desert Botanical Garden through management continuity in the event of the sudden unavailability of the Executive Director (e.g., due to illness or injury) that is expected to be prolonged beyond one month. The Garden's Board of Trustees believes that due diligence in exercising its governance functions requires that it have an emergency executive succession plan in place.

2. Implementation of Plan. Immediately following the receipt of notification of such sudden un-availability, (a) the Garden's Director of Operations or other staff member receiving such notification shall notify the Board President, and (b) the President shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall have the responsibility for making the determination to initiate implementation of this Plan upon the occurrence of the emergency unavailability of the Executive Director, or to make modifications to this Plan as the Executive Committee deems appropriate. This determination shall be immediately communicated to the Chair of the Succession Planning Committee and the Board of Trustees. In the event of the permanent unavailability of the Executive Director, the Executive Committee shall also implement the Non-Emergency Succession Plan for the Executive Director. Until an Interim Executive Director is appointed pursuant to Paragraph 3, the Garden's senior staff and the Executive Assistant shall report to the Board President or his/her designee.

3. Succession Planning Committee. The Chair of the Succession Planning Committee shall promptly call a meeting of the Committee for the purpose of recommending an Interim Executive Director to the Executive Committee for approval. Interim Executive Director candidates shall be evaluated against the requirements of the formal job description for the Executive Director and qualifications (including experience, competencies and personal characteristics) necessary to meet the leadership needs of the Garden, taking into account its strategic plan as in effect at the time. As promptly as possible, the Succession Planning Committee shall recommend a candidate and recommend temporary compensation for the candidate for approval by the Executive Committee. The Board President is authorized to finalize a written offer to the Interim Executive Director with appropriate legal review.

4. Role of Interim Executive Director. The Interim Executive Director shall assume the responsibilities set out in the formal job description and list of Executive Director Incentive Plan goals for the fiscal year. The Interim Executive Director shall have all

of the responsibilities, accountabilities and authority of the Executive Director, except that the approval of the Executive Committee shall be required with respect to (a) hiring and firing decisions for any employee whose annual compensation exceeds \$50,000, and (b) any Garden commitment to spend in excess of \$50,000.

5. Communication Plan. The Communication Plan attached hereto will be implemented by the parties identified therein.

6. Oversight and Transition. The Executive Committee will have responsibility for monitoring and supporting the work of the Interim Executive Director. The Executive Committee and the Interim Executive Director shall, within two weeks, agree on a transition plan that includes, among other goals to be agreed upon, appropriate meetings between the Interim Executive Director and Board members, staff, volunteers, funders, and other Garden stakeholders. Regular meetings will be scheduled every two weeks between the Interim Executive Director and designated Executive Committee members to discuss key issues, report on progress in the transition plan, and provide feedback to the Interim Executive Director. The Executive Committee shall also consider whether the Board's officers or other Trustees should be asked to take on a greater oversight role. Possible additional support to the Interim Executive Director might include: (a) meetings with the Board Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer on a bi-monthly basis to review all Garden financial activity, (b) review by the Executive Committee of the Garden's budget and year-to-date financial results to determine if any changes should be made for the remainder of the fiscal year, and (c) if the Interim Executive Director is a Garden staff member, temporarily "backfilling" the management position left vacant by the Interim Executive Director.

7. Annual Update. The Succession Planning Committee and the Executive Director shall meet annually following the adoption of this Emergency Succession Plan to update this Plan as needed in light of all the circumstances, including an update of the attached Communication Plan. In addition, they shall identify annually a pool of candidates who might serve as Interim Executive Director should the need arise, as well as other individuals who might provide management assistance during the unavailability of the Executive Director.

8. Approval of Emergency Succession Plan. This Emergency Succession Plan shall be approved by the Executive Committee and presented to the Board of Trustees for review and final approval.

Attachment

A. Communication Plan

ATTACHMENT A COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR EMERGENCY SUCCESSION

Identify DBG Spokesperson for Communications Prior to Appointment of Interim Executive Director. Identify the key spokesperson for DBG (typically the Board President, another selected Trustee or the individual who most recently served as an Interim ED) until Interim Executive Director is appointed. As of the date of this plan, the key spokesperson would be the Board President or his or her designee.

Notify Trustees. The Board President and Vice Presidents should notify all other trustees as soon as possible. Direct phone contact is preferable to email or voicemail messages.

Communicate With DBG Staff ASAP. As soon as possible after the need for this emergency succession plan arises (the death, disability or unexpected termination of DBG's ED), convene a brief meeting to share the news with staff.

1. Determine in advance who will lead the meeting.
2. Employees should be informed that a more extensive all-staff meeting will be conducted after the Interim ED is appointed.
3. The Board President or other Board representative should be present at the first meeting.
4. Be prepared to answer basic questions – who, when, where, why and how is a good framework for planning. If certain information must remain confidential, explain why this is so. If information isn't available, assure staff that you will share information as soon as it becomes available.
5. Remind staff that the Garden has developed and will be implementing an emergency succession plan.
6. Consider the use of an outside consultant to facilitate staff debriefings (ideally conducted within 24-72 hours of the triggering event) to provide staff with a safe environment and opportunity to process the unplanned ED departure.
- 7.

Consider Possible Communication to Other Key Stakeholders Prior to Appointment of Interim ED. Depending on the circumstances (including the anticipated time period between the death, disability or unexpected termination of DBG's ED and the appointment of an Interim ED), it may be appropriate to communicate with major donors and other key stakeholders regarding the nature of the emergency, the process for selecting the Interim ED, and/or other related matters.

After Interim ED is Appointed, Communicate with All Key Stakeholders. As soon as possible after the Interim ED is appointed, (i) schedule and hold more extensive staff meetings that provide a forum for employees to ask questions, express their concerns, and share their ideas about what the Garden can do to effectively manage the transition, and (ii) selected Board Trustees, the Interim ED and other specified persons

shall communicate the temporary leadership structure (including the Board's rationale for selecting the chosen interim ED) to the following key DBG stakeholders:

- Major Donors
 - Key VIGs
 - Senior DBG Staff
 - All Trustees
 - Civic and Nonprofit Leaders
 - Media
1. A list of those persons responsible for contacting key stakeholders is attached as Schedule 1. In addition, as soon as possible after the emergency arises, the appropriate responsible parties shall prepare lists of the specific individuals to be contacted under each major category of stakeholder.
 2. The initial DBG communication to key stakeholders should also include general information regarding (i) implementation of DBG's previously established emergency succession plan, (ii) the anticipated process/timeline to address transition and permanent ED hiring issues, (iii) any changes in key DBG contact points, (iv) pending priorities reflected in DBG's then current strategic plan, and (v) how DBG trustees, senior staff and other stakeholders are supporting the Interim ED and transition. The primary purpose of these communications is to educate key stakeholders (internal and external) about the transition and engage their support.
 3. Communication Elements:
 - √Relevance. Ensure that statements are clearly tied to DBG's mission and strategic plan. Keep messages short, memorable and energizing.
 - √Responsiveness. Listen to the stakeholders and note their questions and concerns. Address what you can immediately, and promptly follow-up with them about questions or issues that require further consideration.
 - √Reinforcement. Repeat key messages frequently. Be consistent with words and actions. Seek face-to-face communication.

Issue Press Release Announcing Interim ED. Within two business days of the appointment of the Interim ED, draft and issue a press release that includes (i) the reason for the emergency succession (if not confidential), (ii) the Board's appointment of Interim ED and his or her background/qualifications, (iii) a statement by the Board President that the Interim ED is the right choice for the Garden, given its current position, (iv) a statement by the Interim ED that the Garden's senior staff/management team is strong, that the Garden is well-positioned for the future, and expressing appreciation that the Board has selected him/her as Interim ED, and (v) if relevant, details on other senior management changes that will take place. The Succession Planning Committee shall have principal responsibility for drafting the press release (in consultation with the Board President and Interim ED).

Consider Communication Training for Interim ED. Consider having interim ED obtain media training and being subjected to mock interviews.

Key Stakeholders

Communication Responsibility

A. Major Donors

Selected Trustees and DBG Director of Development

B. Key VIGs

Board President and VIG President

C. Senior DBG Staff

Board President and/or his or her designee

D. Trustees
(Present and Former)

Board President and selected members of Board's Executive Committee

E. Civic and Nonprofit Leaders

Selected Trustees and Senior DBG Staff

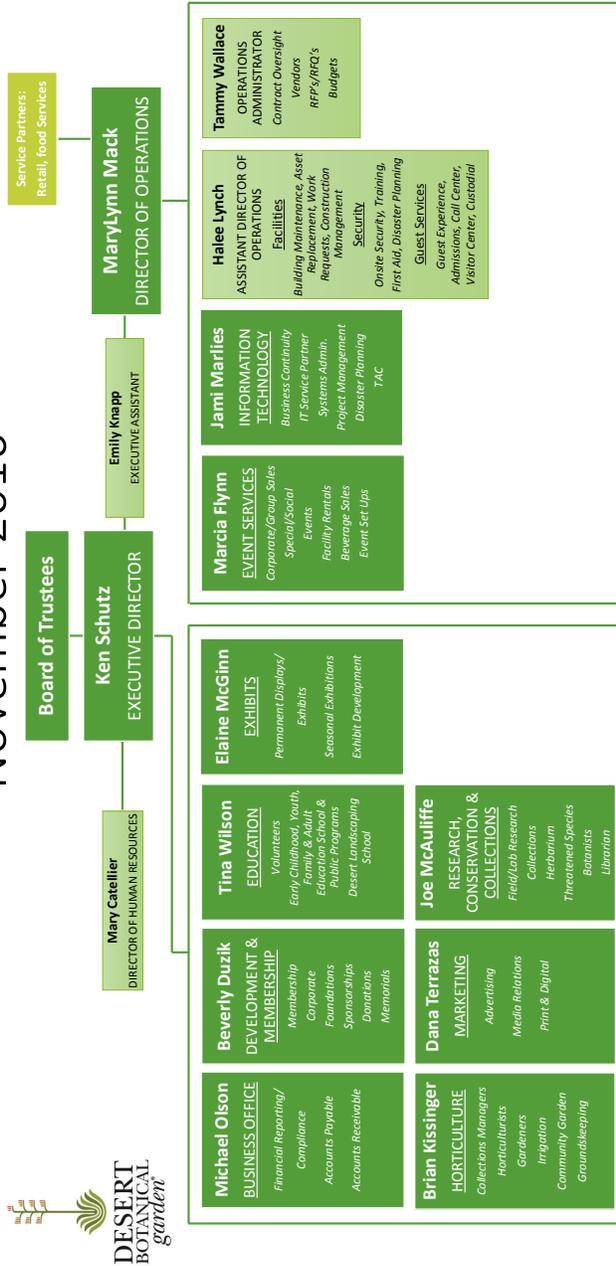
F. Media

DBG Director of Marketing and Chair of Board's Marketing Committee

Appendix Q

DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Organizational Chart November 2016



Appendix R

DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

MISSION

The Garden's commitment to the community is to advance excellence in education, research, exhibition and conservation of desert plants of the world with emphasis on the Southwestern United States. We will ensure that the Garden is always a compelling attraction that brings to life the many wonders of the desert. (Articles of Incorporation, 1937; Amended 2002)

VISION

The Garden's vision is to be the premier center in the world for the display, study and understanding of desert plants and their environments. The Garden strives to be an indispensable resource in the Southwestern United States for helping individuals learn about Sonoran Desert Plants as well as desert plants of the world, so that they will conserve and protect the natural world for the benefit of future generations. Every element of the Garden will reflect excellence, beauty and inspiration to transform the visitor experience into one of discovery and meaning about deserts and desert plants.

VALUES

- Stewardship: To protect and preserve desert plants, animals, and habitats.
- Interdependence: To respect the mutual destinies that link people, plants, and all of nature.
- Authenticity: To reflect our unique natural heritage and cultural history within a public garden setting.
- Accountability: To act ethically and responsibly as we serve our many communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- Not-For-Profit: This doesn't mean we don't try to operate at a profit, because we do. It means that our profits are reinvested in the Garden. This is distinct from a corporation, where profits are distributed to shareholders, or a family enterprise, where the profits are retained by the family members.
- Advance Excellence: We are good today. We can be better tomorrow. The quest for "advancing excellence" is never ending.
- Results Oriented: While it can be difficult, we assess how well we are achieving our mission as accurately as possible, and from the community's perspective—not just our own. Often this assessment can overly rely on metrics—such as the number of people served, amount of money received, or

clean audit reports. But the results we strive for are really much loftier and difficult to measure—such as community pride in the Garden, community gratitude for the job we do caring for their Garden, and community trust that the Garden is in good hands.

- Mission Driven: All of our activities are related to the Garden's mission: commitment to the community; research; education; exhibition; conservation; and being a compelling attraction. We (Board, staff and volunteers) are all privileged to have been selected by the community to care for their Garden. We serve at their pleasure; as long as we vigorously pursue the Garden's mission they will be pleased.
- Holistic: Achieving the ultimate results – community pride, gratitude, and trust – is a responsibility equally shared by all departments. So is the satisfaction from doing so.
- Openness and Philanthropic Culture: The Garden believes in collaboration, and seeks to share information or otherwise be of assistance to its neighbors in Papago Park, other arts and culture institutions in Arizona, and other Gardens throughout the country. The garden fosters a spirit of generosity – both internally and externally – and does not view its strategic and operating plans as secrets to be kept, but rather as plans that should be shared widely if they can be of assistance to other not-for-profit organizations. In resolving matters that involve customer/visitor disappointments, staff members should always “err on the side of generosity.”
- Aesthetic/Innovative: Style matters at the Garden. We have a distinctive “look” that has been carefully cultivated – especially in our exhibits, publications and website. The Garden has a reputation for innovative programming such as Chihuly, Topia and our collaboration with the Southwest Shakespeare Company.
- Investment in People: For Board, staff and volunteers, the Garden supports training and professional development. The Garden uses a “Total Compensation Philosophy” for staff. Salaries are set to be competitive with similar jobs and organizations. At least once a year, each supervisor should have a discussion with each of his/her direct reports about their career goals and how the Garden can help them be achieved.
- Meritocracy and Fairness: The staff member best able to do a job does it, rather than yielding to someone else's “turf.” Those who work the hardest and achieve the most are rewarded with increases in responsibility and/or compensation. The Garden accepts the risk of being a leader in its field—some of its best and brightest might be recruited away if the Garden cannot provide them with increasing responsibility.
- Stability: The Garden is a successful organization that plans extensively, resulting in a predictable work schedule, financial stability and high rate of staff retention. Ironically, maintaining stability often means changing. The

need to always remain relevant to our community requires us to be nimble, adaptable and flexible.

- Sustainability: Sustainability is recognized as a holistic process that encompasses environmental, social, and economic performance. These three sustainability pillars are foundational to the preceding items. We strive to apply these principles within the Garden, but also support growth in sustainable thinking and actions with our visitors and surrounding communities.

Appendix S

IDENTIFYING COMPETENCY, SKILLS, AND SUCCESS FACTORS OF LEADERSHIP

Step 2 – Identify Competency, Skills and Success Factors of Leadership

Now that the leadership team has identified the priority positions, the next step is to document the education, experiences, key competencies, and other factors necessary for success for each key leadership position.

CS-1801
7/2007

Position Success Profile

Position Title:		Classification & Level:	
Bureau:		Location:	
Education: <i>(Degrees, Certifications, Licensure, etc.)</i>			
Experiences:			
Competencies: <i>(Check the key competencies for the position. It is suggested to limit your selection to a maximum of 5 key competencies.)</i>			
Group 4/SES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability <input type="checkbox"/> Aligning Performance for Success <input type="checkbox"/> Building Partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Building Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making <input type="checkbox"/> Delegating Responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a Successful Team <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitating Change <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Leading Through Vision & Values <input type="checkbox"/> Planning & Organizing Work <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Technical/Professional 		Group 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability <input type="checkbox"/> Aligning Performance for Success <input type="checkbox"/> Building Partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Building Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making <input type="checkbox"/> Delegating Responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a Successful Team <input type="checkbox"/> Managing Conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Planning & Organizing Work <input type="checkbox"/> Safety Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Tolerance <input type="checkbox"/> Work Standards <input type="checkbox"/> Technical/Professional 	
Additional Factors:			

If you elect to expand the pool of targeted leadership positions to non-managerial positions, the following profile may be used:

CS-1802
7/2007

Position Success Profile

Position Title:		Classification & Level:	
Bureau:		Location:	
Education: (Degrees, Certifications, Licensure, etc.)			
Experiences:			
Competencies: (Check the key competencies for the position. It is suggested to limit your selection to a maximum of 5 key competencies.)			
Group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability <input type="checkbox"/> Building Strategic Working Relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Building Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing to Team Success <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-Up <input type="checkbox"/> Initiating Action <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Planning & Organizing Work <input type="checkbox"/> Technical/Professional <input type="checkbox"/> Work Standards 			
Additional Factors:			

Appendix T

POSITION IMPACT-RISK ASSESSMENT

Position Impact/Risk Assessment

Assessment of "Position Impact" should be based on a prioritized list of the department's mission, goals, objectives and strategic plan.

Assessment of "Vacancy Risk" should be based on factors such as the incumbent's retirement eligibility, marketability, etc.

<i>Position</i>	<i>Impact/Risk Assessment</i>
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low

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Position	Impact/Risk Assessment
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low
Position Title: Classification & Level: Incumbent: Bureau: Location:	Position Impact: High Med Low Vacancy Risk: High Med Low

Acceleration Pool Nomination Form¹

Nominee Name:
Nominated By:

Classification:
Date:

Leadership Area	Strength	Proficient	Developmental Need
Support of Agency Values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Behaves Consistently with values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Displays respect for others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is a good team player	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Identifies with management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership Promise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is motivated to lead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Accepts leadership responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Mobilizes resources/people to action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Leads teams that have high morale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpersonal Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Communicates clearly and effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Makes effective presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Demonstrates diplomacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is trusted and respected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstration of Results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Shows positive team/unit results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Displays objective indicators of success	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Accomplishes major assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developmental Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Has accurate self-insight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is coachable; accepts feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Has history of learning from experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Quickly learns new tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Self-initiates development activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹ Adapted from Byham, William C., Audrey B. Smith, Matthew J. Paese. 2002. *Grow Your Own Leaders. Acceleration Pools: A New Method of Succession Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile²

Employee Information			
Name:			
Title:			
Job Classification:			
Length of Service:			
Time in Current Job:			
Current Supervisor:			
Career Goals			
1 to 3 Years:			
3 to 5 Years:			
Beyond 5 Years:			
Educational History			
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
Special Skills/Expertise			
Languages:			
Technology:			
Professional Expertise:			
Other:			
Developmental Experiences - Past 3 Years			
Formal Training:	Competencies/Skills Developed:		
Special Assignments:	Competencies/Skills Developed:		
Other:	Competencies/Skills Developed:		

² Adapted from Byham, William C., Audrey B. Smith, Matthew J. Paese. 2002. *Grow Your Own Leaders. Acceleration Pools: A New Method of Succession Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Acceleration Pool Nomination Summary

Name	Support of Agency Values	Leadership Promise	Interpersonal Skills	Demonstration of Results	Developmental Orientation
Applicant A	S	S	S	P	S
Applicant B	S	S	P	P	S
Applicant C	P	P	S	S	P
Applicant D	P	S	P	S	P
Applicant E	P	P	P	P	S
Applicant F	D	P	P	P	P

S = Strength
P = Proficiency
D = Developmental Needs

Appendix V

SUCCESSION PLANNING TEMPLATE



Succession planning templates

Talent bench review (developed by [The Anderson Leadership Group](#))

Instructions and legend:

Performance level — WHAT the employee does and HOW they do it. Rate each employee relative to the following criteria:

- I. Weak performer
- II. Solid performer
- III. Strong performer

Ultimate potential level — The job level the individual is capable of attaining, provided continued performance and development (under best possible conditions). Consider raw ability, motivation to succeed, and commitment to group or organization.

- I. Current role only or possible bad fit
- II. Good fit at current level, lateral move, or upward 1 level
- III. Upward mobility more than 1 level

Readiness — Consider the individual's learning needs and potential when making this judgment

- I. Needs greater than 12 months to develop to next move
- II. Should develop in current role for more than 12 months before next move
- III. Can take next development step within next 12 months

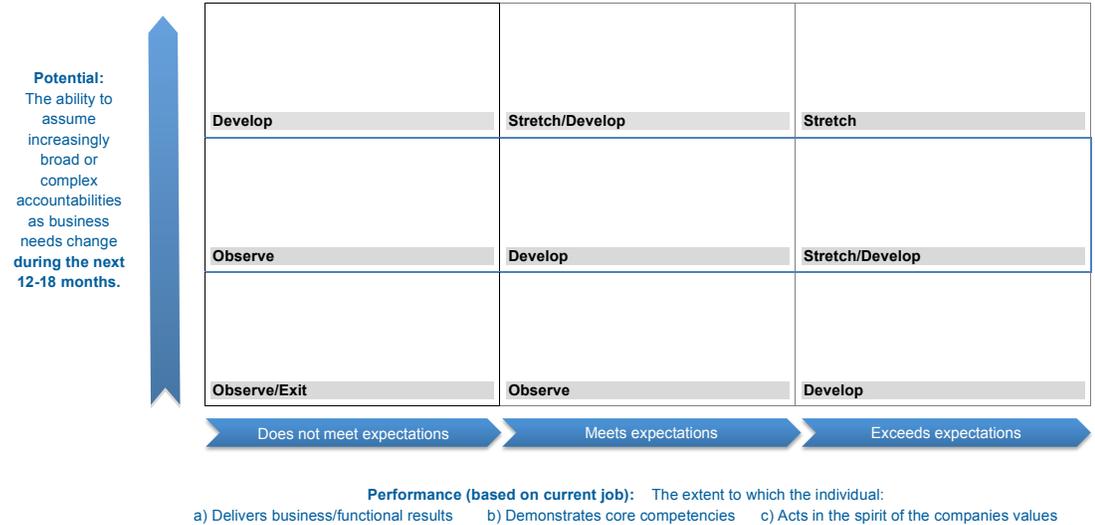
Talent bench review form

	Direct report name	Performance level	Ultimate potential level	Readiness		
				I	II	III
1	Sample: John Smith	III	II		√	
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

9-box grid template

Instructions:

Here you will take the information from the Talent bench review form and plot employee performance against potential. Working collaboratively arrange every employee into one of nine types across a vertical and horizontal axis, based on three levels of performance and three of potential. The 9-box grid guide on the next page provides more insight and recommended actions.



9-box grid guide

Potential:
The ability to assume increasingly broad or complex accountabilities as business needs change during the next 12-18 months.

<p>May be an individual who has recently been promoted and hasn't had the opportunity to demonstrate higher performance. Focus on coaching and a solid development plan. In an individual that has been in this role for some time, there may be a serious issue (derailer).</p> <p>Develop</p>	<p>A valuable asset for the future. There is still room for maximizing performance in current role; potential may not be fully realized yet. Focus on increasing performance contribution to high, after which greater challenge and/or broader scope are likely.</p> <p>Stretch/develop</p>	<p>Has mastered current role and is ready (and anticipating) a new challenge. Next steps are to provide greater scale and/or scope or a new assignment, which will stretch them in a significant way or will provide new or missing skills. Retention is critical. These are future leaders of the company.</p> <p>Stretch</p>
<p>Shows some potential but performance is considered low. Focus on reasons for low performance and actions to improve it. If there isn't an improvement, potential should be reassessed and a performance improvement plan put in place.</p> <p>Observe</p>	<p>Has potential for increased accountabilities and is meeting current performance expectations. Development focus: Increase performance contribution to "high" will further assessment of potential growth.</p> <p>Develop</p>	<p>Is exceeding performance expectations and is a good candidate for growth and development. Employee development should focus on specific gaps – i.e. what is needed to broaden or move to the next level of responsibility.</p> <p>Stretch/develop</p>
<p>Not meeting performance expectations and demonstrates limited potential. Focus should be on significant performance improvement or finding a more suitable role (internal or external).</p> <p>Observe/exit</p>	<p>Consistent contributor, but shows limited potential. Focus on maximizing performance while assessing future potential and/or a more suitable role. May need a plan for a successor. In some cases, if performance declines or is blocked, retention may be reviewed.</p> <p>Observe</p>	<p>A strong performer but unlikely to move to a higher-level role. Engagement will be important for continued motivation and retention. May be of real value for developing others. Professional, business or content experts may fall into this box.</p> <p>Develop</p>

Does not meet expectations

Meets expectations

Exceeds expectations

Performance (based on current job): The extent to which the individual:

- a) Delivers business/functional results b) Demonstrates core competencies c) Acts in the spirit of the companies values