Bridging the Gap in Federal Succession Planning:
Observations on Current Practices and Differences in Perceptions between Human Capital and IT Operations Managers

Human Capital Shared Interest Group (SIG)

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This examination of Federal succession planning practices and perceptions was undertaken at the request of several members of the American Council for Technology-Industry Advisory Council (ACT-IAC) Human Capital Shared Interest Group (SIG) Government Advisory Panel. The Human Capital SIG agreed to examine the state of succession planning across the Federal Government, review specific agency experience, and report the current situation as we found it, as well as make recommendations for improvement.

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Executive Summary

Succession planning, a well-established business best practice, is also mandated for Federal agencies in Title 5 U.S.C. 4121 and 5 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) part 250 (originally enacted as the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004). Public and private sector experts in the field of organizational development agree that effective succession planning is essential to any entity’s vitality and even its survival in ever challenging contemporary market conditions. The purpose of this report, conducted by the ACT-IAC Human Capital SIG, is to offer a high level review of the current status of succession planning in several Federal Agencies and offer suggestions for improvements.

The ACT-IAC Human Capital SIG formed a working group of three industry representatives who sought insights into Federal succession planning in several ways:

- In person and telephone interviews with several Federal human capital executives who are known in the Federal human capital community for their work in succession planning
- Surveys of both human capital and IT operational executives and managers on their experience with agency/department succession planning programs
- A panel discussion with three Federal human capital executives, interacting with both a live and a teleconference audience on the results of the surveys and Federal succession planning in general
- A review of relevant literature on Federal succession planning

This sampling of Federal Government subject matter expert opinions on succession planning provided an understanding of the key issues and challenges involved in succession planning programs. From the consistency of responses in our in-person meetings with Federal thought leaders and survey responses from human capital and IT operational managers we believe our findings are representative of the status of succession planning in many Federal Agencies and Departments. Our findings and ensuing recommendations were formed from a combination of the input received from key agency officials that we interviewed, along with the survey data responses and a search of relevant literature on Federal succession planning.

Several key success factors were identified in agencies where succession planning programs were particularly well-regarded:

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<tr>
<th>Succession Planning Key Success Factors</th>
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<tr>
<td>A unique and well-defined agency mission</td>
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<td>Personal commitment of agency leadership</td>
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<td>Involvement of workforce at all levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on future workforce at all levels</td>
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<td>Progressive human capital strategies</td>
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<td>Pervasive communication</td>
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Our working group produced five findings regarding the state of succession planning in Federal Agencies. In summary, the findings are:

1. Effective and well-regarded succession planning does take place at a number of Federal Departments and Agencies.
2. Intra-agency succession planning does not uniformly take place across all Federal Departments and Agencies.
3. Departmental and agency leaders do not always ensure that their agencies include succession planning as strategic initiatives. Internal communications in this area are often ineffective.
4. OPM has opportunities to enhance its provision of support for succession planning across Government Departments and Agencies.
5. Some agency IT operational managers who view succession planning as mission-critical and do not receive results-producing support from their CHCOs, have developed and implemented their own internal succession planning processes.

Overall, we found that while a number of departments and agencies have effective succession planning programs in place, there is a significant gap between the perceptions of most of the human capital practitioners and the IT operational managers that we contacted. In short, while the human capital practitioners felt they are delivering succession planning programs as directed by OPM, many IT operational managers are not aware of these programs in their areas, or find them ineffective at producing a pool of management candidates capable of executing agency initiatives.

Our findings were consistent with the 2009 report “The Crisis in Federal Government Succession Planning – What’s Being Done About It” by PricewaterhouseCoopers that noted “Many Government Agencies … fall short, however, in aligning training, development, and other human capital practices with strategic organizational goals”.

Purpose

Our examination of Federal succession planning practices was undertaken in early 2010 at the request of members of the Human Capital SIG’s Government Advisory Panel. The members sought insight into the unique considerations for succession planning in the IT workforce and were concerned about the depth and quality of succession planning for Senior Executive Service (SES) positions and the candidate who might fill them. The Human Capital SIG agreed to examine the state of succession planning across Government; review specific agency experience; and report the current situation as we found it; as well as make recommendations for improvement.

Based on research of publicly available documents, the SIG’s Succession Planning Working Group initiated its work with a hypothesis that effective succession planning generally does not occur nor provide expected results despite a legislative mandate and general agreement that it is a positive and necessary management tool. This report tests the hypothesis and explores why this generally accepted best practice management tool may not be consistently executed across Government.
Key Findings on the State of Succession Planning In the Federal Government

Findings
The team’s research identified that succession planning is implemented inconsistently across Federal Government Departments and Agencies. Based on our conversations with agency leaders and from the results of our two surveys, we developed five fundamental findings. We then make five specific recommendations based on these findings.

We found that successful succession planning requires strong, well defined, and interdependent relationships among agency managers, CHCOs, and agency senior staff. OPM and the Congress are cognizant of the need for these relationships, as demonstrated in the explicit language of Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004. Thus, the development and execution of effective succession planning in the Federal Government is a shared responsibility among senior agency heads, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO), and senior program managers.

1. Effective and well-regarded succession planning does take place at a number of Federal Departments and Agencies.

Our research and in-person interviews did find examples of succession planning structures that are producing positive results at the Department of Commerce by the Chief Learning Officer and at NASA with the CHCO’s NASA Leadership Model. In both cases, senior individuals assumed personal responsibility for developing, maintaining, and operating a successful human capital development program in close alignment with the goals and objectives of their agency. Each built lines of communication to multiple management levels with their agencies and had also created feedback loops.

At the Department of Commerce, the CLO gained departmental leadership support for a policy that Commerce agencies must consider the pool of internal candidates from leadership development programs before looking outside the agency. They have a three-level leadership development program spanning supervisors to the SES. There is a regular review of a critical agency skills inventory which is tied to managers possessing and developing skills that fill expected agency shortfalls.

At NASA, the CHCO participates with Principal Staff in strategic planning exercises and contributes by providing planners with workforce skills data so that resource gaps can be identified and addressed. NASA’s succession planning begins with recruiting candidates based on expected agency skills needs, and then incorporates rotations between NASA centers and headquarters assignments within the context of NASA’s formal leadership programs. There is a focus on communication of leadership development programs available throughout NASA, and on the promotion of leaders who have reached leadership positions through the program.

We identified several key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of succession planning programs that we studied that have been recognized by OPM, PwC and the non-profit Partnership for Public Service for their effectiveness. These factors flowed from extensive...
agency workforce planning based on a focus on each agency’s strategic mission and then an analysis of the critical skills required to support the agency’s initiatives. We list below questions that flesh out the success factors identified.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Succession Planning Success Factors</th>
<th>Questions That Point To An Effective Succession Planning Environment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A unique and well-defined mission</strong></td>
<td>• Is there a consistently understood/expressed the mission for the agency?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understandable and compelling</td>
<td>• What evidence is there that it’s consistently understood and expressed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly identifies customers, stakeholders and beneficiaries</td>
<td>• In what ways is the mission compelling? Compelling to whom?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How does the agency know the mission is compelling?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How is the mission expressed externally and internally?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Is the mission static or dynamic?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• If dynamic, how is a change to mission implemented?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Has the agency defined its customers and stakeholders? All of its customers and stakeholders?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Has the agency calculated the benefits of its products and services?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does the agency understand who benefits?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does the agency have potentially conflicting beneficiaries?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• If so, what are the means to reconcile these potential conflicts?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal commitment of agency leadership</strong></td>
<td>• Is the senior executive of the agency championing succession planning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establishes as an agency priority</td>
<td>• How has succession planning been tied to enterprise initiatives?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes necessary funding available</td>
<td>• Is senior staff aware of the OPM and President Management Council’s guidance on succession planning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personally engages with the program</td>
<td>• Have specific succession planning outcome metrics been established?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How are succession planning responsibilities delegated to principal staff?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How is the senior executive of the agency demonstrating his/her commitment to succession planning?</td>
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## Succession Planning Success Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement of workforce at all levels</th>
<th>Questions That Point To An Effective Succession Planning Environment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively seeks broad employee participation</td>
<td>• How is responsibility for succession planning delegated within the agency?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses on-going feedback loops and lessons-learned</td>
<td>• Are responsibilities for succession planning clear, measurable, and achievable?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Is succession planning used to stimulate manager/supervisor/employee collaboration?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Is succession planning used to encourage career growth?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does the agency use checkpoints and feedback to determine that succession planning initiatives are working as expected?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Are lessons-learned activities used and what levels of the agency participate?</td>
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<td>• Where are lessons-learned results retained and how are they analyzed for future use?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Focus on future workforce at all levels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understands retirement trends</td>
<td>• Does the agency maintain retirement and ready-to-retire statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predicts future requirements of the agency</td>
<td>• How are these statistics evaluated and for what purpose?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How far out does the agency strategically plan?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does strategic planning occur across all of the agency’s business areas?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How are human capital needs incorporated into the strategic plan?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does the agency consistently perform market research and analysis to identify leading edge skills sets to manage and competitively execute its business lines and their intra-agency support disciplines?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Who in the agency commissions market analyses and at what level are they reviewed?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How are market and business trends merged with retirement statistics?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What strategies/accomplishments result from the merger of market and business trends and retirement statistics?</td>
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| Progressive human capital strategies | • Are human capital objectives tied to agency business results? |
### Succession Planning Success Factors

- Monitors progress iteratively and exponentially
- Employs benchmarking methodologies

### Questions That Point To An Effective Succession Planning Environment

- Does the agency use performance outcomes for human capital initiatives?
- How are agency career paths established and positively altered?
- How are employees advised of career path opportunities?
- Do agency officials know what employees think of agency career path opportunities?
- Are career opportunities dynamic; adjusting to changes is agency strategy?
- How is annual performance planning and assessment linked to training opportunities, internal and external?
- Do human capital officials look beyond their agency for “best practices”?

#### Pervasive communication

- Top down and bottom up
- Information is timely and accepted as credible

- Who in the agency initiates human capital/succession planning information down and throughout the agency?
- Is such communication done by or directly on behalf of the agency head?
- What types of information are disseminated to agency personnel?
- How frequently is it disseminated?
- What forms of media are used to disseminate human capital succession planning information?
- How are assessments made that the information and messaging were correctly received?
- How is feedback input from employees derived?

### 2. Intra-agency succession planning does not consistently take place across all Federal Departments and Agencies.

In the agency survey responses from human capital practitioners, a lack of focus on aligning agency-level succession planning with agency mission demonstrated a disconnect between human capital managers and their agency leaders. Similarly, the responses from IT operational managers reflect little connection or coordination between them and their respective human capital organizations.
For example, from the human capital practitioner responses:

- Just one human capital practitioner identified a developed set of succession planning objectives aligned with their agency’s overall strategic direction.

- No agency human capital practitioner made reference to a fully mature leadership training and succession program. Dr. Fred Lang, Director, Office of Training and Knowledge Management, U.S. Department of Commerce, did mention in our interview with him that the Department of Commerce has a complete leadership development and succession planning strategy underway - New Pathways for aspiring leaders, The Horizon for executive leadership development, The Summit for SES candidate development and a new program for executives. The Pinnacle, a program for executives, is scheduled for launch in 2012. Former NASA Office of Human Capital Management Assistant Administrator Toni Dawsey similarly described NASA’s Foundations of Influence, Relationships, Success, and Teamwork (NASA FIRST), Mid-Level Leader, SES CDP and Executive Development Curriculum programs that together are key elements of NASA’s succession planning program.

- No agency human capital practitioner pointed to a completed set of internal metrics that measured whether the agency’s succession, skills, and management needs were being met. One human capital practitioner responded that he/she didn’t know if his/her agency was engaged in such monitoring activity.

From the IT operational management survey:

- 100% of the responders stated that their agency’s succession planning program and ongoing human capital resource management strategy were only partially developed, poorly developed, or non-existent.

- 70% of the responders indicated that they had not been asked to participate in any agency-level or department-level succession planning discussions.

One explanation for the lack of consistent agency leadership focus on succession planning is the tendency for senior political appointees to commit to and execute short-term agency agendas of two years or less, thereby invalidating and/or marginalizing the necessity for long term agency succession planning.

According to the Government Accountability Office (See, Political Appointees: Turnover Rates in Executive Schedule Positions Requiring Senate Confirmation – www.gao.gov/products/GAO-95-115FS) the average term of a senior Federal political appointment for the last 40 years has ranged from 24 to 30 months. From the outset, most senior political appointees are outwardly-facing promoting new initiatives of the Administration. They are also under more frequent pressure to react to issues that might flow from the speed of the contemporary news cycles. They are incentivized to focus on the “here and now” to demonstrate accomplishment.

The pervasiveness of Government leaders adopting a “quick hits” strategy is the same regardless of the party in power. Getting It Right: the Difference between Running for Office and Running the Government (www.transitionjobs.us) offers the following advice to incoming political appointees:

“The average length of service for most political appointees is about 24 to 30 months, a relatively short time to accomplish policy or program objectives. It is important to begin immediately to identify a few key areas with major impacts that can be completed during the appointees’ tenure. Resolving longer-term issues...
might not be completed during that time span, but significant forward movement can be achieved, which places the next appointee closer to achieving the Administration’s desired results.”

Succession planning is not a short-term exercise and unfortunately, if it is used in that manner, it will lose its value to the enterprise. In the absence of any agency-wide prioritization of succession planning CHCOs and program managers have fewer opportunities to become meaningfully engaged in these efforts. In this short-term results focused environment, key managers, both career and non-career, reported in their survey responses that they work heads down and often in isolation. This method will not result in a collaborative, enterprise-focused approach to succession planning.

3. Departmental and agency leaders do not consistently ensure their agencies include succession planning as strategic initiatives. Internal communications in this area are often ineffective.

The Federal Workforce Flexibility Act requires agency heads to create and maintain a comprehensive succession planning process for their enterprise. This departmental responsibility is usually delegated to the agency’s CHCO for compliance with OPM’s Guide to Succession Management Strategic Model. The Model provides OPM’s succession planning guidance and expectations and subsequent activities which help to ensure close alignment with the agency’s goals and mission. To achieve compliance with the OPM Guide, agencies are expected to have strategic delivery goals, properly understand their present and future resource requirements, and have a system of assessment and measurements that allows the agency to anticipate and address future resource needs leveraging both internally developed and externally hired resources. Regular reports are due to OPM which documents compliance or progress towards compliance.

The survey responses demonstrate that several agencies appear not to be providing required information on their succession planning initiatives. For example, the OPM Guide asks that the agency provide evidence of alignment of strategic goals and of a robust intra-agency system of succession planning resource management metrics. The human capital practitioners’ survey responses indicated that:

- One-half of the responding agencies have no plans for agency-wide succession planning, communication strategies focused on all management levels of the agency, nor the measurement of anticipated outcomes.
- The other half of the responding human capital practitioners report such plans that are only partially complete.

IT operational management surveys showed:

- 88% of the responders considered succession planning as critical to the completion of their program’s mission.
- However, 62% had no functional or current succession plan for their program aligned with agency goals and objectives.

4. OPM has opportunities to enhance its provision of support for success planning across Government Departments and Agencies.
Under Section 4121 of the Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004, Federal agency heads, in consultation with OPM, must establish a comprehensive management succession program that includes training of employees to develop managers. OPM has published its Guide for Strategic Leadership Succession Management Model which provides agencies with a recommended structure for enterprise succession planning.

In addition to the succession planning oversight office, OPM has a human resources consultative office that provides professional services to agencies on matters of succession planning. This office, upon request, works with agencies to “…develop an effective workforce and succession planning strategy”, “…a multi-year approach to human capital management.” These services are provided on a fee-for-service basis and so less used by prospective client agencies than if OPM provided them at no-charge.

In the Recommendations section of this report are several suggestions to OPM to provide enhanced succession planning offerings. Based on our findings, the recommendations would contribute to increased adoption of OPM’s suggested succession planning practices.

5. Some agency IT operational managers who view succession planning as mission-critical and do not receive results-producing support from their CHCOs, have developed and implemented their own internal succession planning processes.

The answers to the IT operational management survey demonstrated that agency succession planning activities, if they do occur, do not always include the participation of IT operational and program managers. Seventy percent of the operational managers’ survey responders stated that they have not been asked to participate in any agency-level succession planning. These “disconnects” between program managers and succession planning processes indicate that human capital strategies to meet agency goals often times result in insufficient or inadequate outcomes. The operational managers’ comments reflecting these issues include the following excerpts:

- “We used HCAAF (OPM’s Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework) in our office however after we completed the survey no one used the results.”
- “There is a reliance on recruiting senior-level Federal positions from the private sector that has a cost of acclimating those folks to the Government environment.”
- “Although HR department encourages line managers to do succession planning, they do not provide any tools, guidance, or consulting on the topic.”
- “There is no training or coaching/mentoring on developing or implementing succession plans.”
- “Lessons-learned are not shared or leveraged.”
- “A key challenge is how to incentivize a longer term view.”
- “Leadership programs are poorly run and there’s little to no planning for how best will leadership program graduates fit into the management scheme of the agency; it’s more a checkbox to get promoted.”

In the absence of support or coordination from their agencies, some IT operational and program managers are developing their own ad hoc succession plans. Their comments include:

- “I am working on succession planning within my office.”
In addition to misalignment with agency goals and mission, when succession planning is performed down at the program level the agency loses opportunities for cross-fertilization. Employees have fewer career enrichment opportunities, and agencies have higher administrative costs for narrower results.

**Effective and Special Practices**

Examples of effective and special succession planning practices we observed included:

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<th>Internal Agency Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td>The key is to define the agency mission strategy and tie the workforce strategy to it.</td>
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<td>Senior Leader Engagement – participation in succession planning review boards is required; it keeps them engaged. Division leaders get involved when succession planning programs take place within their divisions.</td>
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<td>Agency CIOs and CHCOs should have seats at the Executive Resource Board table to align the management of their resources to agency initiatives.</td>
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<th>Workforce Planning</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Department of Labor demonstrated ability to use bench strength forecasting to make decisions about investments of resources for leadership development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Department of Commerce used anticipated requirements for agency critical occupation technical job functions to create more accurate succession planning projections.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASA combines assessments of their current agency skills bases (multiple) and projections of expected program needs as inputs to their succession planning programs.</td>
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<th>Management Development Programs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Publicize the management development/succession planning program widely - NASA publicizes succession planning best practices across the agency through shared monthly reports, video-conferences, and inter-organizational site visits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASA utilizes in-person interviews (vs. written applications) as key elements in management development program selections – they show much more than written applications – how the candidates think on their feet and interact with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of panels in succession planning programs - NASA’s review panels at the organization and agency levels assure transparency in their processes. Their management development programs are very competitive. Panels also assure a level playing field, help train and involve managers, and provide senior leaders a mechanism to see the developing staff landscape.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commerce has a 5-year plan for their SES CDP program, which OPM approved. The Commerce Chief Human Capital Officer’s policy is that when an executive position is to be filled within the Department, the qualifications of graduates of the SES CDP program</td>
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must be reviewed by the hiring executive before they conduct an open competition. This will help Commerce’s conversion rate for graduates of their SES CDP program.

NRC, OPM and Commerce agreed that SES Career Development programs need to be targeted to a forecasted estimate of SES slots – because it is bad for morale and poor investment for agencies when they develop more candidates than there are available slots and they leave the organization. Best practice to limit enrollment to ensure that a large percentage of program graduates are placed within about a year.

NRC has annual succession planning chaired by their Chief Operating Officer (Executive Director for Operations) and includes all members of the Executive Resources Board. All SESers are discussed with an emphasis on career development and opportunities for growth.

Commerce has three career development programs for different levels of the Department, all funneling into agency succession planning pipeline. Supervisors were recently added to these plans per CFR 412.

Agency External Practices

Required Rotational Assignments for Promotional Consideration - NASA, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the HHS Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals each require rotational assignments as part of their formal leadership programs to develop well-rounded managers.

Recommendations

Based on our findings, the team makes the following recommendations for improvement of Federal succession planning programs:

1. Where agency strategic planning and the measurement of desired outcomes are not linked to agency-wide succession planning efforts, more study and analysis should be undertaken to determine the root causes and whether they lie in the planning, coordinating, or executing phases of an agency’s business cycle.

2. Agency CHCOs should include in agency succession plans rotational assignments and other elements designed to create “fungible” managers and leaders who have both general management skills (versus primarily functional expertise) as well as the ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges and opportunities and lead in uncharted waters. The broadly-skilled and experienced managers that emerge will be well-prepared to deal with the unpredictable management challenges that agencies will face in the coming years.

3. Agency succession plans should take into account the expected utilization of new managers versus existing agency leaders and adapt the “throughput” of agency programs to expected needs. Succession programs should be regularly adjusted to produce graduates in quantities tailored to agency staffing requirements. This practice will lead to increased returns on agency investments in these programs, lessening cases of unpromoted and unchallenged managers that might tend to leave and seek out other agencies or organizations where their newly developed skills can be put to good use.

4. Training for new agency leaders (such as at time of Administration change) should include education on the purpose and benefit of succession planning, the CFR mandate for it, and if done well, how it can support agencies’ ability to deliver on their initiatives.
5. OPM could consider delivering additional offerings to promote succession planning across Government including:

   a. Creating a set of awards to the top (e.g., 10) succession planning programs. This could be done within OPM, or it can be done in conjunction with one or more industry educational association partners to further mutual interest in bettering Federal workforce management.

   b. Creating and delivering Federal Succession Planning educational forum (either in person or virtual) to convene succession planning practitioners across Government. The sessions could include live updates from OPM on latest succession planning policy changes and guidance, case studies from agencies highlighting their effective practices, and perhaps an outside speaker to present insights that would educate and inspire the students. Such a forum could be creatively arranged to minimize OPM’s and agencies’ cost expenditures while providing a venue to engage and recognize the importance of succession planning work going on in Government.

   c. Offerings to accelerate uptake and learning of effective agency practices, such as a Government-only succession planning website with discussion groups and facilities for document sharing to promote collaboration between succession planning leaders across Government.
Appendix 1 - SME Interviews, Surveys and Executive Leaders Panel Discussion

Dr. Harold Welch, HCAAF System Manager, Leadership and Knowledge Management, Office of Personnel Management

To establish a baseline understanding of the definition and importance of succession planning in the Federal Government, in August 2010 the team met with Dr. Harold Welch, HCAAF System Manager, Leadership and Knowledge Management at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Dr. Welch is charged with oversight of Federal succession planning by OPM and in this capacity, he monitors the annual submissions of agency Human Capital Management Reports with references to succession plans and leadership development programs. Dr. Welch pointed us to “A Guide to the Strategic Leadership Succession Management Model” (SLSM Model) that gives Federal managers an overview of Federal succession planning, and provides job aids to help agencies develop and implement their succession management activities. We discussed the succession plan submissions that he reviews as part of the Human Capital Management Report each agency submits annually, including their plans respective strengths and weaknesses. Generally he felt that succession planning has been best implemented in agencies where:

1. senior management takes a personal interest,
2. the CHCOs use their “seat at the table” in executive planning for integrating agency strategic Human Capital initiatives with the agency’s mission,
3. there is a unifying “compelling business case” issue that requires immediate and focused attention on projected management shortages, and
4. an agency’s leadership reaches a stage of readiness to share their attention between the urgent operational essentials and the important strategic Human Capital needs.

In answer to the question, “What are the consequences of poorly or not implemented succession planning in agencies?” Dr. Welch indicated that during the time of the President’s Management Agenda and quarterly scorecards, many agencies paid attention to strategic leadership succession planning to obtain and maintain their “green status.” The approach was effective because it introduced some agencies to contemporary business practices that they would not otherwise have experience. There were also cases where agencies did the exercise only to fulfill the requirement. Currently, they are required to review their succession plans to ensure continuity of leadership talent. A well-managed succession planning process can: 1) optimize leadership development resources, 2) give senior leaders information about potential of the loss of critical talent, 3) provide employees information about career opportunities and development requirements, and 4) provide guidance for recruiting, hiring, or restructuring. These benefits are not available to agencies that do not develop sufficient workforce and succession knowledge.

Dr. Welch also suggested several succession planning subject matter expert (SME) proponents in a number of agencies for us to speak with.

Leighann Volentine, Human Resources Consultant, HR Strategy and Evaluation Solutions, Office of Personnel Management

The team met with Leighann Volentine, Human Resources Consultant, HR Strategy and Evaluation Solutions of the Office of Personnel Management. Leighann’s team provides succession planning implementation services to agencies on a consulting basis. Leighann said her experience is that most agencies are not tying their succession planning to agency
initiatives; rather they are doing what they need to do to respond to OPM succession planning mandates. Her organization works primarily with enterprise-level leaders (rather than human capital) that are requesting and managing their agency succession planning processes.

Toni Dawsey, Assistant Administrator for Human Capital Management and Chief Human Capital Officer, NASA
Dr. Debbie Augustin, Succession Planning Lead, NASA

In September 2010, we met with Toni Dawsey, then Assistant Administrator for Human Capital Management and Chief Human Capital Officer for NASA, and Dr. Debbie Augustin, NASA’s then-lead for succession planning who shared insights gained from building and operating NASA’s succession planning program. NASA’s highly regarded and well-recognized program is integrated across headquarters and centers, and includes entry-level as well as management workers. Summarizing what we heard, NASA’s succession planning success factors are:

- NASA’s unique, well-defined agency mission
- Personal commitment of agency leadership to succession planning
- Involvement of all levels of the workforce in NASA succession planning
- Focus on succession planning outcomes for the workforce at all levels
- Implementation of progressive and scalable human capital strategies
- Pervasive communications on succession planning throughout NASA

Dr. Fred Lang, Chief Learning Officer, Department of Commerce

In November 2010, the team met with Dr. Fred Lang, Chief Learning Officer at the Department of Commerce and a direct report to the agency Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer. Dr. Lang has been responsible for building a well-regarded department-wide succession planning program with programs from the GS-2 level all the way through the Senior Executive Service. The Commerce succession planning programs are focused on the Department’s 23 mission-critical occupations and are designed to expose candidates to opportunities in other Commerce Agencies to develop their cross-department management capabilities. A key success factor in Commerce’s succession planning is a mandate from the Secretary’s office to bureaus that they base promotions on participation in the succession planning programs, as they are aligned with Commerce’s areas of critical needs. Dr. Lang believes that OPM should be a clearinghouse to help agencies develop engaging succession planning programs, facilitate the sharing of successful agency models and facilitate cross-agency succession planning communications.
Appendix 2 - Surveys

The OPM, NASA and Commerce interviews were followed with two online surveys designed to solicit input from the two communities most affected by succession planning programs: the human capital community that typically develops and manages agency succession planning programs, and the agency operational management whose ability to execute agency initiatives is directly affected by the availability of an effective workforce to implement agency programs.

The first survey was targeted at respondents who deliver agency succession planning programs. It contained questions taken from OPM’s Strategic Leadership Succession Management Model designed to test whether recommendations from the model were being implemented and additional questions seeking open text opinions and insights. This survey was initially delivered to the members of the Federal Chief Human Capital Officers Council and the Deputy Chief Human Capital Officers Council. It was then also sent to a list of agency HR Directors provided by OPM. Sixteen responses were received to this survey, 14 from civilian agencies, and two from intelligence agencies. Though invited to participate, no Department of Defense agencies responded to this survey.

The second survey was aimed at agency IT operational executives to determine what impact agency succession plans were having on their ability to achieve agency goals. Logistics and the close tie between ACT-IAC and Government allowed the team to distribute this second survey to the Federal Chief Information Officers Council and then to its IT Workforce Committee. This survey contained six questions focused on the respondent’s perception of succession planning programs in their agency and the effect of those programs on their ability to execute agency initiatives. A total of 25 responses were received to this survey representing a mixture of civilian, DoD and intelligence agencies (as this was a blind survey, specific counts were not available).
### Appendix 3 – Human Capital Practitioner Survey Questions
(completed by CHCOs and HR Managers)

1. **Type of agency:**

2. Is your agency large (over 5,000 employees) or small (5,000 or fewer employees)

3. Is succession planning done at the department level or at the agency level in your organization?

4. Establish strategic goals and objectives for succession management to align with your agency’s overall strategic direction?

5. Utilize workforce analysis findings to articulate a business case for succession management in the agency? The business case includes why the succession plan is needed and how it will benefit the agency.

6. Identify the agency’s current and projected workforce needs, at particular points in time, for the key leadership populations (e.g., aspiring leaders, supervisors, managers, and executives) and subgroups (e.g., by bureau or department, headquarters vs. field, critical vs. noncritical leadership positions, technical vs. line management)?

7. Establish targets describing the number of critical leadership positions for which the agency needs qualified leaders the number of leaders and potential leaders to be included in development, and the required competencies for the targeted positions?

8. Analyze the leadership talent pool by identifying a diverse pool of current and prospective leaders (e.g., high-potential employees, high-performing employees, all employees at a specified level, and/or prospective employees external to the agency)?

9. Assess the extent to which the identified pool of leaders meets established numeric and competency targets?

10. Analyze current recruitment and selection programs, policies, and practices to assess how well they can meet or support projected needs and targets?

11. Analyze current development programs, policies, and practices to assess how well they can meet or support projected needs and targets?

12. Analyze current retention programs, policies, and practices to assess how well they can meet or support projected needs and targets?

13. Establish strategies for identifying, recruiting, selecting, developing, and retaining new and prospective leaders?

14. Establish strategies for retooling, strengthening, and retaining current leaders?

15. Establish strategies for ensuring that valuable knowledge is disseminated throughout all levels of leadership (knowledge sharing)?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Develop a process to implement succession management strategies for the recruitment, selection, development, and retention of agency leaders?</td>
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<td>17. Communicate these strategies to all levels of leadership in the agency?</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Identify metrics the agency will use to measure the effectiveness of all succession management programs and activities?</td>
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<td>19. Link the results of program measurement to continuous improvement follow-up activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Obtain buy-in and support from all levels of agency leadership and articulated expectations and roles and responsibilities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Establish procedures to ensure that policies and practices are modified, when necessary, to support succession management efforts?</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Implement strategies to recruit and select new/prospective leaders to achieve stated targets, taking into account critical competencies particularly scarce within the organization?</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Deploy training and development strategies for current and future leaders in targeted populations and subgroups, taking into account the stated numeric and competency targets?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Initiate strategies for retaining current and prospective leadership talent in targeted populations and subgroups?</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Collect and document process and performance metrics data to measure the effectiveness of succession management programs/activities and generated progress/status reports?</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Analyze metrics data and reported results to senior management?</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Determine corrective actions and improvements needed, including changes in strategic objectives, succession targets (i.e., numbers and competencies), succession strategies, communications, or evaluation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. What creates the compelling need for succession management at your agency?</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. What is the driver?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. What problem(s) will this address?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. What would happen if you did not have an effective succession management initiative?</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Who is most interested that the purpose for succession management is appropriately addressed? Who is the leadership sponsor/champion for succession management?</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. What problems or issues will succession planning address at your agency?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
30. What are the products or outputs of the succession management program?
   a. Who uses the succession management products?
   b. What agency decisions are influenced succession management products?
   c. How is succession management information communicated within the agency and to whom is it communicated?

31. At your agency
   a. What is the measure of success for the succession management program?
   b. Can you give any specific examples where having succession planning in place has significantly benefited your agency in terms of increased customer satisfaction, lower costs, cost avoidance, etc.?
   c. Please quantify the benefits if possible.

32. Would recognition of highly successful agency succession planning programs help your efforts, and if so, what type of recognition would be helpful?
Appendix 4 – IT Operational Management Survey Questions  
(completed by CIOs, CLOs and members of CIO Council IT Workforce Committee)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your agency have a succession planning program as part of its ongoing human capital resource management strategy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. If yes, would you describe the program and strategy as:</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. As an operational manager, how dependent are you on the timely provision of qualified staff to fulfill your mission?</td>
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<td>4. Do you have a current and functional succession plan for your office?</td>
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<td>5. Have you been asked to participate in departmental or agency level, succession planning discussions?</td>
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<td>6. If yes, please describe your involvement</td>
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Appendix 5 - Panel Discussion

Darren Ash, Deputy Executive Director for Corporate Management, Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Dr. Fred Lang, Chief Learning Officer, Department of Commerce
Dr. Harold Welch, System Manager, Leadership and Knowledge Management, Office of Personnel Management

As a final step in our data gathering process the team convened a public panel discussion of two senior agency leaders representing both the human capital and the IT operational management organizations, along with the OPM leader who oversees succession planning across the agencies. Darren Ash of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) oversees both the CHCO and CIO functions within the NRC; Dr. Fred Lang oversees the succession planning programs in the Department of Commerce, while Dr. Harold Welch of the OPM oversees the succession planning guidance and support provided by OPM to the agencies. The panelists also answered specific succession management questions raised by the audience.

Four key points emerged from the panel discussion:

1. Agency senior leadership of succession planning is critical – where it exists the programs are successful and integrated into agency initiatives – where there is little or no senior leadership support succession planning, if done at all, is “check the box” rather than strategic.
2. Succession planning succeeds where agency Chief Human Capital Officers have a seat at the agency strategic decision-making table and are considered strategic partners.
3. The development and maintenance of agencies’ critical competencies has to be at the core of succession planning.
4. There is a great need for developing “fungible management” capabilities within the Senior Executive Service as well as in agency middle management ranks. Succession planning programs need require rotations in different organizations and to different areas of responsibility that will develop managers who can quickly fill the unpredictable management gaps that agencies are increasingly facing with initiative changes, as well as staffing and budget challenges.

Appendix 6 - Author(s) & Study Participants

Interviewees

Dr. Debbie Augustin, Succession Planning Lead, National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Toni Dawsey, Assistant Administrator, Office of Human Capital Management, National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Dr. Fred Lang, Director, Office of Training and Knowledge Management, U.S. Department of Commerce

Leighann Volentine, Human Resources Consultant, HR Strategy and Evaluation Solutions of the Office of Personnel Management

Dr. Harold Welch, System Manager, Leadership and Knowledge Management, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Panel Members

Darren Ash, Deputy Executive Director for Corporate Management, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Dr. Fred Lang, Director, Office of Training and Knowledge Management, U.S. Department of Commerce

Dr. Harold Welch, System Manager, Leadership and Knowledge Management, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Peter Sherer, Founder and CEO, Experience Matters – Panel Moderator

Working Group Members

Betsy Newman, Cygnus Corporation

Chris Peterson, Creative Computing Solutions, Inc.

Debbie Brown, Independent Consultant

Bob Clarke, ASPE, Inc. – Chair, Working Group
American Council for Technology-Industry Advisory Council

The American Council for Technology (ACT) is a non-profit educational organization established in 1979 to assist Government in acquiring and using information technology resources effectively. In 1989 ACT established the Industry Advisory Council (IAC) to bring industry and Government executives together to collaborate on IT issues of interest to the Government. In 1997 ACT established the Intergovernmental Advisory Board (IAB) to foster communication and collaboration between IT executives at all levels of Federal service – Federal, state, local and tribal Governments.

The American Council for Technology, in cooperation with the Industry Advisory Council and Intergovernmental Advisory Board, is a unique, public-private partnership dedicated to helping Government use technology to serve the public. The purposes of the organization are to communicate, educate, inform and collaborate. ACT also works to promote the profession of public IT management. ACT and IAC offer a wide range of programs to accomplish these purposes.

ACT and IAC welcome the participation of all public and private organizations committed to improving the delivery of public services through the effective and efficient use of information technology. For membership and other information, visit the ACT-IAC website at www.actgov.org.

Human Capital Shared Interest Group

The mission of the Human Capital SIG is to bring industry and Government executives together to exchange information, support professional development, improve communications and understanding, solve issues and build partnership and trust, thereby enhancing Government's ability to serve the nation's citizenry.

- **Research** - Providing a forum for studies and analysis of public sector management issues as they relate to Human Capital management issues from recruitment to retirement.
- **Best Practices** - Encouraging debate about best practices in the human capital management arena and present the results to the organizations such as Chief Human Capital Officer Council, the CIO Council IT Workforce Committee, the Performance Management Team of the CFO council, etc.
- **Future Trends** - Advising ACT-IAC leadership and members, Government HR leadership and top management and policy officials on the potential impacts of industry trends on Government technology issues related to human capital management.
- **Improving Performance** - Serving as a sounding board for changes to Federal regulations, and assisting ACT-IAC, and related councils/organizations in public relations and public affairs programs aimed at improving the organizational performance of Government.
  - Identifying professional and Government speakers to deliver presentations on technical, administrative, or managerial topics, as they relate to important strategic human capital management issues.
  - Bridging communication between the IT community and HR community within the Federal Government.
  - Increase IAC member involvement with the Government on Human Capital related issues.
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