Succession Planning Checklist: 5 Focus Areas

Ensure your team is on the same page and prepared for change

Efficient and effective transition of leadership requires an ongoing commitment to planning. Customize and complete this checklist as your organization addresses succession planning tasks for each essential role within your organization.

Focus #1: LEGAL

[Insert date of last revision]

1. Legal Compliance	2. Roles & Responsibilities	3. Access	4. Communication Plan	5. Onboarding a Successor	Onboarding with Intent

	Complete by	Task	Board Person Responsible	Staff Person Responsible	Context Notes
☐		Approve "Policies that Protect"			*Employment contracts, NDA, end of employment processes, succession plan, audits, etc.
☐		Determine if the exit is short-term, long-term, or permanent			
☐		Create a protocol for friendly vs hostile exits			
☐		Identify who will oversee each departure			
☐		Review employee contracts to ensure they are current and relevant.			
☐		Review/discuss non-disclosure or other potential conflicts with the team members/leaders			
☐		Confirm compensation and a final payment plan for the exiting team member			*Payroll, PTO, performance bonus, etc.
☐		Establish policy/process to secure the physical property from existing team members			
☐		Establish a policy/process to secure the intellectual property from exiting team members (			*Ongoing, not just end of employment
☐		Confirm post-employment obligations			*Insurance, workers compensation, unemployment

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Focus #2: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

[Insert date of last revision]

1. Legal Compliance	2. Roles & Responsibilities	3. Access	4. Communication Plan	5. Onboarding a Successor	Onboarding with Intent

	Complete by	Task	Board Person Responsible	Staff Person Responsible	Context Notes
☐		Ensure job descriptions are current and relevant			
☐		Outline core functions/priorities of each role			
☐		Create a "Transition Checklist" to define what information must be regularly updated/shared			*Program files, events calendar, upcoming appts, etc.
☐		Assess upcoming workload of exiting team member			
☐		Decide which tasks to "cancel, post-pone, or re-assign"			
☐		Identify who will serve as interim			
☐		Confirm potential changes in roles/priorities for an interim			
☐		Confirm modified chain of command			*Reporting/accountability norms for an interim
☐		Agree upon fair compensation for interim			
☐		Provide resources/support for interim and all who are impacted by the transition			

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Focus #3: ACCESS

[Insert date of last revision]

1. Legal Compliance	2. Roles & Responsibilities	3. Access	4. Communication Plan	5. Onboarding a Successor	Onboarding with Intent

	Complete by	Task	Board Person Responsible	Staff Person Responsible	Context Notes
☐		Create an "ACCESS" Checklist (physical, online, financial)		\	*Include what must be accessed, how it may be accessed, and who is authorized.*
☐		Define what intellectual property should be regularly updated, shared, backed up.			*Program tools, service docs, curriculum, etc.*
☐		Update partnership guides			*Spreadsheet with names, description, contact, MOU, etc.*
☐		Update vendor lists			
☐		Clarify financial access/authorizations			*Accounts, signature card, check books, bank cards, safety deposit boxes, etc.*
☐		Complete regular inventory of physical property			*Technology, program materials, vehicles, keys, etc.*
☐		Update online subscriptions and software guides			*Domain names, CRM, etc.*
☐		Confirm access/authorization to org media accounts			*Social media, website, etc.*
☐		Utilize shared team systems/files			*Google calendar, Asana, Monday, Trello, Dropbox, etc.*
☐		Address needs/priorities related to post- exit access to property			*Post office, gates, buildings, storage, vehicles, etc.*

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Focus #4: COMMUNICATION PLAN

[Insert date of last revision]

1. Legal Compliance	2. Roles & Responsibilities	3. Access	4. Communication Plan	5. Onboarding a Successor	Onboarding with Intent

	Complete by	Task	Board Person Responsible	Staff Person Responsible	Context Notes
☐		Define resignation processes			
☐		Approve termination policies			
☐		Clarify processes for notifying team members about an exit			*Internal communications
☐		Outline ways team members can assist in sharing a unified message with stakeholders			*Critical for ED, board chair, or lead positions
☐		Define who in the community should be notified about an exit			*Partners, clients, donors, members,
☐		Establish key transition "facts"			*Who, what, when, why
☐		Clarify how the community will be notified about transitions			*E-blast, calls, local media, newsletter, social media, honor event
☐		Publicize new points of contact			*Temporary or permanent
☐		Explain what stakeholders might expect during the transition			*Changes to services, communication, etc.
☐		Share how the community can support the organization			*Moral support, material, volunteer

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Focus #5: Onboarding a Successor

[Insert date of last revision]

1. Legal Compliance	2. Roles & Responsibilities	3. Access	4. Communication Plan	5. Onboarding a Successor	Onboarding with Intent

	Complete by	Task	Board Person Responsible	Staff Person Responsible	Context Notes
☐		Address employee satisfaction- Assessments and Initiatives			*Internal
☐		Identify current skills and experience levels			*Internal
☐		Determine interest in advancement opportunities			*Internal
☐		Invest in professional development			*Internal
☐		Equip current team members to step into new roles			*Internal
☐		Create current and relevant job descriptions			
☐		Identify required skill set/experiences			
☐		Approve a compensation package			
☐		Market the open position strategically			
☐		Confirm selection and onboarding processes			
☐		Establish a 30-60-90 day plan for new team member			*Staff, contract professional, etc.