

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR THE OAKLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Executive Leadership

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy as part of the
Executive Fire Officer Program

September 2007

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others are set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that the appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas and expression or writing of another.

Signed: _____
Renee A. Domingo

ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly changing work environment coupled with the phenomenon of an increase of retirements of the "baby boomers", many organizations that have not employed succession planning are experiencing a leadership crisis.

The problem was that the Oakland fire department did not have a formal succession plan for senior level chief officers and the fire chief position and within the next 24 months, the department will be facing the upcoming retirements of the individuals in these key positions. By not addressing the future succession of those key executive level positions, this problem prevented the organization from ensuring leadership continuity and future organizational excellence in the delivery of services.

The purposes of the Applied Research Project were to introduce the concept of succession planning to the Oakland fire department and identify the applicable components for a succession planning model that could be utilized by the Oakland fire department for senior level chief officers and the fire chief positions.

The research methodology employed was descriptive research to answer the following questions:

1. What is succession planning?
2. What succession planning models are currently used in similar fire departments?
3. What components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?

The principle procedures utilized in this research included a comprehensive review of applicable literature, two phone interviews with Fire Chiefs, a personal interview with the Oakland Fire Chief and a feedback instrument survey of 11 comparable fire departments in California.

The results of the research concluded that a succession planning would address the needs of the organization by providing a formal program to develop and enhance the future potential of personnel. The research also indicated that the private and public sectors have developed specialized succession planning programs that have provided organizations with the desired results. Finally, the results also indicated that by identifying the necessary program components and by taking a step-by-step approach to establishing a systematic process for succession planning, the likelihood of organization and leadership continuity was dramatically improved.

The recommendations of the research included but were not limited to the following:

- The Oakland fire department implement a succession planning program, led by the Fire Chief and executive level staff members;
- The Oakland fire department make the succession planning program a top priority and work with other City departments to implement the program; and
- The Oakland fire department implements the six (6) components recommended in the Applied Research Project, Appendix C, for the Oakland fire department succession planning model.

The implementation of these recommendations would establish ongoing leadership development in the department.

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INTRODUCTION

As we embark on the 21st century, the world is on the verge of experiencing a leadership crisis coupled with a global aging crisis. Why? First, during the start of the 21st century, the nation experienced the tragedy of September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center was destroyed and 172 corporate vice presidents lost their lives.

To further exacerbate matters, the most recent trends in the private and public sectors have been to downsize or “right” size and be more efficient with fewer resources.

The general public continues to demand that federal, state and local governments, along with the private sector, provide quality services and reduce the cost to provide those services. In an effort to meet these demands, government and private sector are forced to do more with less, focusing primarily on the delivery of day-to-day services. This management practice allows for little time to prepare for the future or plan for leadership continuity. This means that even government must choose their successors and future leaders from an ever-shrinking talent pool (Buzzotta & Lefton, 1997).

Global aging and its impact on the workforce, economy and society are now being carefully examined by the United States, Japan and European countries, as these countries’ demographics of rising longevity and falling fertility will have a tremendous impact on the world economy.

In the United States, the “baby boomers” are beginning to retire or are getting ready to retire. As a result, the government sector will be severely impacted by these retirements.

Born between 1946 and 1964, the U.S. workforce will be losing huge labor and knowledge resources (Walsh, 2006).

The horrific disaster of September 11, 2001, also devastated the fire services when the New York Fire department experienced an unrecoverable loss of its key leadership which included a Fire Chief along with 343 Officers and Firefighters.

The events of September 11, 2001, along with the phenomenon of an aging workforce provide a solid foundation of why succession planning is needed within an organization.

Although, it is would be impractical and unlikely to have a plan for leadership continuity for an event that was the magnitude of September 11, 2001, the key is to recognize that succession planning is needed to promote and maintain organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

In light of the emerging leadership crisis, the Oakland fire department, in Oakland, California, also faces the leadership continuity challenge.

The problem is that the Oakland fire department does not have a formal succession plan for senior level chief officers and the fire chief position and within the next 24 months, the department will be facing the upcoming retirements of the individuals in these key positions.

The purpose of this research project is to introduce the concept of succession planning to the Oakland fire department and identify the applicable components for a succession planning model that can be utilized by the Oakland fire department for senior level chief officers and the fire chief position.

This project will utilize descriptive research methodologies to answer the following questions:

1. What is succession planning?
2. What succession planning models are currently used in similar fire departments?
3. What components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Oakland is the eighth largest city in the State of California. Oakland is a metropolitan city in the San Francisco Bay Area with an estimated population of 411,000 people in a dense 56 square mile foot print. Oakland is also home of the 5th largest port in the United States which is also the third principal Pacific Coast gateway for U.S. containerized ports and acts as an economic engine on a global scale. The Oakland international airport provides services to approximately 13.5 million passengers each year. Oakland has also been recognized as the most culturally diverse community in the nation where over 130 different languages and dialects are spoken.

Moreover, the City of Oakland has experienced ten presidential declared disasters since 1986, including the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and the 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm which is ranked fourth among the ten largest U.S. fire losses in history (Cote, 1997).

In modern times, between the years of 1985-2002, the 1991 Oakland Hills Firestorm ranked as the number one U.S. fire loss.

Since 1989, the level of technical knowledge and management ability necessary to become a senior level chief officer and a fire chief in the Oakland fire department has increased. As the complexities of urban metropolitan emergencies have evolved and the number of emergency responses has increased, so has the level of sophistication necessary to effectively manage and lead the Oakland fire department organization.

The Oakland fire department's services have come along way from the basic firefighting activities and include, hazardous materials response, airport rescue and firefighting, swift water rescue, urban search and rescue, wildland firefighting, metropolitan medical response, emergency medical services, high-rise firefighting, fire dispatch communications, weapons of mass destruction response, public education, fire prevention, fire inspections, hazardous materials inspections, vegetation management inspections and emergency planning.

On an average, the Oakland fire department responds to over 60,000 emergency calls each year which encompass the complexity and a myriad of public safety responsibilities.

The Oakland fire department was established in 1869, as a volunteer fire department with one fire house and one engine company.

By the 1920s, the Oakland fire department became a career fire department and was one of the first department's in the nation to hire African Americans although there was still segregation.

Again, on the cutting edge, in 1955, the Oakland fire department was one of the first departments in the nation to desegregate its fire stations under the direction of Fire Chief John Sweeney.

Sweeny also implemented a major reorganization and modernization of the fire department which included the construction of 13 new fire stations, new equipment, and a training tower.

In 1980, the Oakland fire department, appointed the first African American Fire Chief, Samuel Golden and the first woman firefighter was hired (Brief History of the Oakland, 2006).

Today, the Oakland fire department members reflect the diversity of the community and maintain the rich tradition of the fire service.

The Oakland fire department employs 460 sworn members and 64 non-sworn members. There are 25 fire stations, a training division, fire prevention division, administration division, emergency medical services division, communications division, training division, support services division, office of emergency services, and homeland security division. The Oakland fire department's annual operating budget is a \$110 million (City of Oakland Budget Department, 2006).

The command structure has three career top-level management personnel that include the fire chief and two deputy chiefs. There are also 3 division managers that are non-sworn members that report directly to the fire chief. The middle-level management personnel are comprised of 12 career battalion chiefs that work rotating shifts. There are 4 battalion chiefs on duty per shift.

Within the last seven years, the Oakland fire department has lost several senior level chief officers and a fire chief to retirement as these "baby boomers" begin to retire and also to the acceptance of positions with other private and public organizations.

Many of these individuals were sought out by other fire departments because of the knowledge and experience gained in the Oakland fire department. When these individuals left Oakland, their positions were either cut, which created a huge gap in top management for the organization or the positions were replaced by non-sworn members to reduce personnel costs.

Historically, the fire chief position has been filled by internal candidates that have met the education and experience as outlined in the job description and successfully passed an oral interview with the Mayor and City Administrator. But, because there was no succession plan in 1999 and no apparent pool of qualified candidates, an external candidate was appointed to the fire chief position from 1999 to 2004. This external candidate's appointment to fire chief had a significant impact on the morale of the internal candidates that had applied for the position.

Moreover, the Oakland fire department is deeply entrenched in tradition, which supports those that fear change. The labor union that represents the sworn members is the greatest advocate of maintaining the status quo. Consequently, due to the union's political strength and it being a local election year, the external candidate was eventually forced to resign and an internal candidate with 27 years of experience with the fire department was appointed to the fire chief position in 2004, which the labor union viewed as a victory to preserve the status quo.

To add another dimension to the leadership continuity challenge, the author of this applied research project gathered the current statistics on the Oakland fire department sworn members to determine their age and years on the job or experience.

The result of the statistics compiled for the Oakland Fire Department sworn members as they relate to years on the job are shown in Figure 1 and their current age are shown in Figure 2. The researcher developed these figures to easily convey and further illustrate the significance of this project. Furthermore, using this approach of gathering statistics is also a methodology that can be used by other fire departments and the statistics results will provide a tool for assessing the department's demographics and department's leadership continuity strategies.

Figure 1. Oakland Fire Department Sworn Members- Years of Experience

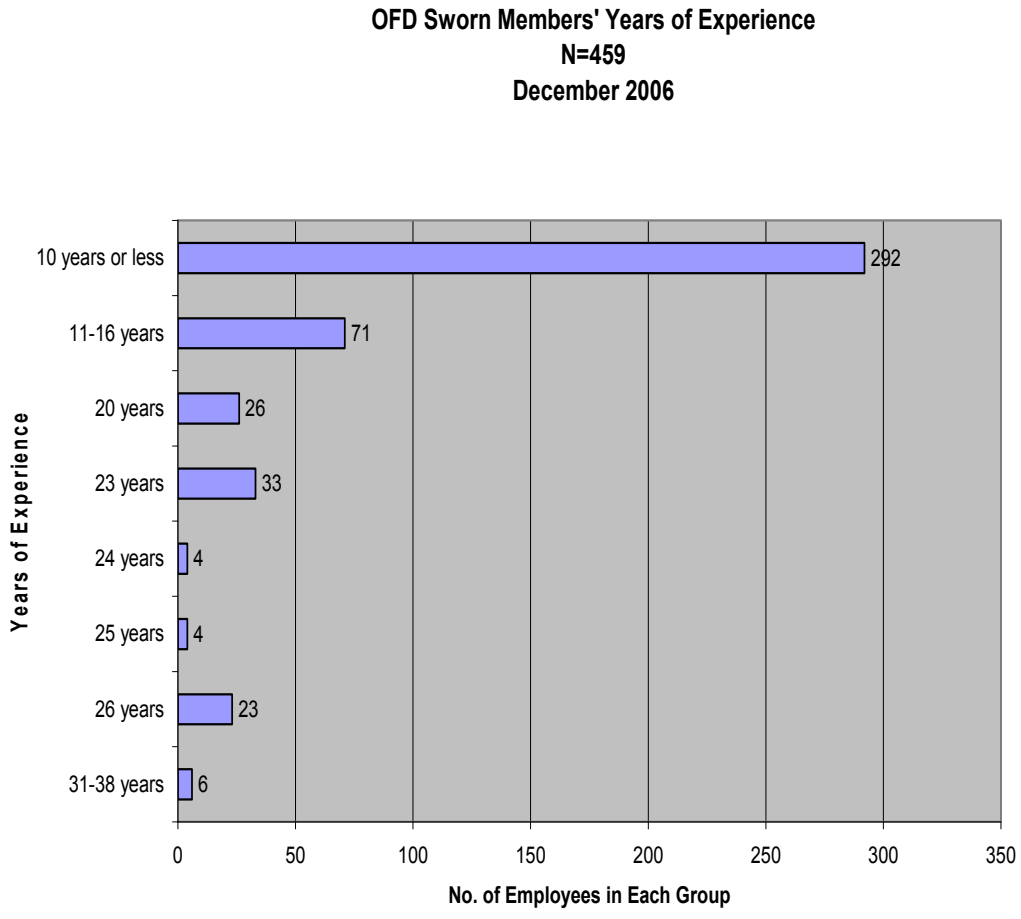
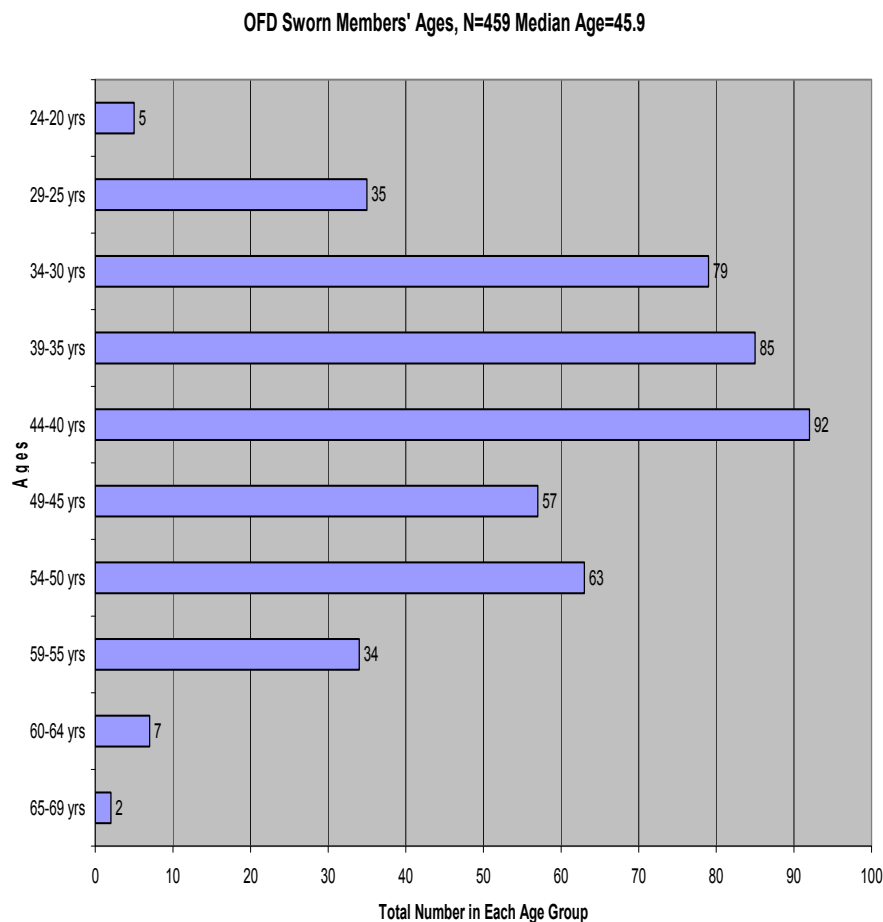


Figure 2. Oakland Fire Department Sworn Members' Ages, February 2007



Similar to many other private and public organizations, the Oakland fire department is also experiencing the phenomenon now being characterized as the global aging crisis.

The current statistics as shown in Figure 2 indicate that the Oakland fire department workforce's average age is about 45 years of age. Relative to work experience, Figure 1 illustrates that the department has a work force that is relatively inexperienced based upon the statistics that 292 employees or 63.62% have 10 years or less of experience.

These statistics are coupled with the fact that a 106 employees or 23.09% of the total workforce are eligible to retire because they are 50 years old or more. These statistical results were also compiled on spreadsheets and two charts were developed to illustrate these substantial results (Appendix A).

Presently, the Oakland fire department is destined to have the current fire chief and the two senior chief officers either retire or leave within the next 24 months. Their departure will represent another significant loss of experience, institutional knowledge and leadership.

Once this occurs, the fire department may be faced with the same challenges of potentially having an external candidate selected for the fire chief position because there is no succession plan developed to help existing personnel prepare to step into the fire chief position. Additionally, the two senior chief officer positions are deputy chief positions that are not part of the civil service process or part of the sworn members union, so there is no formal job classification for these positions. If these positions become vacant within the next 24 months and the decision is made to fill the positions, the candidates will be at a major disadvantage because there is no succession plan to prepare internal personnel to step into these positions. Historically, these positions have also been filled by internal candidates but the City Administrator could determine that there are no qualified internal candidates, therefore, external candidates will be considered. Another scenario could be that the City Administrator determines that these positions be replaced by non-sworn positions to again, reduce personnel costs.

The lack of succession planning will continue to perpetuate these types of decisions that appear to discount employee experience and knowledge, which can also create low morale and apathy among tenured fire department members.

This applied research project will play a significant management catalyst by examining the concept of succession planning and providing the relevant components of a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department.

This applied research project is also relevant to the following areas of the curriculum presented in the National Fire Academy's *Executive Leadership* course; Unit 7: Succession/Replacement Planning, "Succession planning is a critical element of organizational strategy. Organizations with well-developed employee development and planning methods are more competitive. Public safety organizations achieve excellence through a well-trained and competitive workforce" (NFA, 2005, p.SM 7-3).

Furthermore, this research project relates to the United States Fire Administration's operational objective "to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (NFA, 2003, p.II-2).

This objective is met by introducing an organizational management platform known as succession planning, to meet the prevailing and future needs for leadership continuity and employee development to ensure the continued effective and efficient performance of the Oakland fire department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There were three literature review objectives. The first objective was to gather and review pertinent information about succession planning.

By accomplishing this objective, research question number one, “What is succession planning?” would be addressed. The information gathered would provide a basis for defining succession planning and understanding its significant role in leadership continuity within an organization.

The second objective was to identify any existing research in the fire services on succession planning and to identify succession planning models currently being used by fire departments that were similar in demographics to the Oakland fire department. By accomplishing this objective, research question number two, “What succession planning models are currently used in similar fire departments?” would be answered. The findings would be utilized to provide a framework for any additional research and contribute to the decision making when establishing a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department.

The third objective was to identify any existing research in the fire services or conducted by other organizations related to ascertaining the components necessary for establishing an effective succession planning program within an organization. By accomplishing this objective, research question number three, “What components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?” would also be addressed.

If examples were available, they would be reviewed and analyzed to determine whether or not they could be adapted to meet the needs of the Oakland fire department.

The literature review involved a search for pertinent information in published research papers, textbooks, Internet articles, fire service trade journals, Executive Fire Officer Applied Research projects, magazines, newspapers and other periodicals.

What is succession planning?

During the course of conducting the literature review, the author of this research project, found various definitions on succession planning that will be presented and discussed in this report.

Henri Fayol (1841-1925), French pioneer of management history, was among the first to recognize and document the universal organizational need for succession planning (Rothwell, 2001).

After a thorough literature review of writings and excerpts by Fayol, referred to as the “father of modern operational management theory”, the author of this research project was not able to find any specific definition of succession planning developed by Fayol. Rather, Fayol discussed the aspects of succession planning when he defined it as simply “planning”. Fayol identified planning as one of the four functions of management. Fayol defines planning as, “a plan of action to provide for the foreseeable future. This plan of action must have unity, continuity, flexibility and precision. Planning facilitates the art of handling of people; it requires moral courage, since it can fail. Effective planning requires continuity of tenure. Good planning is a sign of competency” (Fayol, 1916).

Fayol’s management theory and concept of succession planning have transcended into modern day management theory and real world needs.

Wallum (1993) provides a simple definition of succession plan when he states that it “encompasses the strategic process and actions aimed at ensuring a suitable supply of successors for senior or key jobs and future roles.”

In the more recent literature reviewed, the concept of succession planning has been defined as “a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future and encourage individual advancement” (Rothwell, 2001).

Rothwell’s definition of succession planning is comprehensive and universal yet succinct. Rothwell has written numerous books on succession planning and is viewed as a subject matter expert in the field of succession planning. His definition of succession planning carries credibility and experience in the field.

In earlier writings he adds that “Succession planning is proactive and should not be confused with more limited-scope and reactive replacement planning, which is a form of risk management” (Rothwell, 1994, p.28).

Susan Heathfield has over 37 years of experience in the field of Human Resources. Her work includes succession planning for businesses, government agencies and other organizations.

Heathfield (2006), describes, “Succession planning is a process whereby an organization ensures that employees are recruited and developed to fill each key role within the company.” This definition is definitely more simplistic for a process that requires a great deal of strategy and forethought.

Perhaps, the most relevant and focused definition for the purposes of the research project is provided by the Executive Leadership course offered by the National Fire Academy. Succession planning is defined as an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, and willing to succeed in strategic roles within the organization (NFA, 2000).

Based upon the literature review findings, the researcher was able to provide a variety of definitions and also select a clear, comprehensive definition of succession planning and address research question number one of “What is succession planning?”

What succession planning models are currently used in similar fire departments?

In September 2006, the researcher reviewed twenty eight National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Research projects that were published and available at the Learning Resource center. An examination of fire service literature on the subject of succession planning disclosed growing support for succession planning in the fire services arena (Avsec,2000; Christiansen, 2001; Duncan 2000; Horcherl 2001;Howes 2000; King 2000; Knight, 2000; Rhor 2000; Sample 1996; Zamor 2000). Although all mentioned sources report the benefits of succession planning, several reports revealed that formal succession plans were missing in most of the fire departments they had surveyed (Duncan 2000; King 2000; Knight 2000). Other research papers also reviewed were also exploring the topic of succession planning for their fire departments (Hanger 2002; Garcia 2004), but it became evident, that there were very few fire departments that have actually established succession planning models for senior level chief officers and Fire Chief positions. Baker (1995), an Assistant Fire chief with the Fairfax City, Virginia, Fire department wrote, “This research shows a critical weakness in providing formalized succession planning felt necessary to meet current and future fire service demands.” Baker was also unable to identify any fire service organizations at that time that had a functioning succession plan.

These reports influenced this research project by providing support for the critical need to plan for succession of senior level chief officers and the Fire Chief position.

Other examples found during the literature review for fire departments were more of professional development programs with a succession planning undertone. These programs with some additional components could become formalized succession plans. These examples were reviewed and will be further discussed in this research report when addressing question number three, “what components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?”

The researcher also found numerous articles in fire services’ periodicals on succession planning. Based upon this body of literature, the researcher was able to acquire information on potential standards and components for consideration that again, could be utilized in a succession planning model for fire departments and also two successful career development and training programs with many of the fundamentals of a succession planning model.

A result of findings included various articles written by Chief Ronny J. Coleman supporting the need for succession planning in the fire service but none of his articles referenced any existing fire department succession plan models. His writings encouraged fire departments to implement succession plans and he was one of the first fire chiefs to write on this subject. His works related to this subject dated back to 1988.

In 1988, Coleman asserts, “I favor an attitude toward succession planning that centers around the organizational environment. Opportunity and preparation are key. The opportunity should be there for anyone to achieve the higher level of responsibility in the fire service” (R. J. Coleman, 1988). Later in this report, the researcher will discuss some of the potential necessary components that were delineated in Coleman’s writings dated back to 1988.

Through the literature review process, the researcher was able to identify at least three fire departments that could be utilized as models for their exemplary succession planning programs or what some of them describes as career development and training programs that contained the components of a succession plan, two of which were located in periodicals, as referenced earlier.

In 1998, Chief Forte, of the Minneapolis Fire department, redesigned their line promotional process to mirror the guidelines of a succession plan. The department revised job descriptions and delineated the subject areas that would be covered in the exam process.

Deputy Fire Chief Clack of the Minneapolis Fire department, described that these efforts were taken on to achieve two main goals, “to prepare fire department personnel for management positions in the future (succession planning) and (workforce planning) to retain quality employees in the fire department” (Clack, 2002, p. 10).

“In short, everyone in a position to take a promotional examination knew what pool of knowledge was necessary. There were no secrets to success shared only with the chosen few” (Forte, 2003, p.33). The fundamental focus of the Minneapolis Fire department’s process was to level the playing field in a concerted effort to acquire a more diverse work force. The successful results of this program allowed the department to appoint 15 members to senior staff positions between 1998 and 2003. “The appointments were made up of a very diverse group of highly skilled employees” (Forte, 2003, p.33).

The article did not specifically address succession planning for these staff members, but the methods institutionalized were the following succession planning mechanisms;

understanding the organizational mission, competency identification, value clarification, employee ownership, and senior management driven. While these are all identified in the article, they are the foundation to any executive succession plan (Rothwell, 2001).

The Minneapolis Fire department *Professional Development and Training Plan* was the only plan that the researcher came across during this literature review that included succession planning for the Fire Chief position.

The next model that was identified by the literature review was in Martinsville, South Virginia. In 2001, Chief Brock (2004) of the Martinsville Fire department, initiative a *Standard Administrative Guideline* (SAG) for a Career Development program that meets the similar guidelines of a succession plan for their chief officer positions. The program was developed by a departmental committee and approved by their Fire chief. Chief Brock stated, “Employees that have a particular goal, such as being promoted to a particular position, will know the path to take to achieve the required knowledge, skills and certifications of the given position. Not only do employees benefit from the program, the department does as well” (SAG 100.33).

The Martinsville Fire department’s Career Development program encompassed the criteria necessary which includes work experience, knowledge in key areas of the fire services, proven technical skills and State Fire Marshal certifications for existing employees applying for the promotional ranks of Lieutenant, Captain, Assistant Chief, EMS Coordinator, Deputy Chief and Deputy Fire Marshal. However, it did not cover formal education requirements such as college degrees or the required knowledge, skills, abilities and certifications for the Fire chief position.

The last example of a fire department succession planning model and the benefits realized from a well-defined officer development program was identified in Philadelphia.

According to Shouldis (2005) “The Philadelphia Fire department is committed to officer development and grooming officers is a structured process with a long tradition. The concept of career development will assist an individual to gain the proficiency needed to “climb the ladder” of responsibility.”

In the literature reviewed, Shouldis (2005) further discusses the Philadelphia Fire department’s dilemma in 2003 and 2004 when more than 225 members retired with eighty one being officers. The department could have chosen not to continue training officers and focus on new recruit training but immediately realized the need to continue training the future leaders of the department. Finally, Shouldis (2005) emphasizes in the literature that this signifies the department’s commitment to the importance of supervisory training for its members. The Philadelphia Fire department’s officer development program consists of five subject areas: Management, Prevention, Operations, Safety and Fire Cause Determination.

The three fire departments with successful succession planning models that were identified in the literature review ranged in size of department and demographics. The Martinsville fire department is a small fire department with 65 sworn members that are a combination of volunteers and paid staff that serve a population of approximately 16,000 residents. The Minneapolis fire department is a mid-sized fire department with 420 sworn members serving a population of approximately 383,000 residents and the last fire department reviewed was Philadelphia fire department which is the fifth largest fire department in the nation with 2300 sworn members serving a population of approximately 1.5 million residents. For the purposed of this research project, Minneapolis fire department was most similar in size of department and population size to the Oakland Fire department.

Philadelphia fire department was also considered to be suitable although it was much larger in size of department and population but the diversity of its population demographics were similar. As previously stated, the Oakland fire department has 460 sworn members and a population of approximately 411,000 residents.

Therefore, two of the succession planning models identified will be given further serious consideration when developing a succession planning program for the Oakland fire department.

What components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?

It has been established through the literature review research that succession planning is a necessary and important tool for ensuring strategic and leadership continuity for a public sector organization such as a fire department. The obvious question now is, what are the recognized components, steps or methods for an effective succession planning program for a fire department, such as the Oakland fire department?

The researcher for this report conducted a literature review to identify and determine the most viable components, steps or methods that are necessary for a succession planning model. There were numerous approaches to implementing a succession plan and only the most appropriate findings and examples will be further discussed. Additionally, the researcher considered both private and public sector approaches for establishing a succession planning model to provide the most comprehensive approach to identifying the necessary components.

Beginning in 1988, Chief Ron Coleman, one of the more prolific writers in the fire services on succession planning suggested five key elements that needed to be included in succession planning program.

The five elements were a career development guide, a performance evaluation system, a challenging environment, an opportunity to achieve and the exposure of a prospective candidate to all aspects of the job, throughout their career (Coleman, 1988).

In 2000, Coleman then addressed an additional element or component of succession planning that needed to be considered referred to as transition management. Coleman (2000) asserted, “Keep your subordinates adequately informed and share information on an open basis.” Keeping subordinates current on the pertinent information about the organization will help to facilitate organizational transition.

During the literature review, the researcher located early works on succession planning by the National Academy of Public Administration.

The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) is an organization that was established more than 35 years ago. It is an independent, non-partisan organization chartered by Congress to assist federal, state and local governments in improving their effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. The National Academy of Public Administration has the distinction of meeting the challenges of cultivating excellence in the management and administration of government agencies.

In the National Academy of Public Administration’s (NAPA) “Paths to Leadership” report, there is discussion of succession planning. The report defines succession planning as “ an integrated process with four basic components, all designed to assure that the organization has the right leaders in the right place at the right time” (NAPA, 1992). The first component of succession planning in the NAPA report is projecting the executive staffing requirement which can be achieved by reviewing job positions and job descriptions for strategic leadership positions in the organization.

The second component is to identify individuals who are prepared to move quickly into key positions. In fire departments, it is essential to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities within the junior officer ranks to address the second component effectively. The third component is to prepare candidates through training and career development.

This component can be achieved by adding career development program elements to existing training opportunities that support the cultivation of junior officer ranks. The fourth component is selecting executives from updated pools of qualified candidates. Having an identified pool of qualified candidates ready to move into key positions prevents disruption and uncertainty within an organization.

The researcher also considered literature sources when addressing research question number three, “What components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?”, that were not solely from the public sector, as previously stated. The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) was a credible source that had published works concerning succession planning.

The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) started in 1944 and is the world’s largest association dedicated to workplace learning and performance professionals.

The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) is an international association and its members work in thousands of organizations of all sizes, including government, as independent consultants and suppliers. In 1993, ASTD wrote an article in a periodical about succession planning and the five basic elements of succession planning.

The five basic elements of succession planning were identified as:

1. Replacement Planning

Replacement planning is defined as identifying who will replace a particular individual when the job comes open (ASTD, 1993). An organization can identify a pool of candidates or choose a successor.

2. Human Resource Audit

The Human Resource Audit builds upon the identification of successors and address assessment of employee mobility to various positions. The process helps to identify a pool of people needed. A human resource audit is conducted by reviewing each employee's time in the job, performance, readiness, their potential and what development may be needed in the future (ASTD, 1993).

3. High Potential Employee Identification

This third element builds on the first two described above. High potential employees are those with the potential to progress, be promoted and assume leadership roles. An organization must determine whether it has a large or small supply of high potential employees to define the scope of the succession planning program. Minimizing the risk of losing leaders requires tracking the loss of high potential employees and establishing a retention plan (ASTD, 1993).

4. Employee Input

The fourth element is employee input. ASTD (1993) states that the succession planning process must respond to workforce demands and incorporate employee input into career decisions. Such responsiveness is a vital link between human resource planning and business strategy.

Employees list their career interest, qualifications, and willingness to relocate.

Once the information is obtained, the employee and management engage in a career development discussion to identify any potential problems and to develop strategies for the employee to obtain his or her goals.

5. Development

The fifth and final element is development. This element is becoming one of the more critical components of succession planning because organizations are needing more people faster to fill key positions and they have to have them ready now (ASTD, 1993). Additionally, the skills needed for positions, especially in the large fire departments are changing so rapidly that people cannot keep up without having planned development.

Development programs determine if you should be using a skill-based plan if you are developing specialists or a job strategies plan if you are developing generalists (ASTD, 1993).

Samuel Greengard's writings were also of interest for this research project. Mr.

Greengard has written thousands of articles for major magazines and publications since 1981.

His area of expertise is in business and finance.

Greengard (2001) suggest, "an effective succession plan requires a careful examination of business strategy." Greengard's (2001) research proposes five key steps to effective succession planning as follows; 1) Identify key leadership criteria. Any organization must know what skills and competencies are needed to succeed; 2) Find future leaders and motivate them. An enterprise must have a system in place for finding star employees and ensuring they are ready for key positions; 3) Create a sense of responsibility within the organization.

Most successful organizations rely on corporate or upper management to review and oversee the process of employees. Then as a worker moves up the ladder, there is a retained record of his or her progress with review from various levels within the company; 4) Align succession planning with the corporate culture. Greengard (2001) states that despite an emphasis on past performance, it is essential to retain focus on core values. Effective succession planning requires an organization to stress these values, whether it's a desire to perform leadership tasks or complete assigned tasks, and weight them heavily in the overall selection process; 5) Measure results and reinforce desired behavior. Greengard (2001) purports, "the only way to know whether a succession plan is effective is to put systems in place to track results. Then the organization must develop systems, such as reward-based compensation, training and appropriate assignments to motivate workers and push them along the desired development paths."

Looking further at private sector literature on the subject of succession planning, two corporate executives of General Electric and Wilson's Leather were interviewed for an internet article titled, "Grooming your successor", on July 22, 2002 by Mark Kindley.

The two executives provide five steps for successful successions; 1) Get the CEO's commitment. Succession planning takes time and money. Make sure it is a value that senior managers share; 2) Build an understanding among your staff that everyone needs to think about who can succeed them. Succession planning is not just for top-level managers; 3) Establish well-defined job descriptions and identify the skills needed to carry them out. Make success measurable, and then measure it; 4) Promote teamwork. You can assume a level of competitiveness among staff members. They need to know that no one can succeed alone and that leaders can manage competitive energy;

5) Engage your top performers in the succession planning process early. Your best people will always have opportunities to go elsewhere. Let them know you realize they always have a choice (Kindley, 2002).

Gary Johnson (2004) fire chief of Maryville, Ohio, Fire department, wrote in an online article for *Fire Chief Magazine*, “to plan for consistent succession, you must assess the potential for vacancies; assess the readiness of current staff to assume these positions; develop strategies to address the needs of employees and the organization; and mentor, train and develop leadership and management skills.”

Chief Johnson also provided the following four components to successful succession planning:

1. Identify existing competencies relating to leadership needs as well as to the needs of your department and the community it serves.
2. Evaluate members of your departments and how they fit with the mission, vision and core values of your organization.
3. Implement coaching, mentoring, recruitment and training requirements that are consistent with the department’s operational needs and its mission, vision and values.
4. Develop a plan.

The researcher identified numerous Applied Research Projects (ARPs), relative to succession planning, that were published and were available at the National Fire Academy’s (NFA) Learning Resource Center. These ARPs were part of the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program.

The common denominator of all these research projects was the lack of established, formal succession planning programs in the fire services as mentioned earlier.

The other observation made by the researcher was that in reviewing these research projects there was valuable information contained in the reports relative to succession planning and the recommended components, elements or steps for establishing an effective succession planning program in a fire department. Since there were a myriad of examples available, the researcher focused on the most recent research reports found and assumed that these reports would have the most current and useful information for the purposes of this project. Garcia (2004) recommends succession planning models include CEO support, succession planning development facilitated by a “leadership cadre”, a mentoring component, and a means for measuring results (pp. 36-37).

Leland’s (2004) report provides several examples of components utilized in succession planning models including the Orange County, California, Fire Authority’s Leadership Institute; career development planning at Fairfax County, Virginia, Fire and Rescue and the Minneapolis, Minnesota Fire department; and a succession plan model for the job of Fire Chief at the County of Henrico, Virginia, Division of Fire (pp. 12-13). According to Leland, common succession planning model components, for the aforementioned examples include: “developing a vision for the organization’s future, defining the skills and competencies needed for leaders, identifying and assessing individuals within the organization, creating individual development plans and providing development opportunities to close the skill gaps” (p.13).

Rooney (2004) recommends succession planning models include the following components: “career development, formal education requirements, a comprehensive training program, and encouraging aspiring senior-level chief officers to pursue the National Fire

Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, the Chief Fire Officer Designation and also strive to meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications" (pp. 54-56).

Rooney adds in his research report that the implementation of a succession planning model must be championed at the fire chief level.

The researcher determined that it would be necessary to delve into the literature review further to acquire a clear understanding of the recommended formalized training and professional development components outlined in Rooney's report.

In conducting a literature review on the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP), Chuck Burkell (2004) believes that this program is the most elite fire leadership program in the United States. The program has evolved since its inception in 1985 to become the preeminent professional development program for senior fire executives. The EFOP curriculum focuses on leadership development; risk reduction; integrated incident preparedness; response and mitigation; and applied research to facilitate change at the community level (p. 58).

Next, in reviewing literature on the NFPA, Standard 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. This standard recommended training in organizational structure, communication skills, human resource management, community and government relations and administration, for fire officers along with fire suppression related information. The recommended training areas are viewed as core competencies for various officer levels ranking from Fire Officer I through Fire Officer IV (NFPA 1021, 2003, chap.3). This standard also envisions adoption of degree programs for future officers.

The researcher learned through the literature review that the Chief Fire Officer Designation (CFOD) is a professional designation for individuals that have demonstrated the skills and abilities required for the fire and EMS profession through structured education and proven leadership and management skills which display requisite industry knowledge. The Center on Excellence for Public Safety formally the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) is the credentialing organization for the CFOD. Currently, there are only 506 individuals internationally that possess this designation (Center on Excellence for Public Safety, 2006).

The literature review of these formal career development options of fire officers provided adequate information and insight necessary for the purposes of this project. The researcher determined that there are viable, recognized and established career development programs in the fire services that can be considered when making the determination about the essential components of an effective succession planning model for the Oakland Fire department.

The final ARP considered was written by Michael Wallace of the New Hampshire Fire Department. Wallace (2004) strongly recommends that succession planning be driven by “the futurity of current and future organizational leadership development decisions based upon the vision of the current organizational leader” (p. 29). In his report, he proceeds to document and detail a six step succession planning model that includes the following components: environmental scanning (similar to a SWOT {Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats} analysis); linking the succession planning process to organizational culture, mission and strategy; identifying position competencies and provide coaching, mentoring and training; identifying internal and external candidates for succession; establishing a formal mentoring program; and continually evaluating the succession planning program effectiveness (pp. 46-69).

The last literature review source considered was William Rothwell who has published numerous books on the subject of succession planning. Rothwell's most recent 2005 publication, "Effective Succession Planning" now in its third edition, provided the most comprehensive analysis of the issues and also provided worksheets, tools and practical information on how to implement a successful succession plan.

Rothwell (2005) outlines what he considers the key components or key best practices in implementing a succession plan: Use a "big picture roadmap or model" to guide the effort; ensure hands-on involvement by the CEO and other senior leaders; use competency models to clarify what type of talent the organization's leaders want to build; develop and implement an effective performance management system; lead the target by clarifying what competencies will be needed for the future of the organization to achieve its strategic objectives; use individual development plans to narrow developmental gaps; develop descriptions of the values and ethical standards required and assess people relative to those as well as competencies; build a viewpoint that high-potential talent is a shared resource rather than owned by specific managers; and use leadership development efforts to build shared competencies needed for the future.

The author of this research paper highly recommends the Rothwell publication for those individuals in organizations that are committed to implementing a succession planning program.

Literature Review Summary

In summary, the literature review accomplished the three objectives. First, to gather and review pertinent information about succession planning.

The literature review findings provided a framework for defining succession planning and solidifying the necessity for an organization to ensure that a flow of potential leaders have

the skills, knowledge and experience to compete for vacancies in key critical roles in an organization.

Second, was to identify any existing research in the fire services on succession planning and to identify succession planning model currently being used by fire departments that were similar in demographics to the Oakland fire department. A comprehensive literature review of the existing research available provided the researcher with various options and considerations.

Based upon the literature review, the researcher was able to select the most appropriate findings relative to succession planning models used by similar fire departments.

Thirdly, the literature review results were able to illustrate to the researcher the benefits of succession planning and an array of components or elements that should be considered by the Oakland fire department when establishing a succession planning program.

Furthermore, the literature review findings were central to this study. The findings have provided comprehensive and significant data, various perspectives, fundamental background information and inspiration to pioneer efforts to establish a succession planning program in the Oakland fire department that can serve as a model for the fire services.

The literature reviewed has influenced this applied research project in the following manner:

- It has provided a framework for defining succession planning and succession planning concepts. The author of this research project can draw from what has already been said and done in these areas;
- It has clearly illustrated the immediate need for implementing a succession planning to ensure leadership continuity;

- It has demonstrated the absence of published literature by the fire services and local government that specifically showcase established, practiced and successful succession planning programs. This has provided the author of this research project with important insight and given the author additional ideas of how to effectively approach this applied research project.

Before any final assumptions can be made, the next logical step is to conduct a survey of comparable fire departments within California that are also confronted with the need to ensure leadership continuity in a demanding, complex work environment. The survey will be used to determine if any succession planning programs have been instituted. If these programs exist, the survey will gather information on when, why and how they were developed, as well as identify whether common program components and characteristics exist. Also, the survey will query the effectiveness of these programs.

In addition, three interviews will be conducted with three metropolitan city Fire chiefs. The Oakland Fire chief will be interviewed, along with the Ft. Lauderdale, Florida Fire chief and San Francisco Fire chief to identify and gather information on what metropolitan city Fire chiefs see as the most important leadership attributes and their views on succession planning.

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this applied research project was to collect and analyze data in reference to succession planning, in order to introduce the concept of succession planning to the Oakland fire department and identify the applicable, most essential components for a succession planning model that can be utilized by the Oakland fire department for senior level chief officers and the fire chief position.

The process utilized to determine the answers to the research questions included researching materials available through the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC), the San Francisco, Oakland and Pleasant Hill, California Public Library system, trade journals, the Internet and other relevant literary sources. A feedback instrument and interviews with subject matter experts were also resources used to provide further explanation of all research question results and for obtaining historical and current data that would provide a research foundation.

Descriptive research methodologies were utilized to direct the applied research project and to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. What is succession planning?
2. What succession planning models are currently used in similar fire departments?
3. What components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?

To address question #1, the researcher started with a literature review to determine if there were any published materials by the fire services or other organizations concern the definition and explanation of succession planning.

Once the literature was completed, the researcher also conducted a convenience sample survey. A Feedback form was utilized to obtain data from 11 medium to large fire service organizations in California. The justification for the convenience sample was based upon similar demographics, similar organizational structures, similar service delivery and similar leadership complexities as those in the Oakland fire department. Obtaining feedback from 11 fire service organizations would provide a sufficient representation of “typical” metro fire services organizations in California, for the purposes of this study.

To address question #2, a literature review was conducted to determine what succession planning models are currently used by similar fire departments. The Feedback form also addressed question #2 to obtain current data from the 11 medium to large fire service organizations in California. Additionally, the researcher conducted two interviews with metropolitan city Fire chiefs to obtain additional data on their departments’ current succession planning models and also to determine their attitudes and opinions regarding succession planning.

To address question #3, the researcher started with a literature review to determine if there were any published materials that provided information or guidance on what components are necessary for developing a succession planning program. The Feedback form included question #3, as well. Following the literature review, one interview was conducted with the current Oakland Fire chief to obtain additional information on his opinion concerning the essential components for a succession planning program for the Oakland fire department.

Definition of Terms

Career Development - giving each employee a chance to evaluate his or her needs, interests, and skills in relation to career opportunities inside and, possibly, outside the employee's career field.

Components – basic functional units of a program.

Elements – same as components.

Formal Education – the imparting of information to the organization's work force in a structured environment employing a learning format.

Mentoring – the formal or informal process of the organization to translate culture, norms and desired work products to its work force utilizing a coaching type education format.

Senior-level chief officer – a position within a fire agency that has executive level responsibilities (i.e. Deputy Fire chief, Division chief, Fire marshal and Division manager).

Succession plan – an on-going program or process in which participants are prepared and trained to step into and take over a position when it is vacated.

Succession planning – An organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, qualified and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization.

Literature Review

Research and data collection began the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, MD. This initial literature review took place at the LRC during the last two weeks of September 2006.

An exhaustive on-site literature search was conducted at the LRC and more than 40 published articles and Executive Fire Officer Program Applied Research Papers were reviewed. Numerous publications that were relevant to this project were copied at the local printer and also at Staples store in Fredicksburg, MD and brought back to Oakland, California for further review and research. During the months of October 2006 through January 2007, additional literature was conducted at the San Francisco Main Public Library, Oakland Main Public Library and Pleasant Hill Public Library using their computer systems. These public libraries are located in the State of California. A reference listed was created of the materials relevant to the research and the relevant materials were borrowed from the respective libraries. In February 2007 and March 2007, the Internet was also used as a resource. When using the Internet, Google, Yahoo, and MSN search engines were used.

The keywords for searches were succession planning, succession plans, fire department succession plans and fire department succession planning. A reference list of applicable articles and materials was established and the relevant reports, Internet articles, studies and other information were printed for further literature review.

Once the literature reviews of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, research papers and Internet articles was completed, each excerpt, paraphrase or quotation of relevance that was determined essential to the research questions was transcribed on a 4" x6" index card which was numbered with the individual reference source.

While there was a substantial amount of material available relating to succession planning, there were minimal sources that related to specific succession plan models being used in the fire services. Also, there was a significant amount of literature related to the components, elements or steps necessary to develop a succession planning model or succession plan program.

The literature review provided research findings that were historical to better contextualized succession planning in general and more specifically in the fire services. It also provided descriptive research findings to address current information relative to the current trends, opinions and attitudes of management and leaders relative to succession planning.

Moreover, the literature review played a vital role in the assessment leading to the conclusion and recommendations reached in the research project.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this research consisted of a feedback form. Once the feedback form was completed, 11 medium to large fire departments were surveyed by e-mail beginning in February 2007.

The 11 fire departments serve a total of 12.5 million residents. The fire departments surveyed were all career fire departments. The feedback form consisted of 5 questions and was used to determine if fire departments were aware of succession planning, if their department leadership had a position on succession planning, whether they were in support of succession planning and if any of these fire departments actually had a formal succession planning program in place and if so, if they would be willing to share a copy of their plan with the Oakland fire department (Appendix B). The feedback form also allowed respondents to provide additional comments concerning their programs.

Within a four-week time period all surveys were completed and collected. Once all the surveys were completed, the pertinent data from the five questions was tabulated using Microsoft Excel software. The results were compiled on spreadsheets and one graph/chart was developed to illustrate the most significant results related to the necessary components of a succession

planning model (Appendix B). The feedback form sample size and response rate for the survey is included as *Table 1*.

Table 1

Feedback form- survey population and response rate

Survey Group	Total population N	Number of responses n	Response rate %
Medium to Large California Career Fire Departments	11	10	90.9

Interviews

After the surveys were completed, three interviews were arranged. Due to various work factors that created time constraints and logistical considerations that would require a considerable amount of travel, two interviews were conducted by phone and one interview was conducted in person. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain additional information related to the three research questions and to determine if there was any new data and also to get a perspective from fire service leadership on their views relating to succession planning.

The interviews were conducted beginning in March 2007 and completed over a three-week period.

Assumptions and Limitations

It was assumed that all survey respondents would answer the questions honestly and directly. It was also assumed that the respondents to the survey understood each question and had the knowledge and ability to answer them accurately.

There were three limitations that impacted the study. The first limitation was time constraints of the researcher. Time was a limiting factor because the project had a six-month completion timeframe established by the National Fire Academy.

Due to various competing priorities at work, coupled with more staff reductions in 2006, and some personal family matters, the researcher was forced to request additional time to complete this research project.

The second limitation was that although the literature review was extensive, due to the research abilities of the author, research materials related to this applied research project might have gone undetected, which may have changed the results of the research.

Finally, the scope of the study was limited because the number of surveys conducted was limited to 11 medium and large fire departments in California. Also, there were only three subject-related experts interviewed for this study due to time constraints.

RESULTS

The results of the research project were derived from the comprehensive examination of data from books, fire journal articles, periodicals, Internet based reports, Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects, a convenience sample survey and interviews. The three interviews resulted in providing additional current information and additional considerations for the researcher that were not as evident in the literature review and surveys.

The interviews added another dimension that would assist the researcher when making recommendations concerning this study.

The results of this study produced a determination concerning succession planning and the necessary components of a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department, which was the purpose of this research. The researcher found that succession planning is critical to the success of leadership continuity in any organization and especially in the fire service because of the multitude of demands and skill sets necessary to successfully lead. These challenges combined with the current workforce demographics, strongly influence the need for succession planning.

Next, the examination of the available information and interviewing produced results that allowed the researcher to analyze and identify the various succession planning model components, elements and steps that are currently in place, primarily in the private sector. It also allowed the researcher to look at the difference in opinions and attitudes concerning succession planning and succession planning models.

Additionally, the research also produced a recommendation of the key components necessary for a succession planning model or to establish a succession planning program for the Oakland fire department (Appendix C).

The recommended components will also assist the fire service when developing or establishing a succession planning program.

The research questions are listed below, with research results from each questions cited in a format determined by the researcher, to best convey, explain and present the results.

Research Question 1 – What is succession planning?

One of the important finding was that there was limited information found on the definition of succession planning. The fire services had published a very sparse amount of research relating to defining succession planning. Most of the information about the definition of succession planning for the fire services was contained in the Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects reviewed and which were providing definitions that had been discovered during their research and primarily came from the private sector literature reviews.

The private sector and other organizations had also published a limited amount of information available in defining succession planning. The researcher found an abundance of published literature on the subject of succession planning and the components necessary for a succession planning program, but it appeared that all the writings published assumed that the reader already knew the definition of succession planning and that the reader or readers were in the process of developing or implementing a program for their organization.

Another measurable result of the literature review was the various former and current perspectives and opinions that the authors had concerning what succession planning is and its benefits. The findings established that support for succession planning has always been there and that there is growing support for succession planning and discussion of its benefits in the fire service.

The researcher determined the most appropriate definition of succession planning for the fire services was the following definition:

“Succession planning is an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, and willing to succeed in strategic roles within the organization.” (NFA, 2000).

Rothwell (2001) in a discussion of succession planning wrote about the need for changing organizations to have the right people working in the right places at the right time. The author further stated that for that combination of events to successfully take place, the organization must have a plan.

The researcher deduced from the literature review findings that from a holistic and universal perspective that includes private, public and fire service organizations, William J. Rothwell provides the most comprehensive definition of succession planning.

Rothwell (2001) defines the concept of succession planning as “a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future individual advancement.” Rothwell also clarified that succession planning defined is a proactive process.

The survey results provided the data that was obtained from 11 career fire departments that were medium to large departments, which represented communities in California with a total of 12.5 million residents.

The result highlights were as follows:

- 100% of the surveyed departments that responded to the feedback form which represented 90.9% of the total sample size, knew what succession planning was but were not able to provide a comprehensive definition. The responses ranged from it being a modified career development program for employees to a formal education program that included college degrees and meeting state and national chief officer standards.

The two interviews with fire chiefs also garnered similar results. The Fire Chief from

Berkeley, California was interviewed on March 12, 2007. Chief Pryor stated, “I know what succession planning is and I am familiar with the concept but it is hard to give it a definition other than planning for future leadership” (D. Pryor, personal communication, March 12, 2007).

The former Fire Chief from Oakland, California was interviewed the following week. Chief Simon was currently the Acting Fire Chief in Miami, Florida. He described succession planning as an integral part of any organization that wanted to ensure quality leadership and continued progress in the future (G. Simon, personal communication, March 21, 2007).

Both Chiefs that were interviewed also stated their definitions would include additional components such as identifying candidates that had the necessary core competencies, candidates that were also able to communicate well, candidates that were able to be “nimble” in a changing environment and candidates that would be willing to move the organization forward toward the obvious future trends in the fire service.

Question 2 – What succession planning models are currently used in similar fire departments?

The literature review results for question #2 included the fact there was a lack of citations concerning succession planning models fire departments in general and very few current citations for actual established succession planning models in similar fire departments. The researcher did however find that during the literature review that it was generally implied that there was a benefit to developing and establishing a succession planning program in the private sector and especially in the fire services. Chief Ronny Coleman wrote many fire service journal articles on succession planning and was one of the biggest advocates for succession planning and clearly delineated the benefits that fire service organizations would gain if they properly implemented a program.

From the research, it was discovered that many private businesses were using career advancement programs that they were referencing as succession plans and it also appeared that only three fire service organizations had some form of succession planning program or an actual succession planning model. The fire departments identified as having succession planning models were Martinsville Fire and EMS department, Minnesota Fire department and Philadelphia Fire department.

After further assessment, the two fire service organizations that were most similar to the Oakland fire department in terms of size of organization and similar demographics were Minneapolis fire department which was comparable in organization and population size and Philadelphia fire department which was much larger in sized but had similar population characteristics and service demographics. These findings also supported the importance of succession planning and the benefits realized to their respective organizations once their succession plan programs were implemented.

The Minneapolis Fire department's succession planning model was written by their Fire chief and was titled, *Professional Development and Training Plan*. The training plan was developed to assist and provide an opportunity for new and existing employees to earn a two-year degree in Fire Protection. To provide a voice from the union, the Fire chief allowed the formation of a Labor-Management committee to design the apprentice training program. Additionally, the department contracted with a qualified training institution to provide the training in according with the established administrative requirements (Clack, 2002).

The Minneapolis Fire department's professional development and training program specifically outlines position requirements beginning from the new employee cadet level through the chief of the department.

This training program details the specific reasons for each requirement needed for each progressive level of responsibility found in the Minneapolis Fire department ranks. It also informs employees of the process followed for promotions and who is responsible for the evaluation and recommendation to hire that specific rank or level of responsibility (Clack, 2002).

The Philadelphia Fire department's program was termed an "officer development" program although it was determined by the researcher that the program had similar characteristics of a succession planning model based upon the program's description and the situation in which it was implemented which was during a staffing shortage which represented almost 10% of their workforce retiring or 225 members retiring with 36% of that number representing officers or supervisory and senior management positions. Their Fire chief, (Shouldis, 2005) stated, "This model ensures that the Philadelphia Fire department will have a viable pool of candidates having the knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed when the opportunity for promotion arises."

The survey results were in alignment with the literature review findings in that 100% of the departments that responded to the feedback form questions did not have a formal succession plan. Of the departments responding, 30% of the departments had parts of a succession planning program such as the establishment of core competencies for promotional positions and having the promotional requirements in writing and available to their sworn members. Another 30% of the departments had discussed or were in the process of discussing the establishment of a succession planning program. All departments saw a need for succession planning but did not have the time or expertise to develop a formal program.

Many of the respondents requested that when Oakland Fire department established their program that they receive a copy of the formal plan.

The two interviews with the metro fire chiefs also yielded identical results with none of these chiefs being aware of any succession planning models that had been developed by the fire service organization or their familiarity with any existing universal succession planning models that could be used as a platform for the Oakland fire department.

Chief Pryor disclosed, “Fire departments needs succession planning but there are no models that I know of in the fire services” (D. Pryor, personal communication, March 12, 2007).

Chief Simon discussed that he had his current staff researching to identify a fire services model but that staff had not been able to find an example to date. Chief Simon exclaimed, “It is hard to believe that in the 21st century the fire services do not have a succession planning model. It is actually ludicrous!” (G. Simon, personal communication, March 21, 2007).

Consequently, the researcher’s findings and results for addressing question #2 were the materialization of two fire service succession planning models, Minneapolis and Philadelphia that would be further reviewed and scrutinized for applicability to the Oakland fire department.

Question 3 – What components are necessary for a succession planning model for the Oakland fire department?

This question was challenging to address but the findings would serve as the critical factors of this research project. The literature review provided the necessary information to answer this question.

An exhaustive review was accomplished related to published information and research about the components necessary for a succession planning model. There were numerous approaches to determining the essential succession planning components, elements, steps or keys discussed in the reviewed published literature for the private, public and fire services organizations.

The literature review included earlier writings on the necessary components of a succession planning model to provide the researcher with a comparison with more recent writings.

The interesting fact was that the current publications mirrored the earlier publications in terms of the findings, opinions and attitudes relative to the necessary components of a succession planning model.

The researcher also recognized during the literature review, that many of the components, elements, steps or keys for a succession planning model were very similar when characterized but called different names by the authors of the writings.

Furthermore, some of the publications and research reports reviewed contained very detailed and sophisticated components for a model or program, while others were more simplistic in establishing the fundamental components for a model or program. Interestingly enough, both approaches when evaluated by the researcher appeared by their descriptions to garner similar results.

The most essential component or element for any succession plan is the requirement for top management support (Kindley, 2002; Garcia, 2004; Rooney, 2004; Wallace, 2004; Rothwell, 2005). Typically, succession planning concentrates on replacement for specific positions. Usually, the focus is on executive level positions or other positions critical to the organization (Rothwell, 2005). Effective succession planning involves keeping the CEO and other senior leaders actively engaged and potential leaders on board developing their skills to meet the future needs of the organization (Kindley, 2002).

Another important component or step in the succession planning process is projecting the executive staffing requirements, also referred to as the leadership core competencies, which can

be achieved by reviewing job positions, job descriptions, effective performance evaluation systems and clarifying what competencies will be needed for the future of the organization to achieve its strategic objectives.

In the literature review this was also described as a human resource audit for strategic leadership positions in the organization (NAPA, 1992; ASTD, 1993; Greengard, 2001; Kindley, 2002; Johnson, 2004; Leland, 2004; Wallace, 2004; Rothwell, 2005).

Another common denominator of the literature review findings relative to succession planning components was the identification of high-potential talent and top performers. These individuals were described as employees with the potential to progress, be promoted and assume leadership roles. The literature review also discussed that as part of this component there had to be serious consideration given to ensuring the retention of these employees because the best people would always have opportunities to go elsewhere. The literature findings recommended as part of the retention strategy to consider providing incentives and rewards for these identified employees (NAPA, 1992; ASTD, 1993; Greengard, 2001; Kindley, 2002; Rothwell, 2005).

The components of establishing individual career and personal development programs, requiring formal education, training and formal mentoring for employees were also primary facets of a succession planning program (NAPA, 1992; ASTD, 1993; Johnson, 2004; Leland, 2004; Rooney, 2004; Wallace, 2004; Rothwell, 2005).

The literature findings discussed implementing career development and personal development models to address needs based upon employee assessments. The formal education requirements and training discussed would be contingent upon industry standards and future trends.

In the literature review, it was disclosed that for the fire services, there are already existing formal education standards that can be considered when developing this requirement, that are currently being utilized by fire departments nationally and internationally (Rooney, 2004).

The final component that was also most frequently discussed and supported by the majority of the literature findings was the review, evaluation and measurement of the succession planning program established by an organization on a regular basis (Greengard, 2001; Garcia, 2004; Wallace, 2004).

The literature illustrated the need and benefits of this component. Periodic and continual evaluation of the succession planning process was strongly supported by the findings to ensure that organizational goals and objectives are met. Another reason given for this component was to guarantee that the process remains parallel and congruent with the organizational culture, mission, values, vision, goal and objectives (Greengard, 2001; Wallace, 2004; Rothwell, 2005).

The survey results complemented the literature review findings in that the departments that responded identified the following components as being the most important,

Of the respondents, 100% identified career and personal development, which included formal education, certifications, and training as a needed component. The survey also revealed additional elements that were identified by 80% of the respondents, that should be part of the career and personal development arena and these were cross-training coupled with on-the-job learning experiences. Another component identified by 100% of the respondents was the need for the Fire chief and senior level chief officers to promote and be involved in the succession planning process.

Another component that was not discussed in the literature review findings gathered, but identified by 80% of the respondents was that succession planning needed to be accepted and adopted throughout the organization as part of the process.

Additionally, 100% of the respondents felt that establishing core competencies, projecting staffing patterns and vacancies for key positions in the organization were also critical components. The formal mentoring component was identified as essential by 60% of the respondents. Evaluation and monitoring of the process was identified as an important component by 40% of the respondents. Also, the identification of potential members that were high achievers or demonstrated talent and abilities within the organization was determined to be a necessary component by 100% of the respondents.

The three interviews with the metro fire chiefs also validated the literature review and survey results. All three metro fire chiefs delineated similar components for a succession planning model and added that when evaluating the members of your fire organization, a fire chief or senior chief officer needed to also strongly consider how the members would fit with the mission, vision and core values of the organization. The Oakland fire chief, Daniel Farrell, added, “You may have employees that are high-potential individuals or top performers but they don’t support or fit the mission, vision and core values of the organization or they may not have the emotional intelligence necessary to become a senior level chief officer” (D. Farrell, personal communication, March 26, 2007).

DISCUSSION

The study results can be directly attributed to the literature review findings, the survey and interviews conducted.

In looking at the research findings, several significant findings came out of this research study.

The most obvious finding being that succession planning is not a new concept and its value continues to increase exponentially as the United States private and public sectors face the aging crisis and the challenges of an ever growing complex work environment. This is evident in the literature review findings that begin with Fayol's original work published in 1916 on the concept of succession planning and continuing into the new millennium with Rothwell's third edition on succession planning published in 2005 that illustrates the quintessential guidelines for an effective succession planning program.

However, succession planning in the fire services appears uncommon from the perspective of implemented succession planning programs.

The researcher has deduced from the research findings and study results that fire departments see the value of succession planning but have not put the time, energy and resources into establishing succession planning programs in their departments. To support this deduction Wolf (n.d.) writes, "Unfortunately, succession planning is not practiced in many fire service organizations. A quick search of the on-line catalog at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center reveals abstracts of many Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) applied research papers identifying the lack of a succession plan when key personnel need to be replaced."

Moreover, this critical need for succession planning and a succession planning program in fire service organizations is illustrated empirically in numerous applied research papers submitted as part of the EFOP (Garcia, 2004; Leland, 2004; Rooney, 2004; Wallace, 2004).

In continuing with the literature review findings for both public and private sectors, study after study illustrates the benefit of succession planning to organizations and their bottom lines (Rothwell, 2005; Shouldis, 2005; Walsh, 2006).

The research also indicated that this type of program is a huge undertaking that will take a serious commitment of time and resources. According to Greengard (2001), "Succession planning is no simple task. Mapping out the future involves more than an organizational chart displaying the corporate hierarchy. It's essential to know which employees have the particular skills and competencies required to assume positions higher on the corporate ladder, what talents will be required for the future, and how best to train employees for management positions, or hire from the outside."

From the fire services aspect, it may be even a more monumental task, as there were very few examples of fire departments that have instituted a program. The Minneapolis Fire department was able to implement their program over a four-year period. They approached their succession planning program by designing a systematic training program for new employees, as well as existing employees.

Fire Chief Forte of the Minneapolis Fire department stated, "As the technical and educational requirements of our profession increase, each person must move forward to address their own professional development. Fire service professionals will emerge from the ranks of the Minneapolis Fire department and become the leaders of tomorrow." He also added, "Personnel

interested in promotion should study the career path outlined here and begin to work on their own career development plan” (Clack, 2002, p. 10).

Although, Minneapolis was among the three fire service examples that most closely resembled a succession planning program, none of the programs exemplified a total and comprehensive program that contained the most crucial succession planning components that were recommended by the literature review findings and sources.

The most crucial succession planning components were identified in the research findings as top management support, identifying leadership core competencies, identifying high-potential talent and top performers, establishing career and personal development programs, and review, evaluation and measurement of the succession planning program (Greengard, 2001; Wallace, 2004; Rothwell, 2005). These components were further validated by the survey results and the interviews that were conducted.

Based upon the study results, the author recognized that there are several organizational implications for the Oakland Fire department since the anticipated retirement of the Fire Chief and two Deputy Chiefs is imminent along with the high likelihood that there will be a number of key battalion chief retirements within the next few years. These implications include that the Oakland Fire department must take aggressive action to begin developing and preparing its future leaders as soon as possible since doing so takes time. It is also apparent that through a commitment to succession planning and implementing the essential components, the Oakland Fire department will be able to meet the complex challenges of the 21st century, ensure that the executive level leadership of the department remains effective and can become a model for other fire service organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem, as previously stated, was that the Oakland fire department does not have a formal succession plan for senior level chief officers and the fire chief position and within the next 24 months, the department will be facing the upcoming retirements of the individuals in these key positions.

The purpose of this applied research project was to introduce the concept of succession planning to the Oakland fire department and to identify the applicable components for a succession planning model that can be utilized by the Oakland fire department for senior level chief officers and the fire chief position.

As stated in the results and discussion, the researcher found that the literature review clearly supports that succession planning is necessary for an organization to maintain a supply of competent leaders. The key theme throughout the research was to recognize that succession planning is necessary to maintain organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Public and private organizations are being asked to do more with less. The research found that fire service agencies recognize the benefits of succession planning but a very nominal amount of fire departments have actually implemented a succession planning program.

Based upon the supporting information in the literature review, the results of the survey and interviews, and the research presented in this study, the following recommendations in this proposal are intended to guide the executive staff in the Oakland fire department in addressing the problem:

1. The Oakland fire department should develop and implement a succession planning program to better prepare individuals and the organization to meet future challenges and ensure the continuity of leadership in the department.

2. The Oakland fire department should recognize the urgency of the need for a succession planning program and make this process a top priority for the current calendar year.
3. The Fire Chief and executive staff should lead the effort to develop and implement a succession planning program for the Oakland fire department.
4. The Oakland fire department should utilize the six (6) essential components identified in this research report for developing and establishing a succession planning program as a benchmark (Appendix C).
5. The Oakland fire department should work with Oakland's Office of Personnel and Resource Management department and the newly created Succession/Workforce Planning office to obtain process feedback and to determine if additional resources are available to assist in implementing the program. Also, working with the city's departments will also ensure coordination and cohesiveness with the City's overall goals related to succession planning.

The implementation of the five recommendations will enable the Oakland fire department to better address the current and future leadership continuity gaps, promote employee development and growth, and institute a formal program for succession.

Succession planning is no simple task and the recommendations in this applied research project are unique to the Oakland fire department and may not be the same recommendations that other fire departments can use. It is recommended that the reader utilize the information within this applied research project as a baseline or as the ground work for continuing the research in the succession planning arena.

The researcher recommends that the reader also conduct their own research to identify the components and criteria that best fit their organization's needs and goals. The researcher believes this applied research report has provided some compelling data and facts that will provide a positive impact in the development and implementation of a succession planning program for any organization.

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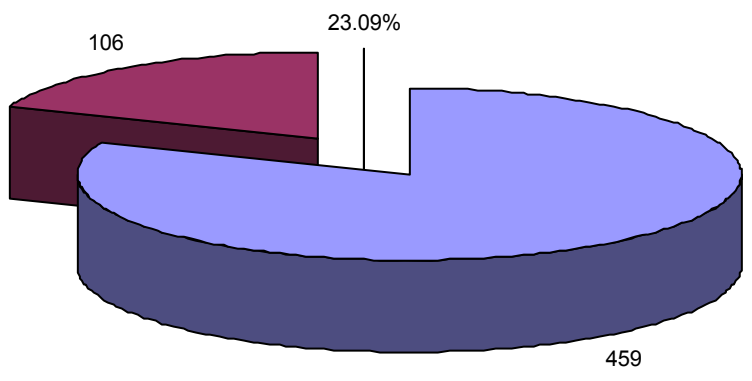
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APPENDIX A

Two charts illustrate the Oakland fire department current statistic results that represent the sworn members eligible to retire this year because they are 50 years or older and the years of experience for sworn members.

Chart 1- Pie Chart

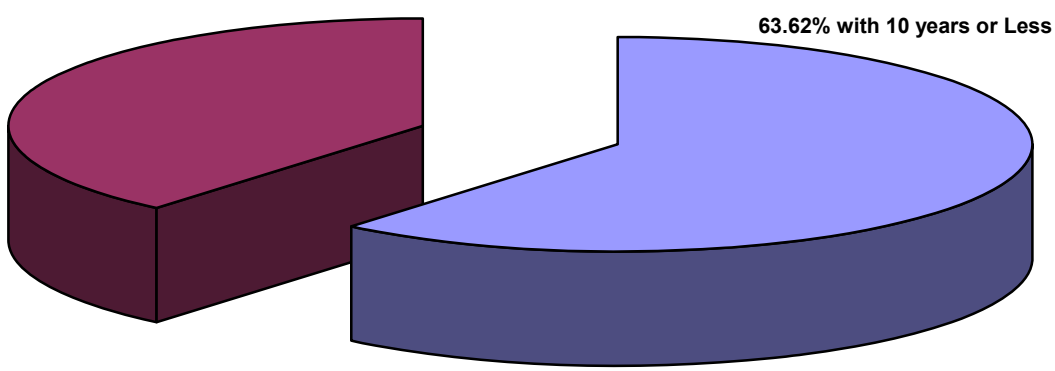
**OFD Sworn Members Eligible to Retire Based Upon Age, 50 years old or older
N=459
February 2007**



Results: 23.09% or 106 sworn members are eligible

Chart 2- Pie Chart

OFD Sworn Members with 10 years or Less of Experience
N=459
December 2006



Results: 63.62% or 292 sworn members have 10 years or less of work experience

APPENDIX B

List of California Fire Departments Completing the Feedback Survey

- Alameda County Fire District
- Berkeley Fire Department
- Contra Costa County Fire District
- Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department
- Long Beach Fire Department
- Los Angeles Fire Department
- Los Angeles County Fire Department
- Sacramento Metro Fire Department
- San Diego Fire Department
- San Francisco Fire Department
- San Jose Fire Department

SURVEY/FEEDBACK INSTRUMENT- Page 1

This survey is part of the Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project.

Responding to any and all questions is VOLUNTARY.

Succession Planning in the Fire Services

Fire Department Name: _____

Approximate population size of community served: _____

1. Are you familiar with Succession Planning? ___ YES ___ NO

If Yes, What is the definition of succession planning? _____

2. Does your department have a formal Succession Planning Program or
Succession Plan in place? ___ YES ___ NO

If Yes, please describe: _____

3. If No, has your department considered one? ___ YES ___ NO

Please explain your response: _____

4. Does your department see a need for a formal Succession Plan or
Succession Planning Program? ___ YES ___ NO

SURVEY/FEEDBACK INSTRUMENT- Page 2

This survey is part of the Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project.

Responding to any and all questions is VOLUNTARY.

Succession Planning in the Fire Services

Fire Department Name: _____

5. Below are components that have been identified as part of the Succession Planning process, Please rank each individual component with a value between 1 and 10, with 1 being most important and 10 being least important, for your fire department.

_____ core competencies _____ formal education _____ mentoring

_____ cross training _____ on the job experience

_____ buy-in at all levels _____ Fire Chief directive

_____ projecting vacancies/Staffing

_____ professional and personal development _____ identify top performers

_____ setting goals _____ developing a strategy _____ firefighting experience

_____ good writing skills _____ officer certifications _____ union affiliation

_____ promotional only-internal candidates

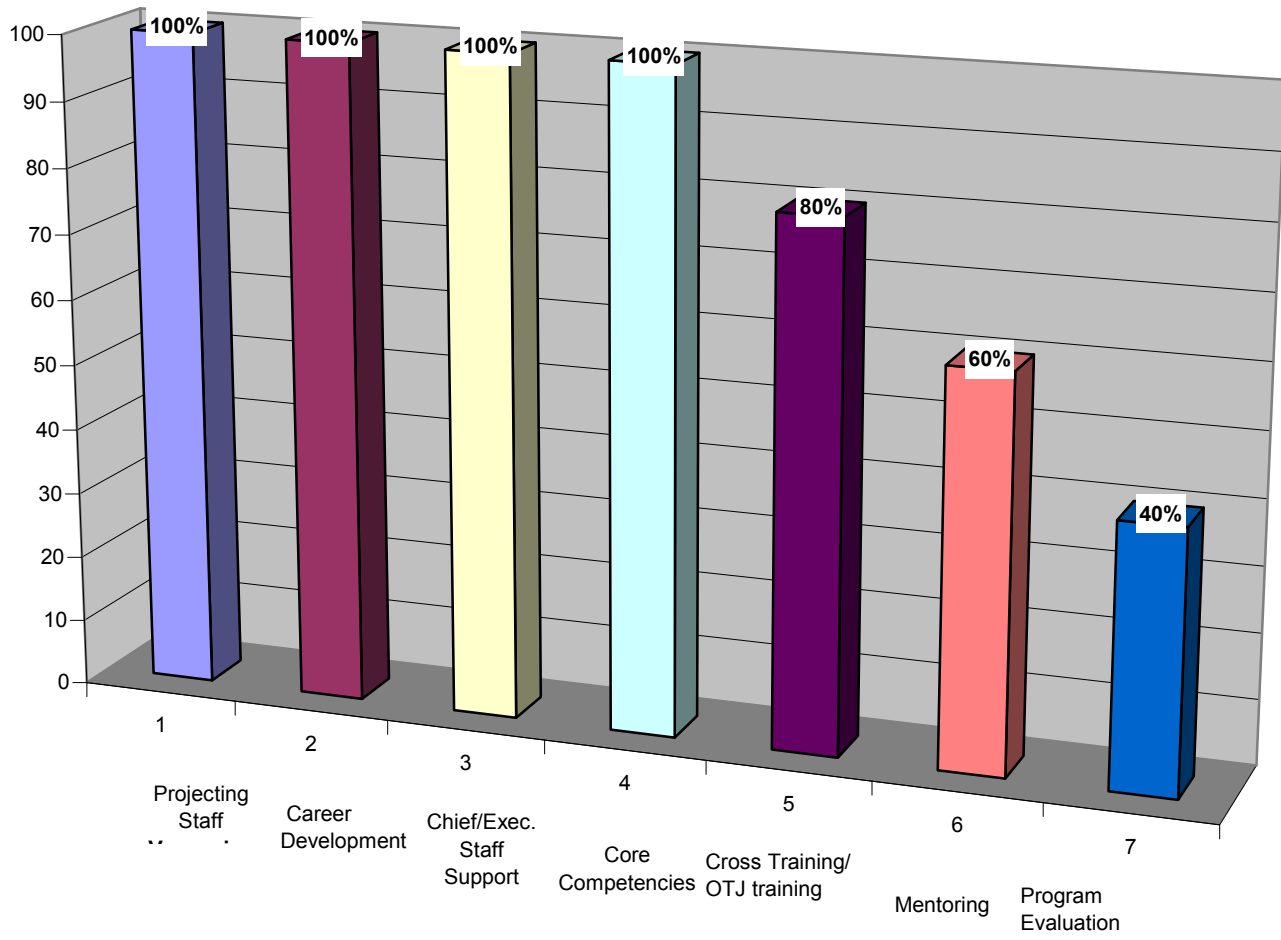
Other components, not included above, please

list: _____

Any additional comments: _____

Thank you for your assistance in this important research project.

Graph 1: Feedback Instrument Respondents' Results
Necessary Components of a Succession Planning Model
N=10



APPENDIX C

THE NECESSARY COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSION PLANNING MODEL

1. Top Management Support for Succession Planning Program
2. Projecting Executive Staffing Requirements/Leadership Core Competencies
3. Identifying and Retaining High-Potential Talent and Top Performers
4. Establishing Individual Career and Personal Development Programs
5. Review, Evaluation and Measurement of the Succession Planning Program on a Regular Basis to ensure process is in alignment with goals, objectives, mission, vision and values.
6. Evaluating Members of the Organization to ensure they fit with the mission, vision and core values of the organization.