

12-12-2023

Achieving Organizational Sustainability Through Gender-Diverse Strategies for Builder Leaders' Succession Planning

Lisa Hawkins-Saleemi
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Lisa Hawkins-Saleemi

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Achieving Organizational Sustainability Through Gender-Diverse Strategies for Builder
Leaders' Succession Planning

by

Lisa Hawkins-Saleemi

MBA, Walden University, 2011

BBA, Georgia State University, 1990

Consulting Capstone Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2023

Abstract

Some builder sector executives need more succession plans to ensure qualified female leaders. Leaders ensure an organization's current and future sustainability by developing an effective succession plan to identify and develop skilled female talent for leadership positions. Grounded in human capital theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies builder sector executives used to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. The participants were three builder sector executives located in the southeastern United States. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, organizational documents, and the builder sector association's website. The data were analyzed thematically, resulting in the emergent themes of process improvement in female employee development and leadership commitment to and support of gender diversity at all hierarchies of the organization. A key recommendation is that senior leadership should ensure female employees have access to training to develop skills and vital business relationships. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase inclusiveness among colleagues and other stakeholders in the construction industry and yield a more prudent approach to recruiting, retaining, and engaging employees so the organization can attract investment from businesses that value gender diversity.

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Acknowledgments

Earning a doctorate demands commitment, and support is essential for achieving this pinnacle of the academic experience. I thank God for the courage and ability to continue amid life's challenges and my network of people who helped me achieve this lifelong personal goal. To the Walden University staff, specifically, my student advisor, thank you for being a sounding board and helping me to navigate the university system. I wish to share my gratitude to the Walden University faculty members who helped me meet the expectations for this program and the University. Your magnitude of academic prowess and professionalism is unmatched. To my chair, Dr. Meridith Wentz; my second committee member, Dr. Rocky Dwyer; my URR, Dr. Peter Anthony; and my program director, Dr. Gail Miles, thank you. Dr. Wentz, I appreciate your wisdom, continuous support, and the wealth of knowledge you have shared with me. Drs. Dwyer and Anthony, I appreciate your feedback and assistance in reaching this point of my journey. Each of you challenged me and guided my intellectual exploration while helping me to develop the necessary writing prowess to publish my dissertation.

I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors. Their courage and resilience have influenced and inspired me to always strive for a level of excellence. To my parents, Marion and Ernest, thank you for your sacrifices and for imparting the traits that push me to strive for excellence. To my sisters, Berneda, Jerral, and Angela, I thank you for being an example. Jerral, thank you for your love, prayers, and support. Angela, thank you for always having my back and for being a steady compass helping me to navigate life's challenges. To my nieces and nephews, I love each one of you. I hope that I inspire you

to dream big and be relentless. Thank you to my village of people who prayed for me, called me, texted me, and invested in me (you know who you are). I could not have done it without you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Construction industry growth helps to increase economic growth and creates investment opportunities across related sectors. Construction business is essential to the U.S. economy, providing approximately 3.9% of the gross domestic product growth (Bureau of Economic Analysis [BEA], 2022). The average annual number of occupational openings in construction totals about 740,000 yearly (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2020a). Unfortunately, the construction industry faces a crisis with an aging workforce and the absence of qualified talent. Skilled talent prepared to assume executive positions are essential to any organization's sustainability.

Executive leadership performance is vital to guide a company into the future. Leaders ensure organizational sustainability when they develop robust future-fit succession strategies. Often due to biases and stereotypes, male-centric industries, such as the builder sector, employ significantly fewer female employees in the workforce than males (Navarro-Astor, 2017). Women in leadership are a smaller subset than male leaders (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. In Section 1, I present the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, research question, qualitative interview questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, research question, conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, significance of the study, a review of the professional and academic literature, and a summary.

Background of the Problem

The construction industry contributes significantly to the development of the global economy. According to the BLS (2020a), occupations related to construction will increase by 4% between 2019 and 2029. Unfortunately, the construction industry workforce shortage and decline in labor efficiency and productivity result in a decrease in professional and adequately skilled personnel at all management and field operations levels, creating a skills gap (Osuizugbo, 2020; Widiyanti et al., 2019). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), between 2010 and 2021, the 65 and over age group was the fastest growing, resulting in a 38% increase. A shortage of skilled workers hampers the ability of the construction industry to undertake a large volume of work with acceptable quality craftsmanship standards.

As the U.S. construction industry continues to grow, builder sector executives face the challenges of a labor shortage, lack of capable workforce, and an increased retirement rate of essential employees (Oo et al., 2022). In 2020, women made up 56.2% of the total workforce (BLS, 2020). However, women are underrepresented in the construction industry, mainly serving in office-based support positions. The share of women employed in the male-dominant construction industry has remained constant at 10.9% since 2020 (BLS, 2021). As the construction industry continues to thrive, companies need to include qualified women in traditionally male positions. Leaders should establish an approach to increase women's representation in the construction industry. Succession planning is a proactive, long-term plan to help future-fit executives prepare for all contingencies by identifying and assessing high-potential talent to fill

talent gaps (Gehrke, 2019; Rothwell, 2015). By developing and adopting an effective succession plan to identify and develop qualified female talent for leadership positions, leaders ensure an organization's current and future sustainability.

Problem Statement

The U.S. construction industry is one of the most male-dominated industries, and because women are continually grossly underrepresented in the construction industry, builder sector executives are plagued by the lack of qualified female leaders (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). According to the BLS (2020a), the construction sector employs over 7 million people, and of those, 10.3% were women. The general business problem was that some executives do not know how to plan for succession. The specific business problem was some builder sector executives lack strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. The targeted population was three builder sector executives located in the southeastern United States who had successfully created strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan in their respective construction organizations. The business impact of this issue is that the findings may increase inclusiveness among team members and other stakeholders in the construction industry. The findings may also yield a more prudent approach to recruiting, retaining, and engaging employees. The study is significant to business practice because it may provide

strategies for identifying specific competencies in talented female professionals, developing and coaching high-potential women, and helping organizations avoid extended and costly business vacancies. In addition, the study findings may help executive teams to attract investment from organizations that value gender diversity.

The research results may create positive social change in multiple ways. The study results may create positive social change by yielding innovative ideas and problem-solving methods from people with different experiences. Leaders should provide women with more opportunities to develop the leadership skills essential for career advancement earlier in life. The return on investment in female employees not only affects their future development as individuals but also as the future of their family. Future forward executive teams recognize the economic value of education and training for future productivity and employees' gains in wages. The study results may also attract investment from organizations that value gender diversity. Additionally, leaders who demonstrate a genuine commitment to a diverse workforce may attract qualified employees with high potential. Finally, the findings may increase inclusivity among team members and other stakeholders in the construction industry.

Nature of the Study

As a researcher seeking to solve business problems, choosing the most effective methodology, gathering and analyzing the data to report, and defining business requirements for stakeholders are beneficial to the evolution and sustainability of an organization. Yin (2018) noted that there are three fundamental research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative methodology is a flexible

method that allows researchers to use people's verbal or written data to understand the meanings they attribute to their behavior, motivations, and interactions with people (Park & Park, 2016; Yin, 2016). This approach was appropriate for the current study because I explored strategies builder sector executives implemented to develop an effective succession plan for organizational sustainability, and the qualitative method enabled the use of verbal or written data to understand the participants' meanings to their behavior, motivations, and interactions (see Park & Park, 2016). Conversely, a researcher uses the quantitative methodology to measure differences and relationships among variables using statistical hypotheses (Mackieson et al., 2019; Park & Park, 2016). Because variables and the relationships between them were not the focus of the current study, the quantitative approach was not appropriate. The mixed-methods approach involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to better understand complex social phenomena (Cabrera & Reiner, 2018; Yin, 2016). Researchers use the mixed-methods approach to explore the research problem from different perspectives to increase the evidence and improve the credibility of the research findings, and the researcher must successfully integrate both quantitative and qualitative data during analysis and interpretation, which is difficult and time consuming (Cabrera & Reiner, 2018; Yin, 2016). For these reasons, I did not employ the mixed-methods approach in this study.

Qualitative researchers can choose from five significant research designs: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, (c) narrative, (d) grounded theory, and (e) case study (Yin, 2016, 2018). Researchers use the phenomenological approach to gather information

about study participants' subjective lived experiences and perspectives (Goulding, 2005; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). Founded by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, phenomenology refers to researching how respondents perceive the meaning of a phenomenon rather than how the event exists beyond the perception of individuals (Groenewald, 2004; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). Ethnography entails the researcher gathering data through observation of the participant's behavior on sight, over a number of days (Groenewald, 2004; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). Phenomenology and ethnography were not suitable designs for the current study because the focus was not on participants' life experiences, cultures, customs, or lived experiences. The narrative design was not appropriate for the current study because I did not use participants' lived experiences to capture the complexities and nuance of their significant experiences (see Polkinghorne, 2007; Yin, 2016). Researchers using grounded theory begin with a set of data and then identify patterns, trends, and relationships among the data to generate a theory (Goulding, 2005). Because this design is appropriate when the aim is to create theory, it was not a suitable design for this study.

A case study design involves exploring a particular phenomenon within a real-life situation (Kekeya, 2021; Yin, 2018). Case studies involve a combination of phenomenology, ethnography, narrative, and grounded theory (Park & Park, 2016). Both case study and grounded theory designs originated in sociology and are focused on understanding, explaining, and predicting human behavior (Kekeya, 2021). Using a case study design allows researchers to conduct in-depth investigations of an individual, group process, activity, or event in a real-world context to develop new theories or to test a

given hypothesis (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Park & Park, 2016). After considering my access to data, the time required to undertake interviews, budgetary requirements, and software needed to collect and analyze the data, I determined that a case study design was the most practical design within the constraints of the current study.

Researchers use either a single-case or multiple-case design in case study research (Stewart, 2012; Yin, 2018). Researchers use a single-case study to explore a single experience in depth (Stewart, 2012; Yin, 2018). A multiple-case design allows researchers to analyze a combination of small case studies (Stewart, 2012). The multiple-case design was not appropriate for the current study because I did not explore several cases to understand their similarities and differences. The single-case design was suitable for this study because it provided the best method to examine a specific phenomenon within an organization (i.e., gender-diverse strategies for builder sector executives).

Research Question

What strategies do builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability?

Qualitative Interview Questions

1. To what extent do you feel that gender-diverse succession planning is a valuable business strategy?
2. How exactly would you develop a gender-diverse succession plan in the organization in which you are employed?
3. What leadership business-critical positions do you believe will be difficult to fill externally?

4. What strategies do you use to ensure qualified female employees are identified and enrolled in a development program?
5. What additional information would you like to add that I have not asked about strategies for developing gender-diverse succession plans for the builder sector executives?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study comprised the human capital theory. Each theory draws on the work of previous researchers, and the human capital theory was formulated by U.S. economists, Gary Stanelly Becker, Theodore William Schultz, and Jacob Mince in the early 1960s (Teixeira. 2014; Weiss, 2015). The human capital theory, which is rooted in economics, refers to investment in skills and knowledge as a form of capital that contributes to the employee's productivity (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). The general assumption of the human capital theory is that the marketable skills and knowledge a worker acquire by attaining more education and through employee development increase that employee's value and productive capacity (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). Talented professionals are the competitive advantage of any organization and industry (Shang et al., 2021).

The concept of human capital evolved from the recognition that investing in employees' education and knowledge is valued in the marketplace because it increases the organization's innovative opportunities (Nafukho et al., 2004). Becker (1993) opined that investing in human capital increases an employee's productivity in all work-related tasks, which leads to economic growth. Investing in employee capabilities adds to the

value of the organization (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). As employees become more skilled through training and education, they become more valuable to the organization and within the marketplace.

Leadership development for succession planning and its value to organizations were essential elements of this research study. Succession planning refers to creating a process to increase the availability of prospective candidates to fill talent gaps by identifying competent employees as well as assessing and developing their skills and abilities to ensure the organization is prepared for future growth (Darvish & Temelie, 2014; Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017). While succession planning is an essential strategy for any organization, implementing a plan without an understanding of the relationship between investing in human capital (i.e., investing in education and development) and economic growth will reduce the effectiveness of the succession plan (Nafukho et al., 2004; Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017). An organization's current and future sustainability depends on the most talented professionals assuming business-critical positions after attrition or retirement (Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017; Ritchie, 2020). Business leaders must identify potential future leaders, determine their development needs, and adapt processes to cultivate that development. This study is significant to business practice because it may provide strategies for identifying specific competencies in talented female professionals, developing and coaching high-potential women, and helping leadership avoid extended and costly business vacancies.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions are used in the study.

Explicit knowledge: The vital understanding of the organization that is accessible in documents or a database and is used even after the employee is no longer with the organization (Proctor, 2019; Siewert & Louderback, 2019).

Gender diversity: Providing men and women fair opportunities based on their abilities, equal pay, and the same opportunities for advancement (Mousa, 2021).

Key employees: Essential employees who are proficient in a particular function, indispensable members of the organization, and critical to successful operations (Ramona & Alexandra, 2019).

Knowledge management: Gathering, using, and distributing knowledge and resources to maximize the distribution of organization information and make it accessible to employees (Proctor, 2019; Ramona & Alexandra, 2019).

Knowledge sharing: The mutual exchange of invaluable organizational information (i.e., employee knowledge, experience, and expertise, to secure the company's future; Ahmad & Karim, 2019; Siewert & Louderback, 2019).

Mentoring: Senior and more experienced employees giving advice and support to younger employees early in their career for the purposes of learning and growth (Eby & Robertson, 2020).

Succession planning: A strategy where organizations actively plan for knowledge transfer if key employees leave the organization. Succession planning involves identifying and developing employees to ensure leadership continuity for all critical positions (Siewert & Louderback, 2019).

Tacit knowledge: Vital, intuitive knowledge held within teams or individual employees of processes and procedures, gained through their personal experiences (Proctor, 2019; Siewert & Louderback, 2019). Tacit knowledge is complex knowledge that is difficult to replace quickly and manage because it is held in a person's mind and not documented (Ramona & Alexandra, 2019).

Talent management: Attracting and retaining high-quality talent, providing learning opportunities, and motivating them to improve their performance (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020; Pandita & Ray, 2018).

Transformational leadership: The relationship between leaders and followers where the leader intentionally nurtures an environment of mutual trust and respect to inspire and motivate follower performance (Busari et al., 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are the researcher's untested and unverified beliefs. Kirkwood and Price (2013) noted that assumptions are the foundation of any research study and are necessary to determine the conclusions that will result from the research study. I assumed that the builder sector executives would have the essential experience and knowledge of gender-diverse succession planning practices and strategies in the construction industry. Another assumption was those study participants would be honest in their responses, manage any potential biases with their answers, and all their responses would be solely their opinions based on personal experience. Validating the answers of each participant

would be time consuming. My final assumption was that failure to implement a gender-diverse succession plan would affect organizational sustainability.

Limitations

Limitations in research studies refer to constraints that affect the study, resulting in weaknesses (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) asserted that limitations often result from methodology and study design choices and threaten the validity of the study results. The study was limited in generalizability (i.e., the ability to generalize the findings to all business areas) because the sample size was small. When the sample size is small, a researcher's ability to generalize the study and produce reliable results decreases (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Another limitation of the study was the participants' experiences with and knowledge of gender-diverse succession planning and strategies in the construction industry. Finally, inadequate supporting documentary material from the builder sector association's files and or data sources to corroborate the interview data was a limitation of the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the researcher's intentional decisions to narrow the scope of the study (i.e., the researcher establishes parameters of inclusion and exclusion; Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The focus of the current study was the construction industry in southeastern United States, with an emphasis on gender-diverse succession plans and strategies in the builder sector. The study population of interest was defined as builder sector executives. The decision to limit the study to this

population was an attempt to isolate results of gender-diverse succession planning experiences as observed in the construction industry from other areas of the economy. Another delimitation of the study was organizations that partnered with the Walden University Consulting Capstone program to use the Baldrige Excellence Framework to improve and achieve sustainable results. Finally, the target group was those in leadership with authority to approve gender-diverse succession practices.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that the results may provide new insights regarding builder sector executives' strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. The results from the study may contribute to a positive social change by promoting and facilitating the systematization of critical processes that focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. By adopting strategies related to gender-diverse succession planning, local governments and firms can provide service to their customers and the community ethically, fairly, and honestly as well as create tangible improvements regarding the availability of building-sector services within underserved communities.

A goal of business leaders is to make money and ensure the most competent professionals assume business-critical positions within the organization. A succession plan increases the availability of qualified talent to replace departing leaders within the organization due to planned and unplanned employee departures (Kim, 2010; Ritchie, 2020). The study is significant to business practice because it provides strategies for identifying specific competencies in talented female professionals, developing and

coaching high-potential women, and helping organizations avoid extended and costly business vacancies (see Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017; Ritchie, 2020).

In the ever-changing business climate, organizations must be flexible and have a structured approach to managing change that will allow business leaders to facilitate the new changes with minimal disruption to day-to-day operations. Leaders develop succession plans to identify and prepare high-potential employees to assume executive level positions (Darvish & Temelie, 2014; Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017). Conducting this study allowed me to gather data from study participants, apply knowledge gleaned from the study to develop effective succession plans, and contribute to knowledge in the industry.

The social change implications include that findings may increase inclusiveness among team members and other stakeholders in the construction industry. The results may yield a more prudent approach to recruiting, retaining, and engaging employees. Findings may also attract investment from organizations that value gender diversity. Finally, the findings may yield innovative ideas and problem-solving methods from people with different experiences. Gender-diverse succession planning is crucial to ensure competent leaders can quickly predict and solve current and future builder sector problems due to changing trends.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. In this literature review subsection, I first examine past and

current theories associated with succession planning, knowledge management, and knowledge transfer as well as other thought leaders' suggestions and improvement areas captured in recent studies on succession planning, knowledge management, and knowledge transfer. Recommendations in the literature on how leaders improve succession planning practices and how to enhance knowledge management and knowledge transfer in the builder sector are then discussed.

Employee attrition and turnover are a part of the lifecycle of an organization. The challenges of the builder sector workforce reaching retirement age and exiting their positions are evident in the U.S. construction industry. To remain sustainable, it is essential for leaders to address critical skills gaps by upskilling qualified internal employees and recruiting prospective candidates. In this literature review, I explore strategies builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. Builder sector executives should evaluate what aspects of the construction industry can adjust to attract and retain female employees.

The articles and literature that guided this study were accessed through the Walden University Library's Thoreau multidatabase search tool and from the SAGE Journal, IEEE, ProQuest, Business Source Complete, and EBSCO host databases. I also used the Google Scholar search engine to obtain articles from open-access journals. An alert system was also set up through Google Scholar to notify me when recent articles on succession planning and gender-diversity were published. I limited my search to peer-reviewed articles published from 2004 to the present. The keyword search terms used

were *succession planning, business strategies, leadership, construction industry, builder sector, gender, women, diversity, millennials, talent management, retirement, recruitment, training, mentoring, knowledge management, sustainability, and family business.*

For the purpose of the literature review, I examined peer-reviewed articles and books on the following topics: (a) human capital theory; (b) the evolution of succession planning; (c) the history of knowledge and the types of knowledge; (d) promoting knowledge transfer through recruitment, mentoring, and coaching; (e) promoting gender diversity; (f) culture of construction sector in the United States (g) contrasting conceptual framework; and (h) human capital theory and positive social change. The total number of references included in this study is 172, of which 89 were published between 2019 to 2023, representing 52%. Of the 172 references for this study, 90% were from seminal works, and 9.9% were from non-peer-reviewed sources.

The review of the literature revealed the consistency and alignment of various researchers on the influence of gender diversity on succession planning when a formal program is in place and implemented. I chose to present the theoretical linkages within the literature about developing competent female talent in the organization and the guiding principles to ensure the builder sector attracts qualified women leaders by delivering effective recruitment, mentoring and coaching, succession planning, and development programs (see Wright, 2021). Organizational success depends on employees and leaders that inspire and empower their employees to have a competitive advantage.

Human Capital Theory

I used the human capital theory as the conceptual framework for this study. Developed by economists Gary Stanley Becker (1993), Theodore William Schultz (1961), and Jacob Mincer in the mid- to late-20th century, the general assumption of the human capital theory is that the marketable skills and knowledge a worker acquires by attaining more education and through employee development increase that employee's value and productive capacity. The concept of the human capital theory developed from the recognition that investing in employees' education and knowledge is valued in the marketplace because it increased the organization's profits (Nafukho et al., 2004; Shang et al., 2021). Becker opined that investing in human capital (i.e., investment in education) increases an employee's productivity in all work-related tasks, which leads to economic growth. Schultz supported Becker's description and suggested that human capital refers to employees' capacity to adapt and is helpful in organizations where employees must adapt to unexpected changes. As employees become more skilled through training and education, they become more valuable to the organization and within the marketplace. Future-fit executives who make employee development a priority help their workforce relate with the organization's goals and find common ground as well as assist the company developing a competitive reputation in the marketplace that will attract highly talented individuals to work for the organization (Armstrong, 2006).

The critical task of organizations is the recruitment of competent and adept leaders. While succession planning is an essential strategy for any organization, implementing a plan without an understanding of the relationship between investing in

human capital (i.e., investing in education and development) and economic growth will reduce the effectiveness of the succession plan (Nafukho et al., 2004; Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017). An organization's current and future sustainability depends on the most talented professional assuming business-critical positions due to employee departure (Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017). Business leaders should identify potential future leaders, determine their development needs, and include processes to cultivate that development (Perrenoud & Sullivan, 2017). Successful organizations recognize the economic value of education and training for future productivity and employees' gains in wages. The construction industry is essential worldwide, and Hamza et al. (2022) noted how a high level of employee productivity is vital for completing projects on time in the construction industry.

Aliu and Aigbavboa (2019) and Shang et al. (2021) posited that human capital is an organization's primary resource. The construction industry has long been an industry with minor female representation. The U.S. construction sector employs over 7 million people, and of those, almost 90% are men (BLS, 2020a). Identifying and retaining the most talented professionals may be a competitive edge in the construction industry. An employee's education, experience, and skills provide a significant economic impact on employers, organizations, and the economy as a whole.

Contrasting Human Capital Theory, Knowledge Creation Theory, and Trait Theory

Successful organizations seek future-fit executives to respond to the perpetual change of business. Senior executives possess various skills and attributes, balancing optimal organizational productivity with talent recruitment, development, and retention.

An essential element of organizational sustainability is the executive team's ability to create processes to attract, develop, motivate, and retain high-performing employees (Wyatt & Silvester, 2018). Dynamic leaders recognize factors that motivate a team to achieve shared vision, values, and goals. Influential leaders must be able to develop strategies to improve their team's performance and promote accountability, collaboration, and engagement to inspire and motivate employees.

The leadership prototype in the United States is White and masculine. White men are considered typical based on race and gender, and C-suite leadership positions continue to be male dominated (McDonald et al., 2018). Eagly et al. (2019) contended that executives traditionally select men for senior-level leadership positions. However, women are equally capable of earning and excelling in leadership roles while inspiring others toward an ambitious vision. Successful leaders share many common traits. Male and female unique leadership styles add value to the workplace (Heilman, 2001). Saxena (2014) noted that executive teams who hire employees across gender, age, and cultural backgrounds enjoy a wide range of benefits. Employees from different backgrounds offer different talents, skills, and experiences that may increase productivity (Rezaee, 2017). Successful executives have the flexibility to navigate the constant changes in conducting business. To achieve results in an organization, leaders should develop core leadership qualities to take their team to the next level of productivity.

One of the executive team's most challenging tasks is attracting and retaining highly skilled employees. Developing strategies to keep high-potential talent is essential for organizational sustainability. A broad field of scholars has conducted studies on

succession planning and leadership. A variety of theories exist to explain the nature and practice of leadership. The human capital theory refers to the knowledge, skills, and other personal characteristics embodied in qualified employees that help them to leverage for growth. The concept of the human capital theory developed from the recognition that investing in employees' education and knowledge is valued in the marketplace because it increases the organization's long-term productivity (Nafukho et al., 2004; Shang et al., 2021). Future-forward executive teams invest in employee in-house learning and work experience (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Organizations where employee development is a priority, attract employees who want to achieve the organization's goals and build a reputation in the marketplace that will attract highly talented individuals to work for the organization.

Using knowledge creation theory as an organizing framework for identifying and developing effective succession candidates complements the human capital theory. Knowledge creation theory refers to leaders creating learning environments (Farnese et al., 2019; Nonaka, 1994). Employees have access to training and education and opportunities to learn through knowledge transfer from interaction with other staff members and outside resources (Cannatelli et al., 2017; Nonaka, 1994). They can excel when employees are supported and guided in their growth strategies. Future-fit executives should allocate a portion of the operating budget to formal training and learning activities, especially for female employees (Wright, 2021).

In examining literature in the context of identifying and developing effective succession candidates as a contrasting conceptual framework to human capital theory,

Gordon Allport's foundational work regarding personality traits and the noticeable impact they have on an individual's behavior is the underpinning of trait theory (Zuroff, 1986). Trait theories of leadership center on the qualities that characterize leaders in general. The foundation of the theory is that leaders share specific identifiable characteristics and habits such as charisma, vision, confidence, and dominance. The list of traits associated with leadership varies, but the principal concept is that some people are born leaders, and others are natural followers. Scholars determined that physiological attributes that encompass decisiveness, judgment, and knowledge exist in high-potential leaders (Zuroff, 1986). According to trait theory, a person's leadership traits determine if they will likely lead successfully.

Human Capital Theory and Positive Social Change

The primary role of a business is to maximize profits. Epstein and Buhovac (2014) contended that as companies worldwide are held to increasingly demanding environmental and social standards, business leaders need to understand how these ecological and social factors affect their business. Additionally, Kowalczyk and Kucharska (2019) and López et al. (2007) asserted that leaders must translate corporate performance on sustainability into financial performance. Businesses with genuine gender diversity perform better, including significant profit increases (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016). Ritchie (2020) posited that leaders must recognize how the loss of valuable leadership cripples even the most successful organizations, and a future-fit succession plan is essential for organizational sustainability. Business leaders should acknowledge that gender inequity in leadership affects economic development, shattering

the glass ceiling and eliminating the glass cliff (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016). As demand for more sustainable products and workplaces increases, leaders should adapt to survive the changing economic and environmental climate.

Evolution of Succession Planning

Employee attrition and turnover are a part of the lifecycle of an organization. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), between 2010 and 2021, the 65 and over age group increased by 38%. The challenges of the builder sector workforce reaching retirement age and exiting their positions are evident in the U.S. construction industry. Succession planning is vital to business sustainability.

Executives develop a strategic succession plan to increase the likelihood of success despite potential unforeseen obstacles, such as turnover or retirement. Ritchie (2020) explained how succession planning is an ongoing process aligned with the organization's vision, needs, and strategic direction. Succession management planning is a proactive plan to help future-fit executives prepare for all contingencies by preparing high-potential employees for advancement when an opportunity becomes available. Perrenoud and Sullivan (2017) argued that succession planning is critical in assuring the growth of competencies in construction organizations and is a vital component of a business strategy because losing business-critical talent will impede the development of even the best organization. Lee et al. (2018) noted employee turnover has detrimental effects on organizational efficiency and affects collaboration among the employees who remain with the organization following a coworker's departure. Lee et al. maintained that business leaders significantly influence employee turnover, and awareness of employee

concerns and needs is critical for creating a culture of engagement. Executives need to identify and implement strategies that help optimize recruitment while engaging and retaining current employees. Lee et al. posited leaders must continue to observe and regularly communicate with employees about their issues to keep them inspired and develop a trusting relationship.

Perrenoud (2020) posited that the construction industry has unique obstacles to overcome, such as uncertainty from temporary projects and experiencing high employee turnover. Succession planning is an essential component of sustainability in the construction industry because a shortage of quality talent results in construction companies not providing quality work. Gender bias persists in the industry and presents a significant barrier to women's leadership opportunities. Groves (2007) suggested that business leaders support female professionals' career advancement by prioritizing gender parity and engaging in continuous education and action-based initiatives that help to eliminate gender barriers and gender bias in the workplace. Obstacles to advancement in the construction industry disproportionately affect women (Navarro-Astor et al., 2017). Bridges et al. (2020) complemented the studies of Groves and Navarro-Astor et al. and noted how the construction industry perpetuates inflexible, exclusionary, male-dominated cultures that are unsupportive or attractive to women. All genders benefit from work-life balance.

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions presents a great opportunity for builder sector leaders to create change in the industry. It is critical that women are informed of job vacancy requirements, so they have access to future roles.

Organizations should provide fair access to professional development opportunities, including networking, client development, and mentorship for women of all levels within the organization (Alqahtani, 2020; Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). Ritchie (2020) noted that succession planning contributes to the success of an organization through effective hiring, developing, and evaluating vital employees. Successful leaders identify future leadership needs, develop potential leaders, and assess talented employees to understand their skills and aspirations.

A vital responsibility of the board of directors is developing a succession plan to aid in identifying an effective CEO (Havrylyshyn & Schepker, 2020). Ritchie (2020) and Schepker et al. (2018) argued boards must be more involved and engaged in succession planning to ensure they make sound decisions when balancing whether to promote from within or pursue external candidates. Creating a continuum of succession planning processes will help ensure a smooth leadership transition (Gehrke, 2019). A CEO is essential to the success of an organization and must evaluate internal and external initiatives to build a sustainable company. Gehrke (2019) posited that the CEO aligns the company internally and externally and develops a strategic vision to maximize stakeholder returns. Specifically, the CEO provides organizational direction, is responsible for the organization's success, and is ultimately accountable for the success or failure of a company.

The CEO is instrumental in selecting the most effective successor, which is crucial to organizational sustainability (Havrylyshyn & Schepker, 2020). Ritchie (2020) contended that the organization's board of directors and CEOs must develop a

comprehensive succession plan to anticipate future business growth and establish potential successor candidates over several years to assume C-suite leadership positions ultimately. Gaining support for a succession plan requires approval from senior leadership (Havrylyshyn & Schepker, 2020). Tamunomiebi and Okwakpam (2019) and Havrylyshyn and Schepker (2020) noted that commitment from the organization's senior leadership ensures the executive talent management team has authority to implement succession strategies. Perrenoud (2020) supported Tamunomiebi and Okwakpam's findings and posited that to ensure a successful succession plan, leaders must have company-wide support, especially from senior leadership. Executives should seek senior level support of the succession plan to create a framework to keep everyone working in the same direction.

Organizations are distinguishable by their knowledge economy, with employees being the most vital asset for organizational sustainability (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2019). Progressive leaders align the organization's business strategy with sustainability goals, and successful organizations develop a succession planning strategy to ensure a qualified talent pool is available for future leadership roles. Gehrke (2019) contended that as companies engage the new workforce and create a plan of action that secures the future of their businesses, talent management initiatives are integral to any company's succession planning framework. The researcher argued that a CEO is essential to the success of an organization and must balance the needs of all stakeholders to establish a sustainable company. Gehrke opined that the CEO position is challenging to replace, and CEO turnover or attrition is disruptive to organizations and affects subsequent financial

performance since they are important decision makers and very knowledgeable about the organization. To remain successful, leaders should develop a gender-inclusive succession plan as part of the business strategy because succession planning is vital to the organization's future growth.

Avanesh (2011) agreed with Perrenoud and Sullivan (2017), arguing that an organization's current and future sustainability depends on the most talented professional assuming critical roles due to attrition or retirement. Leadership transition is an essential component of a business's strategic initiative and provides an opportunity to evaluate the company's longevity. Future-fit executive teams recognize that reducing the risk of falling behind competing organizations requires skilled talent who adapt quickly to change, leading to higher, more reliable productivity and a leaner, optimized workforce (LeCounte et al., 2017).

Executive teams are empowered through continuous workforce planning to improve every aspect of their organization, ensuring they have the necessary talent to execute their business strategy. Tamunomiebi and Okwakpam (2019) and Perrenoud (2020) opined that to be successful, leaders must design their workforce effectively and efficiently to identify the most effective process. They identified the following four essential steps to guide succession planning efforts:

1. Identify company needs: A succession plan begins with identifying the company's needs. For example, executive teams should consider staff, the likelihood of turnover within the organization, and the difficulty filling critical positions. By aligning the organization's business strategy and the leaders

needed for future growth, executives can better identify essential competencies and the minimum requirements for each vital position.

2. Analyze and select the best candidates: Executives determine the organization's current talent and identify employees with unique abilities that position them for future executive roles. Leadership accesses the current workforce through internal talent sourcing of qualified talent and succession candidates.
3. Prepare a detailed plan for the candidates: The process of succession planning provides employees with an opportunity to develop their career path. Employees and leaders can evaluate the employee's qualifications and identify areas of weakness. Leaders deliver personalized talent training to improve the skills, education, and experience to compete as qualified succession candidates.
4. Transition the candidate into the position: Executives maximize the candidate's success by providing employees with an ongoing mechanism to enhance their skills and knowledge, leading to mastery of their current jobs (Perrenoud, 2020; Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019).

Human resources executives balance the needs of the organization with the needs of the work team to ensure organizational sustainability. Talent management is a business strategy executives use to ensure they attract high-potential professionals and prepare to meet future staffing or training needs (LeCounte et al., 2017). Succession planning is an ongoing talent management tool executives use to evaluate and develop future

executives. Whysall et al. (2019) agreed with Perrenoud and Sullivan (2017) stating that leaders must align the hiring plans with the organization's growth areas and consider cross-training programs that will enable existing employees to move into high-demand roles. Whysall et al. contended that technological evolution impacts talent management. Organizations benefit from developing and implementing a robust succession plan as part of the business strategy because succession planning is vital to the organization's future growth (Ahmad et al., 2020; Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019). Future-fit executive teams ensure organizational sustainability when they implement strategies to identify and train qualified candidates so they can progress to C-suite leadership positions.

Developing an effective succession plan is critical to a seamless leadership transition for the organization's employees and clients. Executives should ensure succession planning is a vital component of the strategic business framework and develop long-term proactive strategies to identify high-potential individuals' coaching and development needs before vacancies. López et al. (2007) posited that by ensuring sustainability remains core to the company values, leaders continually provide employees a guide to implementing sustainable procedures to improve economic, social, and environmental performance. Avanes (2011) maintained that an organization's current and future sustainability depends on the most talented professional assuming critical roles due to talent gaps. Epstein and Buhovac (2014) noted that sustainability is a core element of an organization's monetary value. Perrenoud and Sullivan (2017) supported Avanes's study arguing that new executives must be more than capable successors and, to ensure a successful transition, the succession candidate must align with the company's values,

work ethics, and processes. Long-term organizational sustainability depends on leaders creating a plan for losing essential leadership through planned attrition or an unplanned departure.

History of Knowledge and the Types of Knowledge

Aliu and Aigbavboa (2019) declared that employees are valuable assets of an organization because their critical skills, knowledge, and abilities help to secure organizational sustainability. Succession planning supports business growth by ensuring talented professionals meet performance needs and support a smooth transition of essential employees to new positions. Succession planning allows employees to gain new knowledge and develop skills while simultaneously providing the construction company with the talent and expertise to adapt and grow in a continually changing environment. Establishing an active succession plan helps construction companies overcome talent shortages.

Recruiting and retaining quality, high-performing employees is an integral component of an organization's sustainability. When essential employees leave an organization, identifying qualified replacement candidates costs the business time, money, and resources. Organizations must develop processes to assess whether they have competent internal candidates in the talent pipeline ready to fill critical vacant positions or if an external candidate is a better choice. Groves (2007) addressed the need for organizations to invest in leadership development to allow leaders to reach their optimal performance. Conversely, there are situations where an external hire is the best person for the position. When the vacant position requires skills and expertise not possessed by

employees in the talent pool, leadership must hire a qualified external candidate (Kim, 2010). While an external candidate may provide a fresh perspective, external hires may require more training to familiarize themselves with the organization's processes.

When employees are successful, businesses thrive. A successful succession planning strategy with adequate cross-training and preparations for advancements in position prepares high-potential talent for inevitable vacancies of essential employees. Busari et al. (2019) and Matzler et al. (2008) noted how transformational leaders bring out the best in team members because they build trust, encourage confidence, and command respect. By developing a retention strategy, leaders provide learning development opportunities for high-potential employees to assume business-critical positions. Jindal and Shaikh (2021) supported Matzler et al. and Busari et al. study explaining that forward-thinking leaders recognize the benefit of retaining high-potential employees a competitive edge as well as allows organizations to save on recruiting and hiring costs. López-Torres et al. (2019) posited that it also favors an effective knowledge transfer within the organization. Employees who stay longer know more about the company culture and how to perform their duties effectively. They can transfer this valuable information to new staff members.

When essential employees resign or retire from a company, the organization risks knowledge loss. Explicit knowledge refers to an organization's reports, financial statements, databases, and institutional knowledge (Kim, 2010). Explicit knowledge impacts organization costs in training, operational errors, and loss of clients and customers. Organization leaders should promote from within, assessing employees for

core values, strengths, and limitations. Kim contended that senior leaders should also develop an internal talent pipeline of highly qualified employees for future leadership roles. Knowledge management is the process leaders use to identify, organize, store, and disseminate information (López-Torres et al. 2019). Durst and Wilhelm (2012) supported Kim's study, maintaining that business leaders reduce the risk of knowledge attrition by implementing a knowledge management strategy. Farnese et al. (2019) further explained how leaders implementing a knowledge management strategy achieve business outcomes more quickly because of employee knowledge sharing. Knowledge management is essential to retain intellectual capital within an organization and facilitate successful knowledge transfer to new employees.

Promoting Knowledge Transfer Through Recruitment, Mentoring, and Coaching

Kim (2010) asserted that transferring knowledge is crucial in implementing a succession plan. Hamza et al. (2022) contended that new construction managers have the technical skills to succeed, but they often need more skills to manage, motivate, and develop their construction teams. Adopting an active succession planning system is essential for leaders to recruit candidates with highly desirable skill sets. Leaders should provide employees with ongoing learning and development opportunities, reward valued team members, and encourage them to advance within the organization (Farnese et al., 2019). Several practices correlate with a comprehensive succession planning process. Some examples are knowledge management, employee development, retention, timely communication with potential successors, balancing transparency, and ensuring a fair selection process (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012; Kim, 2010). Succession planning requires an

investment in the organization and its employees to ensure leadership continuity and organizational success. Talented candidates seek work environments where they can grow. Future-fit executives recognize that one of the biggest challenges of their talent management team is ensuring employees learn the latest technology trends in the field, or they risk falling behind competing organizations (Whysall et al., 2019). Executives should prepare to accommodate future staffing and training needs by including talent management and talent development in their business strategy.

Senior leaders remain competitive by attracting high-performing talent to expand their talent pipeline. Whysall et al. (2019) identified several practices leaders implement to attract talented candidates. According to the researchers, executives of high-growth organizations implement practices to enable team members to adapt to rapidly evolving technology. The researchers further argued that technological evolution impacts talent management. Talented candidates seek work environments where they can advance professionally.

Whysall et al. (2019) noted leaders use unique branding to attract and retain quality employees. The researchers contended qualified candidates are attracted to organizations that help them develop new core competencies. Leaders should align the organization's recruiting strategy with the growth areas and consider cross-training programs to help prepare existing employees for high-demand positions within the company. Executives begin developing future leaders when they understand what attracts high-performing employees.

Pivotal talent positions, another theme Whysall et al. (2019) identified in the study, is the concept that organizations devote resources to employees essential to the organization's success. The researchers noted that leaders identify gaps in the talent pipeline and often only focus attention and resources on developing high-potential talent (Whysall et al., 2019). Middle managers' (i.e., established leaders) needs differ from emerging leaders, and executives need to develop leaders at all levels to ensure there are no development gaps. Organizational leaders offer high-quality workers the opportunity to develop essential skills and prepare for leadership roles by exposing them to the skills leaders should develop to guide their teams effectively.

The final theme the researchers identified is transforming talent development. As the demands for innovation and business growth increase, leaders should maximize employee talent. Whysall et al. (2019) argued that many leaders believe investing resources in developing high-potential talent will help ensure talented employees become future leaders. However, if executive teams want their organization to succeed, they must recruit and develop high-potential employees from all departments. Whysall et al. declared that technology (i.e., human resources technology and software) would help track and train new leaders by creating a growth and leadership plan for every employee. Organization leaders may discover they are not prepared to accommodate future staffing or training needs if they do not include talent management and talent development in their business strategy.

Promoting Gender-Diversity

As the U.S. construction industry continues to grow, builder sector executives face challenges of labor shortage, lack of capable workforce, and an increased retirement rate of essential employees. Women are a minuscule minority in this male-dominated industry, and builder sector executives struggle to identify qualified female leaders (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). Hurley and Choudhary (2016) contended that the lack of gender diversity in the construction industry results in an underrepresentation of women in the field. Navarro-Astor et al.'s (2017) research complemented Hurley and Choudhary's study. The researchers examined the experience of women versus men in their mobility to the senior management and leadership team, focusing specifically on the impact of individual and firm-level factors. Navarro-Astor et al. proposed that executives exclude women from leadership positions because of systemic gender bias in the construction industry.

Business leaders need to be more innovative in identifying solutions for working parents and their families. Organizations benefit from promoting workplace flexibility policies that enable all employees, but especially essential for women, to develop an appropriate work-life balance. Alqahtani (2020) posited that business leaders must implement strategies and policies to address the company's challenges with women's work-life balance. For example, when business leaders develop women-friendly policies such as opportunities for professional development, mentoring and networking, and flexible work hours, the organization attracts qualified female talent and inspires them to pursue leadership positions. Lekchiri and Kamm (2020) agreed with Alqahtani study and

noted how more women are overwhelmed by the expectations to maintain the same work efficiency as their male counterparts while assuming multiple roles outside their jobs. Alqahtani further explained that female workers are disproportionately likely to exercise primary caregiving responsibilities for children, parents, and other family members, which can deter them from wishing to advance their careers or even reduce their belief that career advancement is possible. Supporting female talent in balancing a career with home life is challenging for women in the construction industry, but it benefits each environment.

Gender stereotyping presents an obstacle to achieving genuine gender equality in the workforce. Hurley and Choudhary (2016) argued women are subject to gender stereotypes, and discriminatory factors reduce the demand for female CEOs. The stereotypes that women are not as effective leaders as men continue to exist in the traditional business world (Eagly et al., 2019; Roebuck et al., 2013). Hurley and Choudhary maintained as the surge of female employees continues, equal representation according to gender is still lacking in male dominated industries such as the construction industry. van Veelen et al. (2019) further opined how historically, influential leaders' qualities, such as assertive, dominant, and ambitious are stereotypical male qualities rather than women. Hurley and Choudhary and Din et al. (2018) noted women in leadership leverage their natural inclination toward transformational leadership to increase organizational performance. Transformational leaders bring out the best in others because they know how to build trust, encourage confidence, and command respect (Busari et al., 2019; Matzler et al., 2008). Forward-thinking leaders acknowledge

obstacles that prohibit women from advancing into leadership positions and implement recruiting and training policies to ensure the development and advancement of female leaders.

Rezaee (2017) noted diverse and inclusive teams provide many business benefits. Successful organizations consider sustainability issues an integral part of their overall business strategy. Companies need help to create a workforce where employees enjoy equitable opportunities in a supportive environment. Business leaders need to review and change the hiring executives' attitudes towards women and increase the number of leaders employing women professionals.

In male-dominate industries, men possess the competitive, independent, and self-confident traits needed in a leader. Hurley and Choudhary (2016) declared that women and men possess similar competencies. Yet, the gender roles stereotype that men are more competent leaders than women result in a gender gap in leadership. The researchers described two obstacles to reaching gender parity in leadership:

1. Glass ceiling: This concept refers to the existence of intangible and unacknowledged obstacles that prevent women from moving up the hierarchies in organizations, governance, and other areas.
2. Glass cliff: Glass cliff is a metaphor for women advancing to C-suite leadership positions despite the chance of failure and the lack of adequate support to succeed.

Navarro-Astor et al. (2017) supported Hurley and Choudhary's study. The researchers posited that leaders' misperceptions help contributes to the barriers to

progression women face in the workplace. Navarro-Astor et al. identified 12 significant career barriers limiting women's career development. Table 1 depicts these 12 career barriers impeding women's career advancement.

Table 1*Overview of Workplace Barriers to Women's Career Advancement*

Barriers	Implications
Work- family balance	Historically, women must make career sacrifices due to the division of family roles and society's expectations or perceptions. Women, more than men, must sacrifice their career for their family. Women often experience the dilemma of whether to focus attention on motherhood or career development.
Gender stereotypes	Male dominated industries reinforce masculine stereotypes that make it difficult for female colleagues to advance in male dominated industries such as construction. The perception that women who lack confidence are docile and indecisive is not well-suited for construction activities and senior leadership positions—unfortunately, stereotypes like these limit women's opportunities for advancement in all industries.
Allocation of posts and activities	Misinformed employers believe men are better suited to succeed in male dominated industries because of the physical capacity required to perform the job. Construction companies are less likely to hire women for roles that require more physical work because of the perception that women are weaker.
Promotion	Women leaders are rare. Men are more likely to receive promotions and unequal career development. Leaders impeded women from advancing to leadership positions in construction because of their gender. By providing an infrastructure for mobility, qualified women have opportunities.
Work conditions	Women often have additional responsibilities outside the workplace. Most employees work full-time and sometimes evenings, weekends, and holidays to finish a job. Women leaders seek employers who prioritize flexibility and support their well-being.
Sexist culture	The construction industry is gender-segregated, with men dominating senior operations positions. In a sexist culture, men who are less informed on a topic behave as though he is more an expert than their female colleagues. Sexism affects how workers treat women in the industry. Leaders must support women working in the trades and champion them as much as possible. Developing awareness and combating bias limits women's participation in any discriminatory behavior that hinders them from advancing in the construction sector.
Harassment and lack of respect	Harassment is an issue that crosses class boundaries and industries and includes improper behavior, sexual harassment, obscene conversations, and vulgar language. Workplace harassment in construction occurs at a high rate of incidents and in all categories of female workers in the sector. Executives must have clear anti-harassment policies, communicate with employees, and create a safe and appropriate workplace by offering training to ensure the workforce understands what constitutes harassment and the process for submitting complaints.
Recruitment and selection	Conscious and unconscious bias and gender differences in hiring practices are barriers to women's advancement in male dominated industries. Leaders favor male employees over women for no attributable reason other than gender. Due to workforce shortages, construction organizations must attract qualified talent wherever it exists. Construction leaders must develop a recruitment and selection strategy to help identify and attract skilled professionals that meet their staffing needs.
Lack of recognition	Critical work performed by women is less likely to receive recognition and is unrewarded. Leaders must develop a system to celebrate and encourage women in the workplace by creating an awards program to acknowledge their achievements, and support women in their professional growth and development.

Barriers	Implications
Pay	Pay disparity between men and women with the same skillset and performing similar jobs is a barrier to women. Men earn more than their female counterparts for doing precisely the same work.
Social networks	A robust professional network helps all professionals increase career success by offering them the necessary resources to foster career development. Men make better use of their social capital because networking outside work hours is challenging for women with young children.
Others	Queen Bees are women with authority who distance themselves from other women, are mean to, or actively take steps to hinder another woman's advancement. Queen Bees perceive other professional women as direct competitors and refuse to mentor a female employee.

Note. Adapted from “Factors Influencing Attainment of CEO Position for Women,” by D. Hurley and A. Choudhary, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-01-2016-0004> and “Women’s Career Development in the Construction Industry Across 15 Years: Main Barriers,” by E. Navarro-Astor, M. Román-Onsalo, and M. Infante-Perea, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEDT-07-2016-0046>.

With a talent shortage in the construction industry, leaders should be concerned with attracting diverse talent. Gomez and Bernet (2019) argued that recruiting a diverse workforce helps leaders build a solid organizational culture. A diverse workforce is often more creative and better at problem-solving. According to Norberg and Johansson (2021), future-thinking business leaders recognize how the current lack of gender diversity in their organizations will result in the inability to meet the demands of the future construction industry.

Hurley and Choudhary (2016) and Din et al. (2018) noted women’s economic prospects are negatively affected by career interruptions contributing to them earning lower hourly wages and bias in career progress compared to their male cohorts. The researchers also contended that when given the opportunities, women are as qualified as men to progress into leadership positions. Leaders should create a work environment that sustains all team members by creating a corporate culture where team members have

opportunities for advancement while supporting work-life balance. Forward-thinking leaders recognize the barriers that help end talented individuals' careers before they start.

Culture of Construction Sector in the United States

Culture is a vital component of adopting sustainability practices and policies. Corporate culture is an ingrained set of values and beliefs that employees and leaders use to guide how they work, treat, and communicate with internal and external stakeholders (Covaş, 2019; Zheng et al., 2021). Horak et al., (2018) and Zheng et al. contended that, concerning sustainability in business, culture impacts the relationships people have in their society and globally, the planet, including the natural environment. Integrating sustainability into the core of a business ensures it is part of the organizational culture. Organizational culture refers to the thoughts and beliefs shared throughout an organization (Cheryan & Markus, 2020). Armani et al., (2020) and Cheryan and Markus, contended that in sustainable organizations, culture is at the core of developing business growth strategies because organizational culture impacts people's relationships with others and how they adopt and adapt to new processes. As economies worldwide experience aging populations, executive teams struggle to attract skilled labor to meet demand (Calk & Patrick, 2017).

Future-fit executives should create a workforce where employees enjoy equitable opportunities in a supportive environment. Atwater et al. (2004) noted that male leaders evolved in their belief towards equality and acceptance of women in management roles, but sexist attitudes still prevail among many male leaders. Chan (2013) underscored Atwater et al.'s study and contended that construction industry leaders often deny female

candidates opportunities for professional advancement. The researchers posited that when women behave as leaders, they are less likely to be recognized as leaders, nor are their leadership abilities acknowledged. Bridges et al. (2020) contended that women are a large part of the workforce. However, the researchers argued that equal representation according to gender is still lacking in traditionally male centric industries such as the construction industry. Business leaders seek to build competitive advantages around the company's core competencies.

Ng and Metz (2015) noted that leaders experience increased innovation and exposure to new perspectives and insights when businesses provide diversity in the workforce. Rezaee (2017) asserted that diverse and inclusive teams provide business benefits such as increased productivity and economic growth. Ratasuk and Charoensukmongkol (2020) and Saxena (2014) supported this position and maintained that employees from different backgrounds provide innovative ideas for projects and problems. Saxena maintained leaders must hire and retain skilled, diverse talent and develop tolerant attitudes towards cultural differences to succeed in the competitive global economy. Only when this occurs are employees inspired to perform to their highest ability. Business leaders should recognize that each employee's unique qualities are a valuable asset to the organization and ensure they are responsive to the challenge of diversity.

Executives continue to make strides in creating more gender-inclusive work environments. However, Heilman (2001) declared that more is needed to ensure organizations promote women in more management and leadership positions. Women

continue to be a large part of the workforce, yet equal representation according to gender is still lacking in male dominated industries such as the construction industry. Business leaders struggle to meet the demand for skilled employees resulting in a skills gap. An organization may be unprepared to accommodate future staffing or training needs if it does not include talent management and development in its business strategy (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020; Whysall et al., 2019). Rezaee (2017) noted diverse and inclusive teams provide many business benefits. Future-fit executives should create a culture strategy where employees enjoy equitable opportunities in a supportive environment.

Supporting women in the builder sector is essential to the construction industry's future. Navarro-Astor et al. (2017) maintained occupations in construction are among the most male dominated jobs, and women make up a small workforce percentage. The researchers discussed how career paths traditionally imply vertical career trajectories to higher-level positions, but men are more likely than women to experience career advancement. A diversity-friendly organization develops when leaders commit to changing workplace processes and support systems to reduce bias. An organization's culture comprises employees of diverse genders, ages, sexual orientations, religions, languages, abilities, professional backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational backgrounds. Business culture shapes employees' beliefs and values. Different behaviors exist among cultures, and other cultures have legitimate and worthwhile perspectives that should be respected and valued. Corporate culture determines the different values and beliefs of the workforce. The culture assessment instrument is a validated tool for assessing organizational culture and helps leaders

determine what they must change (Jaeger & Adair, 2013). They identified the following four organizational culture types:

1. Clan or family refers to a friendly and pleasant work culture, and staff members are one big family.
2. Adhocracy or ad hoc refers to a culture where leaders are innovators and leaders and staff are risk-takers.
3. Market refers to a culture where leaders' and employees' primary focus is on customer needs and achieving measurable and financial-based goals to help the business gain a competitive position.
4. Hierarchy refers to a culture where the development and maintenance of rules, structures, and processes are core values, and people behave according to formal rules and regulations (Jaeger & Adair, 2013).

The construction industry culture is a unique organizational culture. Jaeger and Adair (2013) noted how organizations always reflect more than one culture type and that the adaptation of several elements of each culture type is necessary for effective operation. Jaeger and Adair posited that there is no one best culture, and provided evidence that a correlation exists between business performance and company culture. An organization's culture is essential, not just to employees but also to business success.

In industries where female employees represent a tiny percentage of the workforce, there are often stereotyped notions about women's abilities. In male-dominated industries, female employees are held to unattainably high standards compared to males with similar skill sets and must outperform their male colleagues to

receive equal recognition (Cheryan & Markus, 2020). The researchers also discussed how improving gender diversity in the workplace ensures that women achieve professional equality. Cheryan and Markus (2020) explained that the male default culture exist when masculinity is the workplace normal, natural, and correct behavior. Male default culture is unsustainable because it not only excludes female employees but can also curtail their advancement because it helps to create a rigid expectation for how they are supposed to act, communicate, and present ideas in the workplace. Senior leaders promote gender equality by establishing policies and procedures that address workplace flexibility (Alqahtani, 2020; Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). Influential leaders develop a more supportive, inclusive workplace to help attract and retain highly qualified female professionals while creating a strong cultural foundation of diversity and understanding.

Alao and Aina (2020) supported Jaeger and Adair's (2013) study and examined the relationship between construction companies' success and the companies' organizational culture profile referencing the organizational culture framework. The researchers determined leaders should recognize the benefits of conducting organizational culture assessments to gain valuable insight into an organization's most dominant features and identify the preferred team culture. Ratasuk and Charoensukmongkol (2020) echoed Alao and Aina's work and maintained that a supportive culture is critical to retaining top talent and maximizing engagement, especially when managing a multicultural team. To develop an inclusive succession plan, leaders should focus on workforce culture.

Atwater et al. (2004) noted that women are the most common group to experience gender stereotypes. Brescoll (2016) defined gender stereotypes as preconceived ideas placed on a particular group (i.e., male leadership style vs. female leadership style) and individuals resulting in wrongly judging them because of their gender. The researcher proposed that male stereotypes align with leadership stereotypes that a man, more than a woman, is likelier and perceived as a potential and competent leader. An example of gender stereotypes women experience in the business is that they are more open with their feelings and, therefore, more emotional than logical.

Heilman (2001) posited successful leaders share many common traits, and male and female unique leadership styles add value to the workforce. Atwater et al. (2004) maintained that women are not perceived as leaders if they have a feminine style and dislike women who employ a masculine leadership style. The researcher further asserted that women, more than men, are accused of allowing their emotions to affect decision-making. Campuzano (2019) insisted that men in the United States culture are socialized to hide their emotions, while women are encouraged to express their feelings, be sensitive, and exhibit nurturing behavior. Brescoll (2016) and Settles (2020) contended that women experience unfair biases undermining their career chances. Brescoll and Settles supported Heilman's research noting that men and women have the same capacity for expressing emotions, but the perception is that men demonstrate greater control over their feelings. Business leaders should develop strategies to inspire and attract qualified female candidates to pursue positions in the construction industry, increasing diversity at all levels of an organization. Builder sector executives cannot afford to ignore female

candidates, especially with a severe shortage of qualified employees at various levels in the construction industry. Unfortunately, leaders often overlook the female talent pool.

Diversity includes race, gender, differences in cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic background, and age. To help identify and recruit diverse top female talent to replace essential staff, influential leaders should create opportunities for women's career growth and empowerment in the builder sector. Heilman (2001) contended that women could offer new organizational strengths and unique perspectives. The researcher further maintained that leaders must reject the idea of gender roles. Campuzano (2019) supported Heilman's earlier study and posited that executives must develop a work culture where they acknowledge their female employees' potential, talents, and abilities and provide male and female employees with growth opportunities. Executive leaders should recognize how gender stereotypes affect clients' goals.

Leaders should address the diversity imbalance and unconscious and conscious bias in all areas of the construction industry. Male dominated industries and professions reinforce harmful stereotypes and create unfavorable environments that hinder women's professional advancement. Heilman (2001) proposed increased awareness of gender stereotypes and eliminating gendered criteria on job descriptions. Often, leaders overlook women for senior leadership positions because they assume they cannot handle the challenges and stresses inherent in builder sector positions. Ness (2012) noted that construction is no longer only manual labor and the idea that women are not physically strong enough to work in this environment is outdated. Campuzano (2019) asserted females in male dominated industries face societal expectations and beliefs about

women's leadership abilities impeding opportunities to realize their career goals. For example, masculine cultural norms may pressure women to behave overly feminine, making men view them as likable but not competent. Some people ascribe assertiveness in female leaders as aggressive, whereas assertive in male colleagues is perceived as a leadership trait (Koenig et al., 2011). Female talent who behaves overly masculine may appear intelligent but unlikable by male colleagues. Women leaders need to be both competent and likable to realize their professional career goals.

One of the strategies Heilman (2001) claimed helps to attract and retain qualified women for opportunities in the construction industry is implementing an industry-wide change in the industry's cultural attitudes. The researcher contended influential leaders openly acknowledge biased attitudes towards female employees, creating spaces for conversation between all team members, and together determine strategies to support diverse talent and positively engage each other. Another approach Heilman posited helps leaders recruit and retain talented females to male professions is promoting the trade industry and offering workshops at schools. Leaders should encourage industry outreach designed to introduce women to careers in the construction industry. For example, leaders should create cross-functional teams where women can explore the different career options within the industry without feeling pressured. Females exposed to the construction industry early are more likely to pursue construction industry careers and be prepared for career advancement. Finally, the researcher argued that implementing mentoring programs and identifying role models for young construction tradeswomen

helps to improve the recruitment and retention of women in a male dominated industry (Wright, 2021). Hiring leaders should provide women with an ally, mentor, and sponsor.

Women benefit from access to leadership training and skill-developing opportunities that will position them for career advancement (Cross et al., 2019; Wright, 2021). A mentoring culture enables leaders to focus on employees' personal and professional growth. Helms et al. (2016) explained how talent pools are more diverse by gender, race, and ethnicity. In male dominated career fields, it is difficult for women to insert themselves into the work culture or find the peer guidance they need to advance their careers. Singh and Vanka (2020) contended that mentoring and sponsorship are critical to helping ambitious women leaders gain the perspective and connections they need to advance their careers. The researchers posited that mentoring and sponsorship are strategic tools to enable organizations to attract, grow, and retain quality talent and accelerate leadership development. Wright (2016) echoed Singh and Vanka's study and noted how the availability of same-sex role models influences vocational interests and career choice. Still, fewer females are likely to have female role models in male dominated occupations such as construction trades (Wright, 2016). Garnering support from other women is a challenge of women in a male centric workplace.

Inman (2020) supported Helms et al.'s (2016) study that mentoring complements succession strategies. The researcher opined that mentoring is beneficial, especially for women and minorities. Cross-cultural mentoring relationships offer unique opportunities to broaden perspectives and reduce unconscious biases (Inman, 2020). Women and

minorities, who face significant advancement barriers, benefit from formal mentoring programs that help diminish the gender and racial gaps in the workplace.

Often executive team members partner with high-potential subordinates to support and encourage them, acting as their coach or mentor. Inman (2020) described three mentoring functions:

1. Instrumental mentoring involves a focus on skills and knowledge essential for successful work performance. The mentor helps subordinates grow in their current position and become ready for new roles and career opportunities. By establishing knowledge retention and sharing mentoring programs, executive teams facilitate the transfer of information across every facet of the business and build a community in the process.
2. Psychosocial mentoring involves personal and social support, interpersonal support, friendship, emotional support, satisfaction, and personal development. Psychosocial mentoring requires a high degree of trust between mentor and mentee. The mentor invests in helping mentees develop skills and knowledge, and mentees trust the mentor with honest dialogue.
3. Sponsorship mentoring involves mentors endorsing and advocating for an employee's advancement. Having a professional network is vital at all levels. By serving as the connector, mentors can provide mentees with new contacts in the industry who can support them on their professional journey.

A good mentoring relationship can provide professionals reassurance, advice, or a different perspective on specific challenges. Another strategy companies incorporate into

their policies to support gender diversification is to hire employees who believe in diversification's value. Business leaders should deliberately recruit and hire talent with varying characteristics (i.e., genders, ethnicity, culture, religion, age, sexual orientation, etc.). Luring and Klitmoller (2017) asserted that using gender-inclusive language is a strategy to encourage gender diversity. The researchers maintained that leaders must refrain from using gendered references that are primarily masculine and instead replace them with more neutral and inclusive language. Successful leaders recognize that executive teams with varied backgrounds, experiences, and leadership styles offer critical advantages to businesses.

To succeed in the competitive global economy, business leaders must hire and retain skilled, diverse talent and develop tolerant attitudes towards cultural differences to help inspire employees to perform to their highest ability (Saxena, 2014). Future-fit executive teams recognize the value of diverse individuals with unique skills working towards a common organizational goal. Hurley and Choudhary (2016) and Din et al. (2018) proposed the lack of inclusivity in workplace environments helps form the glass ceiling and glass cliff that prevents women from ascending to top leadership positions. The glass ceiling and glass cliff are invisible obstacles preventing women from reaching senior-level leadership.

Racial Bias

Lippa et al. (2014) argued that women have often incurred challenges in pursuing roles in the traditionally male dominant industry precisely because of their gender. Brescoll (2016) echoed Lippa et al.'s study and noted that the beliefs and stereotypes that

help support traditional ideas about the roles of females and males are often deeply ingrained in people. The researcher provided insight into how mindfulness is a helpful tool in the battle against gender stereotypes and bias and creating inclusive and diverse workplaces for both organizations and women leaders. Wright (2016) further argued that women face barriers in the workplace, which help to shape their work experiences. The researcher contended that women are often the target of sexual harassment. Negative stereotypes are the bases for harassment. Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, the pressure to perform for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature (Wright, 2016). Leaders should develop processes to help eliminate deeply ingrained biases and stereotypes about women and improve gender equality and opportunities for women in male dominated industries.

Atwater et al. (2004) contended how women and minorities experience glass ceilings that prevent them from promotions and further opportunities. Glass ceiling effect occurs when women and minorities experience significant barriers to senior-level management in organizations (Atwater et al., 2004). Brescoll (2016) opined few research studies exist on people's beliefs about men's and women's emotional displays and experiences of color. The researcher compared the descriptive stereotypes of emotional expression for African American, Asian American, Latinx, and European American men and women. Brescoll noted that people express similar patterns of gender-emotion stereotypes for all ethnic groups. However, Settles (2020) declared women of color must maintain a higher standard of work than their white and male peers. Settles contended that leaders fail to value the potential and abilities minority women offer business. It is

vital that an organization's diversity and inclusion efforts reflect women of color's experiences and identify barriers they experience due to their race and gender (Settles, 2020).

Nurturing Diversity

Developing a diverse workforce is essential to expand into global markets, but managing diversity is challenging. Nwabueze and Mileski (2018) argued that the most valuable practice leaders implement to incorporate a diverse work culture where all differences are respected, accepted, and appreciated is acknowledging the value diversity offers organizations. Executive teams who implement policies to help nurture a multicultural workforce recognize how heterogeneous teams provide additional skills, ideas, and unique perspectives to their business (Hurley & Choudhary, 2016). Successful leaders recognize that implementing hiring policies to help reduce biases will help diversify their candidate pool and identify high-performing talent from all backgrounds based on characteristics unrelated to job performance (Akpapuna et al., 2020; Settles, 2020). Leaders should advocate for a diverse workforce of high performers to increase creativity and engagement.

Cultural diversity is often a source of miscommunications and interpersonal friction that impedes effective team function. It is critical to guide these teams to realize their potential rather than suffer communication breakdowns, especially in international business. Incorporating continuous and reliable communication methods with internal and external stakeholders is essential. Future-fit executives should integrate sustainability communication into the existing corporate communications. Successful leaders seeking to

expand internationally must ensure their workforce reflects a diverse community representing different races, genders, ages, sexual orientations, and disabilities (Akpapuna et al., 2020; Settles, 2020). Understanding cultures and harnessing cultural diversity are vital for global organizations. Settles (2020) contended that when looking for employees to sponsor, most executive teams search for people like them with similar life experiences. This behavior reinforces existing gender and racial biases.

Literature Review Summary

Organizational success depends on employees and leaders that inspire and empower their employees to have a competitive advantage. Succession planning is the process of developing potential internal candidates for business-critical positions, mitigating risk when essential employees leave the organization. Critical to a seamless leadership transition for employees and clients is to develop an effective succession plan. Executive leaders should ensure succession planning is a vital component of the strategic business plan and develop long-term proactive strategies before vacancies to identify high-potential individuals' coaching and development needs. Long-term organizational sustainability depends on leaders creating a plan for losing essential leadership through planned attrition or an unplanned departure.

Leaders create a more talented workforce when they recognize a benefit of gender diversity is the creativity of a broader range of qualified leaders. Leaders should commit to increasing the number of qualified women in the organization's recruiting and talent pipeline, ensuring potential leaders are available to assume senior-level leadership positions. Future-fit executive teams ensure succession planning is an essential

component of the business strategy. A robust succession plan helps leaders identify high performers to help prepare the organization for future growth. By recruiting and providing long-term training of high performers, leaders ensure qualified talent assumes vacant senior-level positions. C-suite leaders should implement strategies to ensure more women are in leadership positions within their organization. While women have achieved significant progress in the workplace, organizations have made little progress toward achieving gender diversity in the C-suite and corporate boards. Women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions, yet not because they are not qualified or uneducated. An executive should develop and implement strategies to ensure suitable women opportunities to compete on the same level as men.

Leaders must identify a range of talented individuals to develop into potential successors. Commitment from executive teams is vital to cultivating talented employees and leading the development given their knowledge of the leadership roles and expectations. Talent assessments help leaders to identify current employees who have the high potential for succession within the organization, and leaders have a clear plan of who to include in the organization's robust pipeline of leadership talent. Succession planning is crucial for organizational sustainability.

Transition

Section 1 included the foundation of the study. There are several studies on succession planning, but the influence of gender-diverse succession planning on organizational sustainability has not been adequately researched in the builder sector industry. The U.S. population of people aged 65 and old is projected to increase by 38%

in 2050 (United States Census Bureau, 2022). According to the BLS (2020), occupations related to construction will increase by 4% between 2019 and 2029. Women have not fully participated in male dominated industries; however, the labor statistics indicate a shift in the labor market. Ness (2012) noted how gender stereotypes and roles influence career choice, consequently, there is a high gender gap in the workforce. The executive teams, especially in traditionally male dominated industries should implement gender equality interventions and strengthen organizational sustainability. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. Additionally, I broadened the knowledge base and understanding of succession planning and how leaders can advocate for a diverse workforce of high performers to ensure the availability of qualified succession candidates. Section 1 concludes with suggestions from the literature on how to attract and retain high-potential talent and develop a gender-diverse succession plan in male dominated professions. The review of the literature revealed that by developing a comprehensive combination of training, peer mentoring, and sponsorship, the future-fit executive team attracts and retains high-quality talent to better prepare the organization for current and future growth.

Ness (2012) noted that for years, leaders were exclusively men, and they set the tone for masculine stereotypes. Female careers in the construction industry remain low for decades, due to sexual harassment and hostility, lack of mentors, and stereotyped assumptions about women's capabilities (Inman, 2020; Ness, 2012). Women glean significant value from the mentorship and sponsorship relationships and tend to

participate in them more amid the drive towards gender equality in the workplace (Cross et al., 2019). Having great mentors is also the most effective way to improve knowledge transfer in an organization. The results from the study may contribute to a positive social change by promoting and facilitating the systematization of critical processes that focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.

In Section 2, I present an overview of the process for the project section of this research. In this section, I describe the role of the researcher and the participants and included a detailed explanation of the research methods, research design, and population sampling. Additionally, I identify the ethical issues that arose from the research and explained my approach to maintaining strict adherence to all ethical protocols. Section 2 also includes an examination of the reliability and validity of findings. The data collection instrument, techniques, and analysis also form part of the discussion in Section 2. Section 3 includes the organizational profile, which is a concise description of the organization, the key influences on how it operates, and the key challenges it faces.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I provide an overview of the process for conducting the project at the center of this study. In this section, I also describe the role of the researcher and the participants. The section includes a detailed explanation of the research method and design, population sampling, the ethical issues that arose from the study, and my approach to maintaining strict adherence to all ethical protocols. Additionally, I examine the reliability and validity of findings. The data collection instrument, techniques, and analysis also form part of the discussion in Section 2.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to explore strategies builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. The targeted population was three builder sector executives located in the southeastern United States who had successfully developed strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan in their respective construction organizations. The study results may create positive social change in multiple ways. The findings may increase inclusiveness among team members and other stakeholders in the construction industry. The results may yield a more prudent approach to recruiting, retaining, and engaging employees. The findings may also attract investment from organizations that value gender diversity. Finally, the findings may yield innovative ideas and problem-solving methods from people with different experiences.

Role of the Researcher

Research is intended to provide valuable knowledge and ideas to help society progress. The qualitative methodology is an approach that relies on nonquantifiable data to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Park & Park, 2016). Qualitative research is used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research, and the qualitative researcher typically seeks to develop both expected and unanticipated patterns among many variables (Park & Park, 2016; Yin, 2016). Like quantitative approaches, researchers use qualitative research to answer specific questions by using rigorous methods to collect and compile information and produce findings applicable beyond the study population (Beauchamp, 2020; Yin, 2018). Researchers use the qualitative method to understand humans' experiences better, explore how they form decisions, and provide detailed insight into a phenomenon. Fremeth et al. (2016) asserted that the qualitative method is not adapted as easily as a quantitative approach to study a phenomenon. The qualitative method allows for an in-depth exploration of a relationship that quantitative techniques cannot achieve. I began conducting this qualitative single-case study by (a) designing the study, (b) collecting evidence that is related to the research problem, and (c) analyzing and reporting the findings. Human subjects serve as sources of needed data in a qualitative study; therefore, the relationship between the researcher and participants is integral to the quality of the research results (Park & Park, 2016).

I used the Baldrige Excellence Framework, the Criteria for Performance Excellence, and a comprehensive approach as guides for gathering and analyzing critical

data in this study. The Baldrige Excellence Framework is a set of questions that represent the leading edge of validated leadership and management practice (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). According to the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2019), executives use the framework to help them align their business plans, processes, decisions, people, actions, and results with the mission and vision of the organization.

The Baldrige Excellence Framework helps leaders to focus on:

- organizational agility, innovation, and transformation
- risk management and supply-chain resilience
- societal contributions and environmental sustainability
- the changing nature of work and workforce needs
- diversity, equity, and inclusion

The Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework is a performance excellence program that organization leaders use to operate more efficiently, strengthen fiscal responsibility, and better serve customers and citizens (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). I used the Baldrige Excellence Framework to assess my client organization regarding the most important features of organizational performance excellence. The framework includes seven criteria that each define aspects of organizational performance and management:

1. Leadership: How is the vision shared across the organization? How does it maintain good governance?
2. Strategy: How does the organization prepare for the future?
3. Customers: How well are customers listened to, satisfied, and engaged?

4. Measurement, analysis, and knowledge management: Is accurate, reliable data or information used in decision making?
5. Workforce: How is the employee cohort empowered and motivated?
6. Operations: Are operations effective at delivering quality outcomes? How can processes be designed, managed, or improved?
7. Results: How does the organization perform on the above seven criteria? This also includes performance with respect to competitors.

I considered both the Baldrige Excellence Framework leadership and strategy criteria. While both criteria are elements of organizational sustainability, effective leaders are paramount to the success of organizations, so I selected the leadership criteria as a guide for this study. I believe the leadership criteria was the most appropriate approach for gathering and analyzing critical data for this study.

While some of my prior employers had a formalized succession plan for executive leaders, my knowledge and experience in developing a strategy for achieving organizational sustainability through gender-diverse succession planning were minimal before conducting the research study. I read several peer-reviewed journal articles. I also had no prior experience working for Association A (the study site) or a previous relationship with the workforce.

In response to scandals in the last century involving human subjects research, in 1979 the U.S. federal government created a process to protect human subjects and participants in research studies and clinical trials and published it as the *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and

Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979). The *Belmont Report* contains three guiding principles to help provide researchers with leadership and oversight on ethical matters related to human subjects participating in research: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (NCPHSBBR, 1979).

Researchers must protect the autonomy of all study participants, treating them with courtesy and respect and allowing for informed consent (Husband, 2020; White, 2020). As a researcher, I demonstrated respect for participants by ensuring that I conducted the study with respect for all groups in society regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and culture. I also endeavored to show each participant respect by protecting them and treating them each as an autonomous agent. Researchers must endeavor to ensure that participation in research be voluntary (NCPHSBBR, 1979). To take part in the current study, participants completed an informed consent process during which they all received information in a consent form to help them decide whether to participate in the research study voluntarily.

Beauchamp (2020) and White (2020) contended that beneficence refers to the researcher's obligation to assess the risks (i.e., harm) to participants to maximize research benefits (i.e., promotion of well-being, health, or welfare). Researchers have a moral duty to promote the course of action that they believe is in participants' best interests and will minimize harm (Beauchamp, 2020; White, 2020). As a researcher, I demonstrated beneficence to ensure my topic and study design provided the most benefit to society and the least amount of risk to the most people.

Justice involves the ethical allocation of a fair share of risks, ensuring nonexploitative procedures during and after the research, and an equitable distribution of the benefits anticipated from the research (Beauchamp, 2020; White, 2020). I observed no psychological, legal, professional, economic, relationship or physical risks to participants.

Researchers must ensure the study adheres to well-described rules, regulations, standard practices, and procedures, so participants experience no harm during the data collection process (Beauchamp, 2020; Wendler, 2020). Inevitably, some participant populations may be unable to make informed, voluntary decisions about participation in research, either because of impairments in cognition or reasoning or because they are vulnerable to exploitation and harm in the research context. My role as a researcher was to take special precautions to ensure that the study participants suffered no harm or repercussions from providing information. To prevent ethical issues with the research, I followed the guidelines as outlined in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative and actively addressed potential ethical concerns throughout the investigation. As a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) scholar-consultant, I exhibited professional conduct, respecting the climate, culture, values, and regulatory requirements of the client organizations and client workforce members. Researchers submit studies to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is the committee that approves or refuses a study proposal based on whether the level of the risks faced by human participants, the study is performed safely, and is ethical (Beauchamp, 2020; White, 2020). Although the identities of the participants and the client organization were kept private, the study

results were published and shared with the participants so they could benefit from the results. Scholar-consultants pursuing the Walden University DBA Consulting Capstone are covered by a blanket IRB approval (Walden University, 2021). To strengthen ethical protocols, I also received approval to conduct the study from the Walden University IRB. The IRB Approval Number is 06-19-20-0182852.

Trustworthiness is paramount to quality research because trust is essential to encouraging participation in research, so researchers must take the time and try to build that trust (Beauchamp, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). Communicating directly with participants throughout the study process was critical to earning and maintaining trust, credibility, and authenticity as a researcher (see Petrovic, 2017). My role as the researcher was to develop relationships of trust with the research participants. I protected the promise of confidentiality with the client organization and client workforce, which included explaining carefully why someone was not eligible to participate in a specific study. Each participant was required to sign a consent form to participate in the study to ensure that they made an informed decision about their participation (see Husband, 2020; Petrovic, 2017). McGrath et al. (2019) asserted that qualitative researchers are an integral data collection tool. For example, I designed the interview questions and conducted the in-depth interviews while also avoiding leading questions or providing nonverbal signals that might influence the study participants' responses.

The goal of researchers is to present study findings that are valid and reliable; however, maintaining objectivity and avoiding bias in a study is often challenging (Saunders et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, the investigator's analysis of

the study participants' responses is subjective, sometimes causing substantial ethical risks (Saunders et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). Researchers must acknowledge their own bias about the study problem, any form of negative influence of the investigator's knowledge, assumptions of the study, and the data analysis. Researcher bias in qualitative research is a significant issue because it causes false conclusions and is potentially misleading (Saunders et al., 2015). Researcher bias is defined as bias by the researcher based on their personal experience and not the participants' experience (Kross & Giust, 2019; Perterson, 2019). I shared clear statements of any bias that may have arisen during the study, which could add to the credibility of the study.

My role as a researcher was to monitor and reduce study bias. Critical concepts that influenced my approach to reducing personal bias were transparency and a commitment to principles of accuracy. One way reliability was achieved in this research was by reflexivity. Reflexivity is the researcher's process of continual reflection on the research process and self-awareness of personal bias that may frame the research (Mason-Bish, 2019; McGrath et al., 2019). I practiced active reflection and self-awareness on how I acted and felt by using a reflexive journal. Saunders et al. (2015) contended that the reflexive journal helps the interviewer recognize prejudices and subjectivities. I also minimized personal biases by using a reflexive journal to log the details of how I may have influenced the results of each interview. I continued to self-examine my beliefs and assumptions about the research study and read all significant scholars' research philosophies on gender-diverse succession planning.

To reduce bias in the study, I maintained detailed notes to help reduce errors. I was also transparent, ensuring that I included all study results. I was honest about the limitations in the study as well. Entirely unbiased research is ideal, but it may not always be possible. Essential to conducting qualitative research interviews is the researchers' consideration of interview protocols to provide themselves with a guide to minimize bias. Researchers who create an interview protocol must first consider the topic to study and issues to explore (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Yeong et al., 2018). I used an interview template, interview protocol, and audio recordings as the data collection instruments. Appendix A depicts the interview protocol I used in the study.

The interview format consisted of one-on-one conversations. To ensure I focused on only eliciting the participants' perspectives on gender-diverse succession planning strategies, I asked each participant the same open-ended interview questions. The Baldrige Excellence Framework standardized scoring system was used to evaluate study participants' responses.

Participants

Developing good interview questions, selecting the best data collecting tool, and identifying study participants are essential to conducting research (Saunders et al., 2015). Before beginning the interviews, I determined the study population and the complete set of individuals included in the study. Conducting effective qualitative research necessitates identifying the appropriate population and selecting the optimal population samples. To collect relevant data, researchers must first determine the specific population that relates to the study's nature. The target population for this study was builder sector

executives located in the southeastern United States who had successfully developed strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan in their respective construction organizations.

Researchers must carefully select a sample that is representative of the population.

Three of the most common sampling methods used in qualitative research are:

- Purposive sampling is a method of selecting participants based on predetermined criteria that are relevant to a certain research subject.
- Quota sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique in which researchers create a sample of people who represent a population.
- Snowball sampling is frequently used to locate and recruit hidden populations (Stratton, 2019, 2021).

I used purposive sampling to determine the characteristics and experiences of the sample population. I aimed to collect in-depth information through filtering out participants who did not fit the criteria for participation. The criteria for the systematic investigation were based on the specific aims and objectives of the study. I conducted exploratory, semistructured interviews with builder leaders (i.e., C-suite leaders) who were members of Association A.

Establishing specific inclusion criteria is essential in qualitative research because it helps ensure that the right participants provide the necessary data to address the research questions (Porzsolt et al., 2019). The qualitative research sample size, which is the subset of the population that is used to analyze and determine the study results, is smaller than the quantitative sample (Quintao et al., 2020). The eligibility criteria for this

research sample were that participants were in a leadership position within their organization, Association A; had at least 10 years of experience in the building sector; and had developed strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan within their respective construction organizations.

To identify interviewees for this study, I requested a list of senior-level members of Association A. To ensure access to interviewees, researchers must develop a relationship with an insider who recognizes the value of the research study and who will provide suggestions for the appropriate access procedure (Marland & Esselment, 2019; Saunders et al., 2015). To establish initial access to senior-level, builder sector association members who meet the criteria for participation in the study, I partnered with the executive director of Association A. The sample size for this single case study was three builder sector association members with a minimum of 10 years of experience in the builder sector. Of the three members, one participant was a member of the Association A executive committee.

When recruiting participants for qualitative research, researchers can utilize a variety of sample strategies. The sample size selection ensured that I would reach data saturation and that I gathered sufficient information data that allowed the generalization of the findings. Data saturation is the best metric researchers use to ensure they reach the ideal number of participants (Guest et al., 2020; Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). Researchers achieve data saturation when they reach the point where adding further participants provided no additional insights. I used my expertise, the central research questions, and the selected framework to choose the sample that led to data saturation. I ensured data

saturation by continuing to conduct interviews and exploring themes until I no longer uncovered new insights.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Three fundamental research methodologies exist quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Park & Park, 2016). The quantitative research method is a deductive process that researchers use to focus on an empirical inquiry of an observable phenomenon. Researchers using quantitative methodology are afforded more breadth in understanding because they investigate relationships, cause-effect phenomena, and conditions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Park & Park, 2016). The quantitative method is used to analyze variations or relationships among variables & formulate and test hypotheses. The mixed method is a combination of qualitative and quantitative. I did not test statistical hypotheses nor quantify the data for this study; therefore, neither the quantitative nor mixed methods applied to this study.

While quantitative methodology includes gathering data points in measurable, numerical form, the qualitative method is an inductive process that aids researchers in exploring and understanding interactions by gathering information from participants to learn about their experiences (Yin, 2016). Researchers use the qualitative method to study attitudes, behavior, and experiences. Researchers using qualitative methodology gain in-depth insight by observing and collecting non-numerical data such as individuals' opinions and motivations (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2016). An essential component of qualitative research is smaller sample sizes that are homogenous (Park & Park, 2016).

Qualitative methods can improve design flexibility, avoid relying on the researcher's predetermined assumptions or biases and provide in-depth detail in the findings.

Researchers using mixed methodology desire an understanding of a broad and in-depth phenomenon afforded by quantitative and qualitative data, respectively (Cabrera & Reiner, 2018; Yin, 2016). Labor intensive and costly, a mixed methodology combines the quantitative and qualitative methods, allowing researchers to strengthen findings by using both the inductive and deductive perspectives to confirm results (Cabrera & Reiner, 2018). A mixed methodology was appropriate only if the current study required qualitative and quantitative data to explain the relationship between variables.

Research Design

A research design is a strategy for answering a specific research question, whereas a research method is what puts that plan into action. The research design is the researcher's plan for conducting the proposed study. Because proper research design ensures that the data gathered will help answer the research question more effectively, research design and techniques are distinct but closely related. Developing research methods is an integral part of research design.

The research design is the researcher's plan for conducting the proposed study. Merriam (1998) and Yin (2018) noted that researchers consider the design to ensure the method is suitable to the research question. The research method and design center around the research question, aiding the researcher in outlining the scope of the study and explaining the research goals and objectives (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018). I selected the qualitative method because I sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies

builder sector executives used to ensure a healthy gender balance in the talent pipeline of skilled employees prepared to take over vital positions. Because I intended to test an existing theory, I selected a deductive approach to this study.

Yin (2016) and (2018) contended that there are five types of qualitative research:

1. Ethnography is used in cultural anthropology.
2. Narrative is used to research a sequence of events.
3. Phenomenology is used to detail an event or activity.
4. Grounded theory is used to expound details surrounding a specific event or activity.
5. Case study is used to obtain a thorough understanding from multiple sources.

Researchers use a phenomenology design to study experiences from the participants' perspective and aid researchers in describing how a human being experiences a psychologically impactful phenomenon (Goulding, 2005; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). Phenomenology was not appropriate for the study because I did not seek to gain information about participants' perceptions or opinions by observing their lived experiences. I considered using ethnography, but I did not plan to observe participants' daily lives and habits to understand how individuals experience or behave with something in their natural environment. Researchers use ethnography to understand how and why people behave differently in various communities and cultures (Goulding, 2005; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). Based on the understanding that humans naturally create narratives and stories when interpreting their own lives, in a narrative design, participants recount stories that become the raw data (Polkinghorne, 2007; Yin, 2016). The narrative

approach was not appropriate for this study because I did not seek to gain insight from data in narrative form.

I considered grounded theory which, according to Goulding (2005), researchers adopt grounded theory when no clear theory exists, from previous data and studies, on why certain behaviors are occurring. I did not plan to create a new theory; therefore, grounded theory was not an appropriate research design for this study. A case study is an intensive study about an individual, a group of people, an event, or a situation (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2016). I used a qualitative single case study as my research design to gain in-depth knowledge about what gender-diverse strategies builder leaders use to achieve organizational sustainability.

Researchers who conduct case-oriented research use either a single case study or a multiple case study (Stewart, 2012; Yin, 2018). Quintao et al. (2020) and Yin (2018) asserted that researchers use a single case study to gather an in-depth description of the experience of a single person, family, group, community, or organization. Before I decided to undertake a single case study approach to interview three builder sector leader members of a builder sector association, I considered using a multiple-case design. Multiple-case design refers to researchers selecting several cases to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena than a single case can provide (Stewart, 2012). Researchers use a case study to source multiple pieces of evidence from documents, physical artifacts, archival records, audiovisual materials, interviews, and direct observations to triangulate findings and validate conclusions (Yin, 2018). A qualitative single case study was appropriate for the current study because the design aided me in

exploring gender-diverse strategies for builder sector executives in a single builder sector association.

Population and Sampling

Researchers preparing to conduct a qualitative research study must identify quality participants that best fit the scope of the study. The population is the entire group that researchers wish to investigate. When researching a population, it is rarely possible to collect data from every person in that group. Hennink and Kaiser (2021) and Boddy (2016) noted that researchers apply criteria for selecting the sample for the study. The sample is the individuals who will participate in the research (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Quintao et al., 2020). The population for this study was builder sector leaders who are members of a builder sector member association.

Researchers must carefully select a sample that is representative of the population. Purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling technique that utilizes a criterion to choose in-depth information from a particular sample (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Stratton, 2019). Additionally, Yin (2018) remarked that using the purposive sampling technique would ensure that selected participants have the knowledge and experience to provide rich data. Ames et al. (2019) noted that purposive sampling is used to recognize imminent members from their populace who could add to the research question, depending on their standard capacities and capabilities. I used the purposive sampling method for this study. I aimed to collect in-depth information filtering out participants who did not fit the criteria for participation. I determined the criteria for the systematic investigation based

on the specific aims and objectives of the study, choosing units or variables that would provide meaningful responses.

Boddy (2016) argued that sample sizes involving a single case study could be highly informative and meaningful. The qualifying conditions or criteria for this research sample were that participants were in a leadership position within their organization. Participants also needed at least 10 years of experience in the building sector, had a leadership position within an organization in the construction industry, and developed strategies to implement an effective gender-diverse succession plan within their respective construction organizations. The sample size for this single case study was three builder sector association members. The sample size selection ensured that I would reach data saturation and that I gathered sufficient information data that allowed the generalization of the findings.

Researchers use data saturation to ensure adequate and quality data are collected from study participants (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). Data saturation is the best metric researchers use to ensure they reach the ideal number of participants (Guest et al., 2020; Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). Researchers achieve data saturation when they reach the point where adding further participants provided no additional insights (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Stratton, 2019). I used my expertise, the central research questions, and the selected framework to choose the sample that led to data saturation. I ensured data saturation by continuing to conduct interviews and exploring themes until I no longer uncovered new insights.

Ethical Research

I provided an in-depth explanation regarding the ethics behind the research study. Researchers must protect the study participant. I complied with all Walden University policies and procedures and the client organization's policies. An essential aspect of conducting research is gaining each member of the samples' consent to participate in the study (Johnson et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Before applying the data collection instrument, I emailed each participant a consent form. Participants acknowledged that they were informed about and consented to be a participant in the study by replying to my email with the words "I consent." The deliverables of this case study are to identify strategies to develop effective succession plans for construction sector executives, add meaningful content to existing knowledge, and foster growth in the construction industry. Appendix B depicts the informed consent form presented to participants in the study.

The researcher must ensure a participant's identifiable private information is safely collected, managed, and disseminated (Johnson et al., 2020; Ngozwana, 2018). The consent form contains a concise presentation of vital study information (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). The interviewees' informed consent to participate in the study is fundamental to ethical and thorough research because it provides participants with a better understanding of the benefits and the risks of participating in the study (Geier et al., 2021; Husband, 2020). For example, the informed consent form included detailed information about myself, my contact details, the participant selection criteria, and the purpose of the research. Each interviewee received a consent form listing potential risks and benefits to ensure the participants could make a fully informed decision about

whether to participate. Participants have the right to discontinue or decline participation in the research anytime (Geier et al., 2021; NCPHSBBR, 1979). The form also gave participants information on how to exit the study, should they need to withdraw for any reason. Included in the consent form was disclosure to the interviewee that I would record their responses to ensure I transcribed their experience correctly. NCPHSBBR (1979) contended that it is imperative for the researcher to remain objective and not influence the process intentionally or unknowingly. Offering participants compensation for their time and inconvenience of participating in the study may result in the researcher unduly influencing interviewees' responses and thus encourage bias or distorted responses (Lee, 2019). I offered participants no incentives for participation in the study to ensure no undue influence or coercion.

According to Geier et al. (2021) and NCPHSBBR (1979), investigators must protect the participant's identifiable data. NCPHSBBR affirmed that researchers must protect study participants' autonomy while fully disclosing the study's factors. To ensure the ethical protection of participants in the study, I implemented several study precautions. So that the client organization is not identifiable or proprietary details revealed, I assigned a pseudonym for the client organization's name and location throughout the study. I used a letter and number in place of the participant's name to protect their identity. The list connecting the participant's name with the letter and number was stored in an encrypted computer-based file along with consent forms and stored in a locked file cabinet.

Data Collection Instruments

Researchers collect data to create an accurate picture of the research problem. The data collection instrument, techniques, and analysis form the foundation of how data are amassed and used in the study. Researchers must identify the type of data to be collected, the source of data, and the method used to collect the data. The research method and design help determine the research scope, the data collection approach, and the analysis technique (Yin, 2018). The qualitative researcher interprets phenomena and is one of the primary data collection instruments (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Researchers select the data collection technique that will ensure credible high-quality data development, to enhance reliability, validity, and accuracy in the study (Nassaji, 2020). I used semistructured interviews to collect primary data for the study. Appendix A depicts the interview protocol I used in the study. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) asserted that the semistructured interviews allow the qualitative researcher to explore a phenomenon by asking each participant the same predetermined open-ended questions, developing rapport and trust with interviewees who then freely share their experiences and express their views. I used the semistructured interview to gather data to gain insights into the participant's personal experiences, beliefs, and opinions.

Quality in research helps to ensure the study results are valid and consistent. Research quality criteria are requirements to aid investigators in identifying flaws in the study. In qualitative research, investigators do not use instruments with established metrics about reliability and validity like in quantitative. Qualitative researchers ensure study findings are trustworthy by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability,

and confirmability (Amankwaa, 2016; Babaei & Taleghani, 2019). Evaluating the quality of research is essential for researchers to apply the findings to develop strategies to implement practical improvements.

Researchers must test reliability and validity to enhance the quality of the study. One test researchers use to ensure reliability and validity and that they do not waste resources is conducting a pilot test. Pilot tests are small-scale preliminary tests researchers use before starting the main study to determine the feasibility of the planned research design (Arain et al., 2010; Malmqvist et al., 2019). Arain et al. (2010) suggested that the pilot test is less rigorous than the primary research. A pilot test was not appropriate for this research.

I collected data by listening and recording participants during semistructured interviews. Transcribing the interview immediately after the session helps to ensure the researcher accurately records participants' responses (Gill et al., 2008; Lobe et al., 2020). The more complete the research, the less likely gaps exist in the study. In this research, reliability was also achieved by member checking which helps to reduce researcher biases, so that the findings are not influenced. After the interview, I conducted a member check. Member checking is the process where researchers provide interviewees with the opportunity to engage with, and add to, interpreted data after their interview (Candela, 2019). I summarized each participant's responses and emailed them a copy to review. Candela suggests researchers use member checking to establish credibility by inviting participants to review interpretations to verify accuracy. The data provided by interviewees are confidential and not shared with others without written permission from

the participant (Geier et al., 2021). I gave participants a summary of their responses to allow them to review and clarify previous statements. Saturation in qualitative research occurs when, through interviewing and observation of participants, the researcher notices the same themes emerging repeatedly.

Data Collection Technique

Qualitative researchers collect data to gain quality evidence, insights and understanding on underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. Researchers use data from different sources, namely primary and secondary sources, to deduce quality information that is a prerequisite for making informed decisions (Mazhar et al., 2021). The researcher's attention to detail, probing for further explanation, and subjectivity during data collection remain integral to the analysis process. Besides the researcher, the most commonly used data collection methods are individual interviews, questionnaires, groups, observations, and extraction from organization documents and secondary data previously published by other (Mazhar et al., 2021; Yin, 2018). Interviews are the most used technique researchers use to collect data for a qualitative research study.

The data collection methodology used in this study was semistructured interviews and document review. The semistructured interview is an in-depth conversation between the investigator and interviewees where researchers explore a phenomenon by asking participants a predetermined but flexible list of questions (Mazhar et al., 2021; Yin, 2018). Scholar-consultant pursuing the Walden University Consulting Capstone are covered by a blanket IRB approval (Walden University, 2021). To strengthen ethical protocols, I also submitted my proposal to Walden University's IRB. Grady and Fauc

(2016) explained how study investigators are accountable for protecting the rights and welfare of participants and following applicable regulations. According to the researchers, investigators are expected to follow ethical principles and standards to ensure quality and integrity in the study. After obtaining IRB approval, I began the recruiting process. As a scholar consultant with the Walden University DBA Consulting Capstone, I am permitted to collect only interview and archival data per the terms of the Service Order and the preapproved Consent Form (See Appendix B).

An essential aspect of conducting research is gaining each member of the samples' consent to participate in the study (Johnson et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Before applying the data collection instrument, I emailed each participant a consent form and addressed any questions they had about the informed consent form. The interviewees' informed consent to participate in the study is fundamental to ethical and thorough research because it provides participants with a better understanding of the benefits and the risks of participating in the study (Geier et al., 2021; Husband, 2020). For example, the informed consent form included detailed information about myself, my contact details, the participant selection criteria, and the purpose of the research.

Each interviewee received a consent form listing potential risks and benefits to ensure the participants could make a fully informed decision about whether to participate. Participants have the right to discontinue or decline participation in the research anytime (Geier et al., 2021; NCPHSBBR, 1979). The form also gave participants information on how to exit the study, should they need to withdraw for any reason. Included in the consent form was disclosure to the interviewee that I would record their responses to

ensure I transcribed their experience correctly. Participants acknowledged that they were informed about and consented to be a participant in the study by replying to my email with the words "I consent." The deliverables of this case study are to identify strategies to develop effective succession plans for construction sector executives, add meaningful content to existing knowledge, and foster growth in the construction industry.

It is imperative for the researcher to remain objective and not influence the process intentionally or unknowingly (NCPHSBBR, 1979). Offering participants compensation for their time and inconvenience of participating in the study may result in the researcher unduly influencing interviewees' responses and thus encourage bias or distorted responses (Lee, 2019). I offered participants no incentives for participation in the study to ensure no undue influence or coercion. I collected information from available data sources, which included semistructured, one-on-one interviews and association documents. I reviewed the association's archival documents and artifacts from the organizations' websites. I also reviewed the organization's documents, such as the builder sector association's executive committee meeting minutes and board of directors' annual reports to support the information collected from participants. A strength of the semistructured interview methodology is that it provides researchers with participants' immediate, vibrant descriptions and examples that help explain the phenomenon. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected physical gatherings and travel, researchers using semistructured interviews rely heavily on technology for critical qualitative research (Lobe et al., 2020). A weakness of using the semistructured interview is the potential for data loss. Semistructured interviews are conducted one-on-one (e.g.,

on online platforms such as video conferencing tools and emails) with participants or with written interviews. I scheduled a Zoom interview after receiving a consent email from participants.

Qualitative researchers must consider all the data generated from data gathering and summarize the data correctly to draw actionable conclusions. As a scholar consultant for the builder sector association, I had access to nine builder executives with experience developing gender-diverse strategies for succession planning. A case study design includes interviews with open-ended questions, member checking, and additional sources to triangulate the findings from the interview data (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018). Asking open-ended questions prompts a dialogue and elicits more detailed information.

Data Organization Techniques

Data collection for this study consisted of asking open-ended probing questions, watching the participant's reactions, reviewing and analyzing the data, and asking if they have any relevant documents to share. For this qualitative case study, I used a general outline of questions, asking respondents follow-up questions based on the participant's responses. The researcher develops a relationship of trust with each participant, encouraging interviewees to provide detailed feedback on their experience with the phenomenon (Yin, 2016, 2018). I designated a maximum of 1 hour for this study to conduct in-depth interviews. To maintain trustworthiness within my research process, I ensured that I maintained the privacy and confidentiality of each participant. Researchers typically use qualitative interviews to achieve a more personal setting than other approaches (Clark & Vealé, 2018). The interview took place remotely at each

participant's office over a videoconferencing call. All interview sessions occurred virtually using videoconferencing. The participants selected a space they only occupied during the interview to ensure their privacy and confidentiality. The interview process allowed me to remain attentive and actively listen to the interviewees, careful not to limit participants' responses.

Protection of the participants includes guarding their identity and privacy (Husband, 2020; White, 2020). I provided each participant with an identification code (e.g., P01, P02 P03, P04, P05, P06, P07, P08, P09, P10, P11, P12, P13) that I used throughout the interviews, coding, and analysis. I provided code names for the organization's documents which I reviewed as part of my data collection. The code was ORG01-Doc1. The strategy I used to protect participants and the organization's identity was not to collect any demographic information. I refrained from using names when referencing the organization within the manuscript and discussing the study with other people. To protect participants' identities, I did not share the data collected with anyone outside the organizations. I secured participants and organization information with a passcode on my computer and a portable data storage device. Hard copies were placed in a locked file cabinet at home for no more than 5 years from the dates of the interviews.

Researchers must adhere to specific guidance on how long to retain research data (Hesse et al., 2019; Petrovic, 2017). Research data includes tangible information, recordings, and intangible information. My research data management plan included securely storing the hard copies and electronic copies of data for 5 years to protect confidentiality. I ensured data were integrity protected by storing it in the cloud so that it

was reusable in the future by other researchers or in my future research. In the event of data loss, I ensured that data were replicated and backed up to a secured and reliable portable data storage device with a passcode in a different location. Once the data retention period expires, I will destroy the information. For hard copies, I will shred all material with a shredding machine. I will delete the electronic documents from my computer by overwriting the files and physically destroying all portable data storage devices.

Data Analysis

The researcher aims to collect valuable data from participants to explain and explore the phenomenon. Essential to the study is for the researcher to conduct a proper analysis to ensure the audience and future scholars understand precisely how the researcher reached conclusions about participants and ensure that the researcher's results are more trustworthy (Saunders et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). Unlike the quantitative data that researchers express in numerical values, qualitative researchers gather data that is descriptive and expressed in terms of the participants' feelings and experiences with the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). I examined textual data to extract meaning from participants' responses to inform the builder sector association on taking strategic action to improve organizational sustainability. There are two types of approaches for qualitative research data analysis. Inductive techniques, which rely on the gathered data to give themes, are used in qualitative research, whereas deductive approaches compare categories between studies (O'Kane et al., 2021). I used deductive reasoning because it allowed me to test the existing theory of human capital theory to formulate a hypothesis

of what gender-diverse strategies executive use for builder sector succession planning, collect and analyze the data to summarize whether the results do or do not reject my hypothesis.

Researchers select data analysis tools to explore the data and find patterns and themes in the data to help answer the research question. I used Yin's five-step approach to analyze textual data. Yin (2018) described five steps to analyze textual data as follows:

1. Compile the data.
2. Disassemble the data.
3. Reassemble the data.
4. Interpret the meaning of the data.
5. Conclude the data.

I collected textual data from in-depth interviews, literature, and organization documents in the first step. I created detailed field notes to help document contextual information gathered from interviews. Creating field notes to record observational data, insights, and other descriptive information during the interview is a valuable tool for collecting data (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018; Renz et al., 2018). I arranged field notes into groups to determine the meaning and understand the data collected. Within 72 hours after each interview, I emailed the interviewee an overview of their responses in a Microsoft Word document for their review within 48 hours. I conducted member checking to increase accuracy and reduce the variation in data collected.

For step 2, I disassembled the data by conducting manual data coding. Because I had a significant amount of data collected, I used the MAXQDA analysis software

program to help classify, organize, and code textual and audiovisual data. The software enabled me to compare attributes and examine relationships in the data to identify themes and patterns. I reassembled the data in step 3, identifying repetitive or commonly used words that develop into themes and categories. For step 4, I interpreted the meaning of the data, verifying patterns in the data from the interview transcripts. I used words and labels to describe characteristics or traits in the textual data. Researchers must remain open and unbiased towards unexpected patterns, expressions, and results. Lastly, I summarized the data in step 5. The summary focused on the themes that help provide insight to inform the builder sector association's leadership on strategic actions to improve organizational sustainability.

Because the depth of the data collected is often more important than the numbers in qualitative research, a fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is smaller sample sizes (Quintao et al., 2020). A saturation point occurs during the data analysis, where the same themes are recurring, and the researcher observes no new insights from additional data sources (Babaei & Taleghani, 2019; Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). I continued data collection until I was confident participants offered no new ideas, concepts, themes, or emerging patterns. My goal was to ensure quality in contextual data to support the study findings. After collecting data, investigators must analyze the data. I considered two qualitative data analysis tools. Grounded theory is a qualitative data analysis method that begins with analyzing a single case to formulate a hypothesis (Saunders et al., 2015). Grounded theory was not appropriate for this study because I do not want to develop theoretical explanations by examining additional studies to determine

if they contribute to the theory. Saunders also noted that thematic analysis allows researchers to identify and analyze common themes, ideas, and patterns of meaning in text documents, interview transcripts, journal articles, and images. Unlike grounded theory, where the researcher uses the hypothesis to direct the research, researchers use thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in contextual data (Quintao et al., 2020; Saunders et al., 2015). I used thematic analysis to analyze data because I wanted to understand builder sector experiences, views, and opinions about gender-diverse succession planning and strategies to implement an effective strategy in the construction industry. Thematic analysis is a practical approach to my research and is a flexible method that I adapted to fit the purposes of my research study.

As workers enter and exit the workforce and to ensure the work environment functions efficiently, leaders must recognize the challenge and opportunities from the shifts and design a strategy to maintain organizational sustainability. The study was significant because the findings revealed the consequences that could arise if leadership fails to address the challenges created by the retiring and aging workforce leaving with their wealth of knowledge and values. I drew from past literature to elaborate on strategies that support succession planning and knowledge transfer. The concluding part of this study provided suggestions on how to overcome the challenges associated with succession planning and knowledge transfer.

Reliability and Validity

Trustworthiness is paramount to quality research. Reliability refers to consistency in the measurements used, and viability refers to whether the measurements measure

what is intended (Nassaji, 2020). The principle of reliability in research is the degree to which a study method produces consistent results multiple times (Mohamad et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). Researchers strive to achieve reliability and validity in research to help evaluate the quality and trustworthiness of the study. Because qualitative researchers use less structured methods such as observations in words, interviews through open-ended questions, and reviews to explore theories and concepts, it is challenging to verify the trustworthiness of research findings (Cypress, 2017; Nassaji, 2020). It is possible to establish the reliability and validity of the results in qualitative research but repeating the process and methods may not be as easy to execute in quantitative research (Amankwaa, 2016; Nassaji, 2020). Evaluating the quality of research is essential for researchers to apply the findings to develop strategies to implement practical improvements.

Reliability

Yin (2018) remarked that scholars overlook qualitative research because of the subjective nature of the approach. Researchers frequently measure qualitative research against quality criteria established for quantitative research (Nassaji, 2020; Yin, 2018). The principle of reliability in research is the degree to which a study method produces consistent results multiple times (Mohamad et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). I established the transferability and confirmability of the study by minimizing personal biases. I used a reflexive journal to document how I may have influenced the objectivity of my research. Transferability, confirmability, and dependability are similar concepts to reliability.

Participant specification errors, biases, and assumptions significantly affect the reliability and validity of research findings. Researchers conducting quantitative and

qualitative research use different methods to collect and analyze data that yield the most accurate study results. Credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability are principles qualitative researchers use to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility in study findings refers to how confident the researcher is in the reliability of the results (Amankwaa, 2016; Babaei & Taleghani, 2019). Credibility is synonymous with validity in quantitative research. Researchers build credibility through observation, member checking, and triangulation with research. I established validity in participants' responses using semistructured interviews for data collection which allowed me to ask all participants set questions in a standardized order, reducing participants' urge to seek assistance from others in formulating their responses. To achieve credibility, I strictly adhered to this study's qualitative methods and instruments, using the interview protocol and member checking to enhance the reliability of my research. Researchers establish that the results in the study are credible by conducting member checking where participants provided feedback on the accuracy of the data (Candela, 2019).

Transferability refers to how easily future researchers can apply the study methods or results to other populations, contexts, and phenomena (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Yin, 2018). Transferability allows other researchers to compare the data collected over time, helping them to identify trends and areas for improvement and improve the findings' accuracy. Qualitative researchers establish the conformability of study results by ensuring that the findings are the participants' responses and not potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher. Finally, trustworthy study findings occur when the results are dependable. Dependability refers to the ability of

other scholars to replicate data by establishing consistency in the methods used over time (Amankwaa, 2016). I used a reflexive journal to document how I may have influenced the objectivity of my research.

I used multiple sources of evidence, including participant interviews and organization documentation, to achieve transferability. I ensured I presented the study results logically so that other builder sector leaders struggling with succession planning could implement the recommended strategies. To establish dependability in my research, I presented the purpose of the study, provided a thorough description of the selection process for the participants, described the data collection process, explained how I interpreted and analyzed the data, and presented findings to others. I examined the interview transcripts eliminating any mistakes or responses that were unclear. I also compared data with assigned codes to ensure that the coding aligned with the meaning. Reliability is the foundation for achieving validity in research.

To ensure transferability in my research, I provided:

- An in-depth description of the phenomenon studied.
- Details of the criteria used for selecting participants and my interview protocol.
- Thorough documentation of the study results.

I used multiple sources of evidence, including participant interviews and organization documentation, to achieve transferability. I ensured I presented the study results logically so that other builder sector leaders struggling with succession planning could implement the recommended strategies. To establish dependability in my research,

I presented the purpose of the study, provided a thorough description of the selection process for the participants, described the data collection process, explained how I interpreted and analyzed the data, and presented findings to others. I examined the interview transcripts eliminating any mistakes or responses that were unclear. I also compared data with assigned codes to ensure that the coding aligned with the meaning. Reliability is the foundation for achieving validity in research.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy of the data the researcher wants to study, and the instrument used, ensuring that the study measures what is intended (Mohamad et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). According to Candela (2019), member checking is necessary to avoid researcher bias throughout the analysis and interpretation of study findings. I used member checking to improve the consistency of the findings. After the interviews, participants were provided with a written summary of their responses to assess my interpretation, suggest modifications, and offer more information.

Qualitative researchers achieve validation in research through rigor (Babaei & Taleghani, 2019). Qualitative researchers establish rigor to increase trust or confidence in the study findings. Demonstrating rigor and transparency in qualitative research promotes integrity and enhances the validity and reliability of the study and its results (Babaei & Taleghani, 2019; Nassaji, 2020). Mackieson et al. (2019) further explained that researchers conduct rigorous research by developing consistency in the methods resulting in unbiased design, methodology, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of results accurately. Avoiding bias in my actions throughout the study helped to achieve rigor and

credibility. I used a field journal to capture (a) the date and time of the interview, (b) the participant code, and (c) the virtual platform utilized in a field journal. I also recorded in the field journal (a) participant information, (b) my observations on the contents of the interview, and (c) any concerns I had about the interview or the data. Using semistructured interviews allowed me to ask all participants set questions in a standardized order, reducing participants' urge to seek assistance from others in formulating their responses. To achieve credibility, I strictly adhered to this study's qualitative methods and instruments, using the interview protocol and member checking to enhance the reliability of my research.

Qualitative researchers achieve validation in research through rigor (Babaei & Taleghani, 2019). The criteria and principles qualitative researchers use to assess study quality are rigor. Qualitative researchers establish rigor to increase trust or confidence in the study findings. Babaei and Taleghani (2019) and Nassaji (2020) contended that demonstrating rigor and transparency in qualitative research promotes integrity and enhances the validity and reliability of the study and its results. Mackieson et al. (2019) further explained that researchers conduct rigorous research by developing consistency in the methods resulting in unbiased design, methodology, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of results accurately. Avoiding bias in my actions throughout the study helped to achieve rigor and credibility.

Moon (2019) and Yin (2018) suggested that triangulation of multiple data sources, different methodologies, various researchers' findings, and varying theories help to address these threats to validity. Triangulation enriches research because it allows the

researcher to establish that the research study findings are credible, strengthening the confidence the audience and future researchers place in the results (Nassaji, 2020). In this study, I examined data from different respondents, ensuring the collection method was the same for each participant. I sought to identify patterns or contradictions beyond the participants' individual unique experiences.

Transition and Summary

For Section 2, I examined the methodological approach in conducting the research. To outline this section, I restated the purpose statement then explained the role of the researcher. Through the use of literature and seminal work, I identified strategies on how to select and gain access to the participants, and the methodology to collect the data. For this study, I used qualitative single case qualitative study research. I also examined research methods and design and explored population and sampling. The selection of the participants was purposive sampling given their knowledge of the field of study.

The core of Section 2 was research ethics. To ensure prudent ethical research protocols, I used the *Belmont Report* and Walden University's Ethical Review committees to review and monitor my research work. I used the Baldrige Excellence Framework, the Criteria for Performance Excellence, and a comprehensive approach as a guide for gathering and analyzing critical data. I examined the data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis so that there was consistency with the method of collection, organization, analysis, and

dissemination. Also, I reviewed reliability and validity, along with credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

In Section 3, I present the findings of the study, explanations of the application of the data, and the implications for positive social change. In addition, I provide recommendations for action and explore areas for future research. Lastly, I conclude with my reflections and conclusions.

Section 3: Organizational Profile

An association refers to individuals with a common purpose, interest, or activity (Ki & Wang, 2016; Knoke, 1986). Ki and Wang (2016) contended that the benefits of joining an association are networking opportunities, the development of standards and best practices that the industry and participants will adhere to and adopt, and financial discounts incentives for events and research publications. Individual members are a collective voice within the industry concerning regulation and policy issues, which is crucial for organizations that do not have resources or expertise in this area (Ki & Wang, 2016; Knoke, 1986). Association A's membership is builder sector executives whose goal is to collaborate to develop a sustainable industry and organization.

Key Factors Worksheet

Associations provide members with opportunities to form relationships with successful and knowledgeable members in the industry, share best practices, foster education, and enrich communities (Federal Trade Commission, 2020). Association A is a 78-year-old builder sector association in the southeastern United States includes industry leaders whose goal is to build a professional and sustainable industry and builder association. Association A is the largest builder sector association in the state in which the organization operates.

Organizational Description

Association A is an affiliate association of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), a well-established nationwide group of federated state associations that operate independently of each other but work together for a united cause of

advancing the construction industry. The NAHB is the largest network of craftsmen dedicated to building and enriching communities. In 1944, a group of local construction and building industry professionals founded Association A in the southeastern United States to represent the interests of builders and craftsmen in allied industries and professions in seven surrounding counties. The builders sector association's objective is to maintain a stable state builder sector association. Members enjoy educational opportunities and a legislative and regulatory presence that protects members from unnecessary litigation or legislation that would prohibit members from serving their customers and the community ethically, fairly, and honestly.

Organizational Environment

Association A is a for-profit 501(c)(6) builder sector association representing the interests of builders, developers, contractors, and associated businesses in the southeastern United States. The builders sector association is an affiliate of the NAHB. With more than 1,000 members and governed by a board of directors, Association A is the largest builder sector association in State X and is among the top five builders associations in the country.

Product Offerings. Membership in Association A is a significant aspect of a builder sector professional's career and helps signify members are serious about their professional development. The builder sector association provides opportunities for networking and professional development not offered by other sources. Association A provides members with the following services: (a) networking opportunities, (b)

advocacy services, (c) educational programs, and (d) community service offerings. Table 2 depicts a list of member services provided by the organization.

Table 2*Association A Membership Services*

Services	Offering	Deliverable
Network opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members gain access to successful and influential decision makers in the southeastern United States. ▪ The association leverages a strong network of long-term, well-established relationships in government and the construction industry to benefit the membership and help solve problems in the industry, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Association A hosts various social events to facilitate valuable networking among members, such as golfing events, fishing events, sporting clay events, formal dinners, and award ceremonies. ▪ Young Professionals Group (YPG) hosts events and social events designed to engage younger members. ▪ Monthly association business meetings provide members with updates on association and industry activities.
Advocacy services	Association A provides advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels for members regarding issues affecting the building sector such as affordable housing, building codes and standards, and improving the local economy.	The association advocates for the industry, member companies, and individual members.
Education programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The association offers a variety of educational development programs in areas related to construction such as finance, insurance, legal, marketing, sales, technology, business operations, marketing strategies, and general professional development. ▪ The association promotes pro-growth policies, resisting policies that inhibit members' growth and profitability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Association A provides members with Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety training, first aid, CPR, and a wide range of technical seminars. ▪ The Apprenticeship Program, a four-year education program certified by the Florida Department of Education (DOE), uses the nationally recognized National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) curriculum. Graduates receive a Certificate of Completion qualifying members to take any state required licensure examination. ▪ Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) provides participants with personal and professional development opportunities in the house building and land development industries and networking opportunities. Participants learn about the building and development industry and various skills, including time management, communication, marketing, personal branding, financing, and budgeting.
Community service	Association A provides members with opportunities to serve the community by addressing people's housing needs and not-for-profit organizations' needs in the area.	Through the association's charitable foundation, members have a platform to give back to the community. Association A enacts and implements policy to help promote affordable housing options for all population segments.

Note. The NCCER is an educational foundation that develops standardized construction and maintenance curriculum and assessments with portable credentials. Certification of Completion qualifies members to take any state-required licensure examination.

Members are a significant asset to Association A because the membership volunteers time and money to accomplish the mission of the organization. Association A's brand and website are assets that help make the organization more recognizable in the industry. As part of the intellectual property, the brand and website help the builder sector association convey the long legacy of a high standard of serving customers and the community ethically, fairly, and honestly. The membership database and a branded showcase event of new and remodeled homes held in several regions throughout the United States are also part of the intellectual property. The showcase event is an example of the builder sector association's branding of the long legacy of a high standard of serving customers and the community ethically, fairly, and honestly.

In addition to membership services, the builder sector association provides a platform for members to donate money, volunteer in the community through the philanthropic side of the organization, and serve on various councils. Association A operates two 501(c)(3) charitable foundations and a charity contractor. Senior leadership uses funds from the foundation to support philanthropic work that includes funding housing to the underserved community and providing senior homeowners living on a fixed income with small to medium critical home repairs. Table 3 depicts specialty councils that help the organization diversify service offerings to members.

Table 3*Association A Specialty Councils and Committees*

Councils and committees	Offering	Deliverable
Custom Builders and Remodelers Council	The council is dedicated to the needs of custom builders and remodelers.	Members receive support with unique challenges particular to the niche in the construction industry
Professional Women in Building Council	The council is increasing the number of female-owned companies in the construction industry.	Members develop strategies to support the specific needs of women in the industry.
Area Council	Component chapters of the association serve the industry in counties within the region and within an hour of the main office.	Clay Business Council, Nassau Builders Council, and St. Johns Builders Council are component societies of the association. Meetings and social events are held within the local county, thereby allowing for better participation from the members in the area.
Sales and Marketing Council	Council members are dedicated to the industry's sales and marketing professionals' needs.	The sales and marketing professionals collaborate, network, and support each other through sales and marketing education. The LAUREL Awards ceremony acknowledges members' accomplishments in sales and marketing.
Government Affairs Council	Council members address ongoing government and regulatory issues in the region.	Members meet monthly to discuss and develop strategies to respond to government and regulatory challenges affecting members. The Political Action Committee (PAC) interviews and endorses political candidates that support pro-growth policies and pro-construction issues.
Industry Issues Fund	Members are large-size builder and developer organizations who are disproportionately affected by excessive regulations and fees.	Membership requires a minimum \$5,000 contribution to the fund. Members use funds for legal issues that may require hiring outside counsel or lobbyists to resolve.
Executive Apprentice Committee	Membership is comprised of two builder, developer, or remodeler members, two members from each trad committee, and the immediate past Training Vice President.	Committee members recommend a Training Vice President to the nominating committee. The general membership elects the candidate at the annual meeting.

Mission, Vision, and Values. The organization's mission states that Association A promotes policies, education, and programs that provide opportunities for members to succeed. The builder sector association's vision is to support and protect the home-building industry through education, training, advocacy, networking, and community involvement. The organization's value statement includes the terms of integrity, committed, connected, charitable, and resourceful. Association A's values help to distinguish members and member organizations from competitors. The builder sector

association's core competency is a high expectation that members, member organizations, and employee groups demonstrate integrity, honesty, and trust in all business practices.

Workforce Profile. The employee group consists of a sales and marketing director, government affairs director, finance and human resources director, workforce and development director, events and programs director, St. John's Builders Council director, program coordinators, and a receptionist. Several drivers motivate the workforce to share their expertise to help propel the organization toward goals. The builder sector association aspires to positively impact the communities they serve by using building expertise to help solve societal problems. Employees' values align with the organization's vision to work toward the greater good. With a business culture that promotes personal responsibility and collaboration, the builder sector association offers employment with purpose. Table 4 depicts the list of Association A employee groups.

Table 4

Association A List of Employee Groups

Position	Area	Number of Employees
Directors	Executive officer – 1	8
	Executive director of builder care – 1	
	Director of members services and marketing – 1	
	Director of government affairs – 1	
	Director of finance and human resources – 1	
	Director of events and programs – 1	
	Director of St. John's Builders Council – 1	
	Director of workforce and development – 1	
Program coordinators	Events and programing coordinator – 1	4
	Area council coordinator – 1	
	Training coordinator – 2	
Receptionist	Front desk – 1	1
Volunteers	Training – 1	3
	Information technology specialist – 1	
	Craft instructor – 1	
Total		16

Note. The executive officer is responsible for hiring and supervising employee groups.

Another workforce driver is the opportunity to hone interpersonal skills by collaborating with colleagues and volunteer members. Collaborative skills and the ability to build consensus are essential for the builder sector association and its employees' success. Employees work with professionals in all lines of business (i.e., sales and marketing, membership, accounting, and operations). Senior leadership offers the workforce the opportunity to learn about membership, meeting planning, budgeting, and governance. The workforce appreciate honest and transparent communication. Volunteers are a tremendous resource for the organization. Builder sector association officers and members serve as volunteers who are part of the unpaid workforce of the organization. Without volunteers, the builder sector association would struggle to accomplish its goals and achieve the mission.

The organization provides no bargaining units (i.e., union representation). COVID-19 controls and prevention are part of the builder sector association's specific health and safety requirements for the staff and membership. The builder sector association workforce adopts infection control strategies based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines to ensure safe work practices.

Assets. Association A operates from a 10,000 square feet facility with a 3,000 square feet auditorium. Builder sector association membership is a significant asset to the organization because members donate time and money to accomplish the organization's mission. The organization's brand and website are also assets that help senior leadership to make the builder sector association more recognizable in the industry.

Regulatory Requirements. Association A is a professional builder sector association supporting and empowering members employed in the building sector. Members are provided with continuing education to assist them with complying with all licensure requirements in the construction industry. The builder sector association's Apprenticeship Program is registered and accredited by the state Department of Education (DOE). Apprentice graduates earn a nationally recognized journeyman level certificate of completion from the state's DOE.

Organizational Relationships

Organizational Structure. The builder sector association's employee groups consist of directors, program coordinators, a receptionist, and volunteers. Association A's officers include the president, first vice president, second vice president, third vice president, secretary-treasurer, and executive officer. Senior leadership includes the board of directors, the executive committee, and officers. A 60-member board governs the builder sector association, seven members of which are also members of the executive committee. Members of the executive committee make decisions to guide the builder sector association's daily operations, while the board of directors provides strategic-level direction. The executive officer receives direction from the president and is responsible for hiring and managing the builder sector association's employee groups. The president is the chief officer of Association A and presides at the board meetings and executive committee meetings. The builder sector association president is the official spokesman of the organization in public policy matters, appoints all committee members, and is an ex-officio member of all committees. In the absence of or on the president's direction, the

first vice president performs the duties of the president. The secretary-treasurer is responsible to the builder sector association for an accounting of all monies collected and disbursed by the organization, providing a monthly statement to the board of directors and an annual report to the association members. The secretary-treasurer also provides a record of the official proceedings of the association and the board of directors. Table 5 depicts the role and responsibilities of the officers, directors, and committees.

Table 5*Association A Executive Officers, Directors, and Committee Members Rules and Responsibilities*

Officers, directors, and committees	Responsibilities
President	The officer is either a builder, developer, or remodeler. As the official spokesperson of the association in matters of public policy, the president appoints all committees and is an ex-officio member of all committees. The president fills vacancies on the board of directors. Members of the board, the executive committee, and the president assign duties to the executive officer.
First vice president	The officer is a member and is either a builder, developer, or remodeler. The first vice president performs the duties of the president, in the absence of or at the request of the president.
Second vice president	The officer is an association member and serves as an executive committee member.
Third vice president	The officer is an association member and serves as an executive committee member.
Secretary-treasurer	The officer is responsible for accounting for all monies collected and disbursed by the association. The secretary-treasurer provides monthly statements and a record of the official proceedings to the board and annual reports to the membership.
Training vice president	The officer oversees all training programs, the Apprenticeship Programs, the Executive Apprentice Council, and Trades Committee.
Past president	The officer is either a builder, developer, or remodeler and is responsible for all duties relating to the Nomination Committee.
Executive officer	The officer serves as the chief administrative head for Association A and supervises employees.
Executive committee	Members consist of the President, First Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Second Vice President, Third Vice President, Training Vice President, and immediate Past President. The committee members are responsible for recommending a budget and all matters of policy and public statement, subject to the final approval of the board of directors. The committee, along with the board of directors, conducts the affairs of Association A per the Constitution and Bylaws. Members are the policy and steering committee of the association.
Nomination committee	Members consists of executive committee members and all past presidents of the association's current membership. The immediate past president will serve as chairman.

Note. The executive committee members meet each month or upon the call of the president, the board of directors, or any four of the committee members, (i.e., a quorum).

Customers and Stakeholders. Association A has five stakeholder groups: (a) builder sector association members; (b) community members; (c) community stakeholders; (d) federal, state, and local government; and (e) employee groups. Table 6 depicts Association A's stakeholders, including all levels of builder sector association members.

Table 6

Association A Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder groups	Description	Requirements and expectations
Association member	The group consists of any individual, firm, or corporation in allied trades or industries and professionals within the territorial jurisdiction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Honesty is the guiding business principle, and members deal fairly with their respective employees, subcontractors, and suppliers. ▪ The association supports members with effective representation on issues related to industry, educational resources, access to local, state, and national experts, and a myriad of other services. ▪ Members are committed to eliminating substandard housing in State X. ▪ Members also participate in networking opportunities, community outreach, and industry development to improve the quality of life for the citizens of State X.
Community member	Community members who are beneficiaries of the charitable foundation are third-party stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homeownership can and should be within reach of every American family. The association contributes to urgent or emerging needs in the local economy.
Community stakeholder	Community stakeholders are the recipients of Association A's donations to fund housing and small to medium critical home repairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contribute to an urgent or emerging need in the local economy. ▪ Build strong relationships with community members. ▪ Build homes that are well-designed, well-constructed, and well-located in attractive communities, (i.e., access to educational, recreational, religious, and shopping facilities).
Federal, state, and local government	The government requires the organization to finish periodical reports of various kinds, and in return, the government provides the organization with benefits.	Construction projects must be compliant with the law.
Employee groups	The association's employee groups consist of eight directors, four program coordinators, a receptionist, and three volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrated trust, transparency, and respect. ▪ Fulfillment across work, personal lives, and relationships. ▪ Effective communication. ▪ Professional development.

Suppliers and Partners. Association A has three suppliers, partners, and collaborators: (a) information technology (IT) suppliers, (b) maintenance suppliers, and

(c) general office suppliers. Table 7 depicts the builder sector association’s suppliers and collaborators.

Table 7

Association A Suppliers and Collaborators

Suppliers and collaborators	Descriptions
IT suppliers	The IT specialist provides the association with web resources, network management, database administration, and software development.
Maintenance suppliers	The association office building requires daily maintenance, The maintenance suppliers provide services to manage all the repairs and ongoing tasks to maintain day-to-day operations within the facility.
General Office suppliers	General office suppliers are critical for the association office to remain well-stocked. Suppliers ensure the workforce operates efficiently and help the association create a professional atmosphere that increases stakeholders’ confidence.

Association A has 25 partner organizations called Smart Partners who provide essential resources to help the organization achieve the mission and vendors support, advancing the construction industry. The organization allows eligible sponsors to pay fees to participate in premier events, such as golfing events, fishing events, sporting clay events, formal dinners, and awards ceremonies, where sponsors engage members. The funds generated from the events contribute to 50% of the builder sector association’s revenue stream. Table 8 depicts the list of Association A’s partner organizations.

Table 8*Association A Smart Partnerships*

Diamond partner	Gold partner	Silver partner	Bronze partner
Sherwin - Williams	Duval Commercial Vehicle Solutions Dream Finder Home Mattamy Homes Parc Group Adam Homes	ICI Homes James Hardie Teco People Gas On Call Computer Solutions LLC BMC	Dostie Homes Wells Fargo Home Mortgage FBC Mortgage Centricity HBNEXT Bank of England Mortgage Regions Mortgage CHW Professional Consultants Universal Engineering Science Opendoor Sterling Specialties Providence Homes Lansing Building Products Miranda Contracting

Organizational Situation*Competitive Environment*

Competitive Position. Association A operates in a competitive environment.

Association A is an influential organization that provides members with a high level of service. The builder sector association competes for association members, members' time (i.e., volunteers), money (i.e., dues), and against multiple other associations such as the Chamber of Commerce the Urban Land Institute, the oldest and most extensive network of cross-disciplinary real estate and land use experts worldwide. Table 9 depicts a comparison of the largest builder sector associations in State X.

Association A is an affiliate of the NAHB, the largest network of craftsmen dedicated to building and enriching communities. The builder sector association is the largest construction association in the state with 23 total buildings and construction associations. Association A ranks number nine in a Nation of 6 hundred building and construction associations. The organization is a well-established builder sector

association with an over 77-year history of networking, community outreach, construction, and building industry development.

Competitiveness Changes. There are three essential competitive changes affecting the association: (a) demographic changes, (b) technology, and (c) the high barrier of entrance. First, builder sector association members' age demographic and the need for diversity in membership are significant competitive changes affecting Association A. The association desires to make the membership body look more like the population in which they operate. Second, the changes in technology are another competitive change affecting the builder sector association. Lagging in new technology adoption and not remaining current on technological tools results in a significant decline in Association A's productivity growth. Third, the high barrier to entry is a competitive change affecting Association A's. Membership in the builder sector association is vital to builders-developers-remodelers professional development, but cost-sensitive professionals' participation fees are significant.

Comparative Data. Association A does not systematically utilize comparative and competitive data. Table 9 depicts the list of Association A's partner organizations.

Table 9

Leading Affiliate Builder Associations in State X

Ranking	Associations	Membership as of June 2020
9th	Association A	1050 – 1100
31st	Association G	600 – 650
68th	Association M	450 – 500
71st	Association B	450 – 500

Note. From the NAHB website (<https://www.nahb.org/>).

Strategic Context

Association A has five strategic advantages and challenges. Table 10 depicts the list of Association A strategic advantages and challenges.

Table 10

Association A Strategic Context

<u>Strategic advantages</u>	<u>Strategic challenges</u>
Association A is a well-established association with an over 77-year history of networking.	The association lacks an effective strategic plan to develop a gender-diverse succession plan to restaff essential positions.
A component association of a well-established nationwide group of federated State Associations that operate independently of each other but work together for a united cause of advancing the construction industry.	The association competes against many other associations for members, volunteers, and dues.
Association A is influential in the political arena. The association leverages a network of long-term established relationships and financial resources to endorse candidates advancing the construction industry.	The association lacks an effective strategic plan to increase non-dues revenues.
Provides a forum for leaders to exchange ideas and innovations related to the construction industry.	Association A is experiencing unprecedented disruption to the sponsorship ecosystem for the future, due to the pandemic.
Association A employs a well-engaged workforce who possesses the education and experience to advance the association's causes and the growth of the construction industry.	The administrative staff lacks opportunities to advance into senior leadership positions.

Performance Improvement System

Performance improvement refers to the business practice of identifying, analyzing, and improving existing business processes to optimize performance, meet best practice standards, or improve quality (Robinson & Schroeder, 2009). The executive officer supervises employee groups and conducts scheduled meetings with each workforce member at the beginning of the year to establish professional goals and discuss areas of opportunity. Association A administers a classic formal annual review at the end of the calendar year when each employee receives a performance report card score. The executive officer uses corrective action policies that encourage team members to assume

personal responsibility for their behavior and performance. The executive officer cultivates a culture of openness in sharing knowledge, cooperation, and soliciting staff feedback.

Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customers

Leadership

No matter the size, an organization profits from a solid foundation of leadership. Business leadership is an essential component of organizational sustainability. Champion leadership leads to effective performance. Influential leaders lead with poise, foresight, and wisdom in unexpected circumstances. Astute leaders make decisions based on what is best in the long-term, developing a bold vision that inspires a team to perform tasks to achieve organization goals and objectives (Matzler et al., 2008; Vasilescu, 2019). Successful leaders create a cohesive and communicative work culture with team members that contribute to the organization's overall success (Vasilescu, 2019). Influential leadership guides and inspires teams to meet and exceed expectations.

Senior Leadership

A solid foundation of leadership governs the builder sector association. A 60-member board of directors governs Association A, seven of which are also executive committee members. Senior leadership consists of a board of directors, a seven-member executive committee, the president, and the executive officer. Members of the executive committee make decisions to guide the builder sector association's daily operations, while the board of directors provides strategic-level direction.

Setting Vision and Values. Senior leadership uses the vision and values to guide the builder sector association to future success. Board and executive committee members meet during the annual installment meetings to develop an initiative for the coming year. Officers use the vision and values to guide the builder sector association to future success. Senior leaders use a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to review and refine the builder sector association's vision and goals. The SWOT analysis helps leadership teams assess internal and external business factors and strategize short-term and long-term decisions to improve their competitive position.

Promoting Legal and Ethical Behavior. The builder sector association's overarching code is to treat everyone ethically. Association A demonstrates its commitment to legal and ethical behavior by adhering to the Code of Ethics that are listed in the association bylaws. Senior leadership nominates future leaders who adhere to the behavior, conduct, and personal responsibility included in the Code of Ethics. The Association A Code of Ethics include the following:

- Home ownership can and should be within the reach of every American family.
- American homes should be well-designed, well-constructed, and well-located in attractive communities, with educational, recreational, religious, and shopping facilities accessible to all.
- American homes should be built under the free American enterprise system.
- Honesty is our guiding business policy.
- High standards of health, safety, and sanitation shall be built into every home.

- Members shall deal fairly with their respective employees, subcontractors, and suppliers.
- As members of a progressive industry, we encourage research to develop new materials, new building techniques, new building equipment, and improved methods of financing to the end that every purchaser may get the greatest value possible for every dollar.
- All sound legislative proposals furthering the goals outlined above shall have our informed and vigorous support. Proposed legislation that negatively impacts the construction industry as a whole will be vigorously opposed by our association.
- We hold inviolate the free enterprise system and the American way of life. We pledge our support to our association, our local, state, and national associations and all related industries concerned with the preservation of legitimate rights and freedom.

Association A's Code of Ethics is an internal guideline and an external statement of its values and commitments. The builder sector association membership assumes these responsibilities freely and solemnly, mindful that the Code of Ethics is part of their obligation as association members. The Code of Ethics helps Association A membership to clarify the mission, values, and principles, linking them to professional conduct standards. Senior leaders articulate the values the organization wishes to foster in the membership and employees and, in doing so, define desired behavior. The executive officer conveys the builder sector association's clear vision of goals and a passion for the work. The workforce is energized and empowered by the executive officer, who

discusses ethics and compliance. The executive officer enables the workforce to handle ethical dilemmas in daily work. Association A executive leaders promote a culture of accountability, and the executive officer cultivates a high expectation of staff members. Employees are encouraged to participate in training courses to help them develop professionally and increase their problem-solving skills.

Communicating and Engaging the Workforce, Key Partners, and Key Customers. Communication is vital to the builder sector association's workforce productivity and the organization's performance. Association A leadership focuses on providing employees with informed, accurate, and detailed feedback. The organization does not have much bureaucracy and participates in clear two-way communication with members, employee groups, and other stakeholders. The executive officer is transparent and shares the values, visions, and the executive committee's new initiatives during weekly staff meetings. The executive officer encourages open two-way communication during weekly staff meetings and everyday work.

The builder sector association recognizes that successfully setting organizational direction and purpose is a collaborative effort and communication is vital to organizational sustainability. The executive officer and the seven-member executive committee meet bi-weekly to approve financial reports and update the progress toward meeting goals. During the monthly executive committee meeting, members of the workforce and directors provide updates. Council and committee chairs are held accountable for goals assigned during the annual retreat. The executive officer and president meet once a month, between the monthly executive committee meetings, to

discuss strategies for achieving annual goals and initiatives. Recognizing that scheduling regular sessions and providing constructive feedback between directors and the workforce helps both parties become engaged in their role and confident in their responsibilities, the executive officer initiates regular communication and feedback with employees.

The builder sector association distributes information regarding new initiatives through texting, cell phone, electronic mail, Zoom online audio and web conferencing platform, and face to face. Post COVID-19 pandemic, senior leaders canceled all in-person meetings. The senior leaders utilize digital technology to communicate and ensure the safety of the membership and employees. Association A leadership makes no overt effort to communicate essential decisions and needs for organizational change to community members, community stakeholders, federal, state, and local governments. During the installation meeting, the new president provides a review of the builder sector association's values, visions, and annual initiatives to volunteer members, key suppliers, and partners (i.e., Smart Partners).

Mission and Organizational Performance. As stated earlier, the Association A mission says that the organization promotes policies, education, and programs that allow members to succeed. The builder sector association membership consists of professionals with careers in the construction industry. The organization exists to meet members' needs, offering unique value through engaging opportunities and events. Association A's mission is to help the executive leadership team guide the organization's actions. For example, the leadership employs staff and engages volunteers with different skill sets to

increase recruitment. Furthermore, the workforce and volunteers support industry professionals by coordinating member-to-member networking events and community-building events and enhancing overall efforts to aid them in continuing their career growth.

Creating an Environment for Success. Association A is customer-focused, and staff are encouraged to make the same deliberate effort. Senior leadership establishes the vision for the builder sector association and creates clear organizational core values. The general membership and the executive committee members are informed about updates during the executive committee meetings. Members may attend the executive committee meeting the second Wednesday of the month.

The workforce is committed to supporting the organization's vision and mission. The executive officer ensures the builder sector association's values and goals are communicated effectively and discussed with the employees during weekly staff meetings. The Employee Handbook is a useful tool to improve professionalism, transparency, honesty, and hard work. The executive officer and president meet on the third Wednesday of the month to discuss Association A's initiatives, strategies to achieve goals, and updates on progress. The executive officer cultivates innovation by allowing the team to make mistakes because taking risks enables individuals to learn and grow.

Builder sector professionals populate Association A membership. By joining the organization, members signify their interest in developing professionally. Part of Association A's mission is to create sustainability within the organizations, and talented future leaders are critical to the organization's future growth. Leadership development is

an explicit part of the builder sector association's growth strategy. Senior leaders use succession planning to ensure a pipeline of internal talent is primed and ready to assume a vacant leadership position. Past presidents of Association A staff the nomination committee and are accountable for developing the next generation of leader-member. Senior leaders of the committee are responsible for identifying members committed to the mission and are willing to take an active role in leading the builder sector association.

Creating a Focus on Action. Association A's leadership team schedules over 200 meetings a year to provide updates on achievements and offer insights into new opportunities for growth. The executive director and president meet monthly to discuss Association A's initiatives, strategies to achieve goals, and updates on progress. Senior leaders focus on strategic opportunities and actions to improve performance. During monthly meetings, the builder sector association's workforce implements services and improved processes to help separate the organization from the competition.

Governance and Societal Responsibilities

Establishing and implementing effective organizational governance is a critical component of Association A's sustainability. A solid foundation of leadership with layers of accountability governs the builder sector association. Senior leadership consists of a board of directors, a seven-member executive committee, the president, and the executive officer. The board of directors develops the governing policies, which are the strategic-level direction for Association A. For example, the builder sector association's governing policies help establish the organization's boundaries to ensure integrity, high quality, fair dealing, and ethical practice. The secretary-treasurer ensures Association A's fiduciary

soundness. Each department head develops an operations budget which the executive officer first reviews. The secretary-treasurer is accountable for all monies collected and disbursed by the builder sector association and provides a monthly statement and a record of the official proceedings to the board of directors and annual reports to the membership. The board of directors reviews all financials and provides budget approval. Board-approved budgets are published and emailed to all members to ensure transparency in the builder sector association operations. Board of directors' meetings are open to all members, and Association A membership is encouraged to attend. Members of the executive committee make decisions to guide the builder sector association's daily operations. Along with the board of directors and the executive committee, the president assigns duties to the executive officer. The executive officer, along with the directors, establishes guidance for the workforce regarding how they will enable the builder sector association's work.

Governance System. Association A uses a governance system to outline members' and governing bodies' roles. The Constitution and Bylaws provide members and senior leadership with a list of the internal operating rules and the methods by which the builder sector association will pursue organizational goals and objectives. For example, Association A's Constitution and Bylaws describe how board members and executive committee members behave and schedule meetings. The Constitution and Bylaws align with the builder sector associations' identity and mission as a business, providing members and senior leadership with codes of conduct and other regulations to which members must adhere.

Layers of leadership drive Association A's guidance system within the organization. Senior leaders set the builder sector association's vision and values. Board members and executive committee members meet during the annual installment meetings to develop an upcoming year initiative. Members of the board, the executive committee, and the president assign duties to the executive officer. The executive officer is the administrative head, ensuring the staff possesses clear direction on what the organization is to accomplish and how to accomplish their work.

An ongoing requirement for membership is the recruitment of other members. The past presidents of the Association A staff the nomination committee and are accountable for developing the next generation of leader-members. Senior leaders are responsible for identifying members committed to the mission and willing to lead the builder sector association actively. A Board Reporting Card is an internal comprehensive governance tool used to monitor member participation in the builder sector association. Identifying members to participate in the Association A's senior leadership is an ongoing mission of the organization. The executive committee and executive officer use the Board Reporting Card to measure member performance. Managed by the executive officer, the Board Reporting Card helps chart member attendance, financial support, recruitment of new members, and overall engagement in the builder sector association. The organization also uses a "Get-To" board to illustrate the ongoing membership campaign. The "Get-To" board is an internal audit tool, updated monthly to reflect membership recruitment. The executive committee and executive officer report on the membership campaign during the annual board retreat. An independent certified public accountant performs an

external audit for the builder sector association. The certified public accountant addresses changes in accounting standards and examines the validity and accuracy of the organization's accounting records.

Senior leadership recognizes that unsecured membership data places members at risk. The builder sector association manages a membership directory and offers public phone number lists for sale to external customers. Association A does not provide a public email directory to protect member stakeholders. Association A governance system to protect membership data is a built-in member messaging feature, where members communicate within the organization's internal system without offering a public email directory. The builder sector association conducts macro-level political advocacy to provide indirect giving to political campaigns on behalf of members. Association A political action committee receives and disburses financial contributions, on behalf of members, to political campaigns, ballot measures, or proposed bills that align with the builder sector association's interests.

Recognizing the need to prepare members for senior leadership responsibilities, Association A executive leadership has developed and implemented a succession plan for emerging leaders. The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) helps identify the knowledge, skills, and training needed for future officers or board members. The ELP helps prepare participants by providing them access to personal and professional development opportunities to ensure emerging leaders can fill officer and board vacancies in the builder sector association. Association A also uses an internal comprehensive governance tool to monitor member participation. Identifying members to participate in the builder

sector association's senior leadership is an ongoing mission of the organization. The executive committee and executive officer use the Board Reporting Card to measure member performance. Managed by the executive officer, the Board Reporting Card helps chart member attendance, financial support, recruitment of new members, and overall engagement in Association A.

Performance Evaluation. Association A recognizes a need to assess how effectively executive leadership performs its role. The builder sector association has not created a formal framework for evaluating senior leadership. Past presidents of the builder sector association staff the nomination committee and are accountable for developing the next generation of leader-member. The builder sector association appointments members to the board of directors to enhance board performance. Senior leaders of the committee are responsible for identifying members committed to the mission and are skilled in taking an active role in leading the builder sector association.

Legal and Ethical Behavior. As stated earlier, adherence to ethical and professional behavior standards is fundamental to the builder sector association's successful operation while also acknowledging its social responsibility. All builder sector association members and the workforce adhere to a written code of ethics that collects the rules, principles, values, and employee expectations essential for successful operation. Association A workforce and all members review and affirm their commitment to abide by the standards that guide their decision-making and daily professional conduct. Senior leadership offers members, employees, and volunteers ongoing education about ethical, legal, and social issues related to the builder sector and construction industry.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance. Association A is committed to providing services and engaging in activities that enhance the organization's credibility and value. Fundamental to the builder sector association's successful operation is adherence to the standards of ethical and professional behavior while also acknowledging its social responsibility. All builder sector association members and the workforce adhere to a written code of ethics that provides a collection of the rules, principles, values, and employee expectations essential for successful operation. Table 11 depicts Association A's Code of Ethics.

The builder sector association has not experienced current legal, regulatory, and community concerns with product and operations. To address anticipated future legal, regulatory, and community concerns with products and operations, Association A is involved in public policy through the government affairs committee. Governed by the executive committee and board of directors, the committee addresses industry issues that affect business and community interest on a macro-level. The government affairs committee, led by the committee chairperson, brings together politically savvy members, community leaders, and elected officials to discuss specific local and state industry issues and develop new ideas for future policy. The committee chairperson provides advice and recommendations to Association A executive committee and board of directors, who empowers the chairperson to take legal actions when compromise and negotiation with officials on Association A members' priorities are impossible. For example, the builder sector association advocates for the protection of federal financing and programs that preserve and build affordable housing. The chair accesses the Industry Issue Fund funds

and fundraising campaigns to underwrite advocacy and legal expenses. Once a policy is adopted, the builder sector association's public relations arm educates stakeholders on the new approach.

Association A recognizes the lasting effect of the builder sector on the community. Buildings and houses are crucial to both the economic development of a city and to the people in the community. As the global population ages, builder leaders must accommodate the needs of future generations by creating structures with the most significant impact. Association A members recognize that homeownership is part of the American dream. As part of the builder sector association's mission, members commit to designing and building sustainable and affordable structures for all consumers.

Association A members must adhere to layers of state, local, federal codes, and regulations. Builder sector association members participate in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration training and code training offered by the organization to help members remain compliant with all applicable legal requirements. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the global economy resulting in building constructions and new homes construction delays because of the shortage of supplies. The government affairs committee engages building officials, share member issues, and supports legislation to examine industry problems, recommend solutions, and implement solutions. Education and engagement ensure members adhere to codes and regulations, the foundation of the builder sector association's compliance program.

Ethical Behavior. Association A leadership shares with builder sector association members and employee groups the mission statement, vision, goals, and code of ethics

that provide guidelines that clearly outline expectations. No formally developed systems for monitoring, auditing, and reporting member misconduct exist; however, blatant code violations result in revoked membership. While Association A is not an enforcing organization, the executive committee and board of directors respond to incidents when they occur. The builder sector association provides members with continuing education classes to ensure members know the relevant business laws, become aware of potential legal or ethical problems, and how to resolve them ethically.

Societal Contribution. Builder sector professionals uniquely influence economic growth and significantly impact the economy and society. As stated earlier, the construction industry contributes to the U.S. economy, influencing business growth and employment. The quality of buildings affects the well-being of citizens and communities across the country. Senior leadership endorses local, state, and federal lawmakers who support policies that help stabilize construction activities. The executive leadership team supports policies and procedures that aid builder sector professionals in working more sustainably by adopting new methods to cut down on waste and developing innovative products that can help them improve many facets of the building process.

Societal Well-Being. The builder sector association believes that a core social determinant of social well-being is improving housing affordability and access to housing citizens can afford. Home stability is essential for people to pursue their goals—unaffordable housing results in significant social and economic consequences for individuals and communities. The builder sector association members recognize the need to provide people with sustainable and affordable homes. Housing inventory remains low

while the demand for homes continues to remain significant. Association A members recognize that the methods and materials involved in constructing a home and or a building affect the environment.

Community Support. Association A supports the community by advocating for housing construction to meet the needs of families, young professionals, and seniors. The executive committee and board of directors authorize funding for a lobbyist to persuade lawmakers and administrators to cast a vote or make decisions supporting the builder sector interests. In addition, association members positively impact the communities they serve through the organization's charitable foundation and fundraising events. Through philanthropic events such as Builders' Care, members donate charitable contributions to help make the case regarding housing affordability and housing stability. Association A uses champagne funds to actively recruit a broader array of stakeholders and local leaders to address housing affordability and stability actively.

Strategy

Strategy Development

Strategy Development Process. The executive leadership team seeks innovative ideas and initiatives that align with Association A's vision, mission, and values. As stated in the previous section, board members and executive committee members meet during the annual installment meetings to develop initiatives for the coming year. Leadership performs a SWOT analysis to identify and collect vital business information regarding the builder sector association's current situation. The executive team identifies patterns and documents agreed-upon decision-making processes. The executive officer

communicates specific, realistic, and time-bound goals with its internal stakeholders, sharing strategic opportunities to help position the organization from the competition and ensure long-term productivity. Currently, senior leadership does not share its strategic planning process with external stakeholders.

Strategic Development. One of senior leadership's many responsibilities is to attract and grow a loyal community of members and to generate recurring revenue. Executive leadership has not created a formal membership strategy for growth. However, senior leadership uses various programs and events to attract members from the construction industry. As stated earlier in the study, the builder sector association provides a platform for builder sector professionals to network, learn, obtain credentials, impact the community, and endorse legislative change. Senior leadership has established a builder sector association value proposition defined in the mission statement. As stated earlier, the mission statement concisely outlines Association A's purpose and identifies the benefits builder sector professionals will receive by joining the builder sector association. While Association A maintains no formal strategy to generate recurring revenue, senior leadership continues to create income on a predictable basis via membership dues and Smart Partners' sponsorship of various events.

Strategic Objectives. Association A leadership's primary strategic objective is to adapt during an unexpected disruption, maximizing productivity. The builder sector association has few formal systems for developing a strategic objective quantifiable using statistical results and timelines that provide leaders with goals that are measurable or observable data. The informal strategic objectives include training events to increase

employee knowledge and capabilities as well as members' knowledge level through credentialing programs and Strategic objectives for growth: the executive leadership team can help a company plan for the future of the business with specific steps to achieve long-term goals, implementing a timeline to help make an objective measurable. Association A leaders create informal strategic objectives for learning, increasing staff knowledge and capabilities with specific actions. Senior leadership's strategic objectives for training include the organization investing revenue in its employees to address overall performance goals.

Strategy Implementation

Action Plan of Development and Deployment. During the annual retreat, the executive leadership team identifies five initiatives for the upcoming year. The executive director and president meet monthly to discuss Association A's initiatives, strategies to achieve goals, and updates on progress. Table 11 depicts the builder sector association's five initiatives and deliverables.

Table 11

Association A's Annual Initiatives

Initiative	Deliverable
Increase membership	Executive leadership team members approve strategies to increase member recruitment and retention.
Improve technology	Technology is at the center of business change. Executive leaders seek to offer members access to essential knowledge in new technology designed to improve industry safety, efficiency, and quality.
Improve financial position	Senior leadership determines how to efficiently use Association A resources.
Growth and diversification	Association A leadership expands services and initiatives to appeal to new professionals and to create organizational sustainability.
Improve gender and ethnic diversity	Executive leadership designs processes and practices to foster inclusion and reduce conscious and unconscious

bias. Senior leadership is committed to providing professionals seeking career advancement with equal opportunities to interact and elevate perspectives.

As stated earlier, the executive director participates in two-way communication with staff frequently and consistently. The executive leadership does not use formal indicators that show how the innovation contributes to the vision. However, staff members and directors provide the board updates during the monthly executive committee meeting. Council and committee chairs are held accountable for goals assigned during the annual retreat. The executive officer and president meet once a month, between the monthly executive committee meetings, to discuss strategies for achieving annual goals and initiatives. The builder sector association is structured internally to meet external and internal demands and opportunities. Recognizing that scheduling regular sessions and providing constructive feedback between directors and the workforce helps both parties achieve goals, the executive officer initiates regular communication and feedback with employees. By engaging staff in discussions about process improvement, member engagement, and service development, everyone becomes a catalyst for positive change.

As stated earlier in the study, Association A has 25 Smart Partners who provide essential resources to help achieve its mission and vendor support, advancing the construction industry. In exchange for financial contributions to the Association A's premier event, eligible sponsors are provided access to engage members. The funds generated from the events contribute to 50% of the builder sector association's revenue stream. (See Table 8 for a list of partner organizations). The secretary-treasurer is responsible to Association A for an accounting of all monies collected and disbursed by

the organization, providing a monthly statement to the board of directors and an annual report to the builder sector association members.

Senior leadership ensures that financial and other resources are available to support the achievement of action plans while the organization achieves current obligations. As stated in the section on governance, leadership also uses the Board Reporting Card to help chart member attendance, financial support, recruitment of new members, and overall engagement in the builder sector association. Senior leadership implements a strategic planning process that includes external stakeholders.

Action Plan Modification. Association A leaders recognize the need to pivot the action plan to help mitigate negative external factors such as market trends, competitors, and other potential issues affecting the organization externally. For example, as discussed earlier, the construction industry is an essential signal of the U.S. economic climate (BEA, 2022). The government regulates local, state, and federal safety rules and can impact the building and construction industry. If governmental officials deny approval of safety laws, no project will occur. In the section on organizational description, I explained how the executive committee and board of directors authorize funding for a lobbyist to persuade lawmakers and administrators to cast a vote or make decisions supporting the builder sector interests.

Customers

Customer Expectations

Association A's internal and external stakeholder groups are its customers. Stakeholders include anyone who, directly or indirectly, is interested in the builder sector

association achieving its goals, either providing services to other employees within the same organization or external partners who interact with the builder sector association outside its overall operations. As depicted in Table 6, the builder sector association's customers, (i.e., association members; community members; community stakeholders; federal, state, and local government; and employee groups), help to transform the organization into a more efficient and effective business.

Customer Listening. Senior leadership understands that listening to internal and external stakeholders is crucial for Association A to grow membership, innovate, and recruit and retain professionals for the workforce and membership. The builder sector association's future-forward leadership team recognizes providing premier learning programs to employees is essential to long-term productivity. As stated earlier, the executive leadership team communicates with members, employee groups, and other stakeholders. The executive leadership team strives to create an environment of encouraged collaboration and two-way communication. For example, when mentoring or teaching other professionals, leaders recognize the value of two-way communication, where both parties genuinely listen to each other and share insights. The leadership team recognizes the value of improving the workforce environment by ensuring employees and members can share their ideas or concerns without facing unfair repercussions.

Customer Segmentation and Product Offerings. Business leaders use customer segment intelligence to help them connect with their target customers (i.e., employees and construction industry professionals) at a deeper level and to stay relevant to staff and membership. While senior executives would benefit from a formal system to gather data

required to deliver the best employee and member experience, they use a broadly defined category to identify customer needs. For example, the builder sector association provides a professional women council to address the unique needs of women in the builder sector and the ELP committee to provide professional support to grow their careers; senior executives lack a plan to address the underserved needs of members of color. Association A leaders observe how employees and members access programs, events, or services. Senior executives develop initiatives to support the workforce and membership in achieving career goals or help them navigate industry challenges. To reduce miscommunication and potential confusion of core information, executive leadership uses in-person conversations in the workplace and during annual builder sector association meetings to convey the tone of the discussion. During weekly staff meetings, the executive officer is transparent and shares the values, visions, and the executive committee's new initiatives. Senior leadership also uses emails for distributing information to multiple recipients so employees and its members can share documents with an entire team or professional colleagues.

Customer Engagement

Customer Relationships and Supports. Executive team members use a nonformal customer engagement strategy to engage internal and external customers. Communication is vital to workforce productivity and builder sector association performance. Senior leadership is transparent and shares the values, visions, and new initiatives with Association A members during annual and monthly meetings. Business leaders believe engaged employees are better performers. The executive leadership team

integration process for new staff includes familiarizing them with their roles and duties and drafting an internal announcement explaining the new appointment's impact on specific initiatives and programs. Leadership also posts a picture of new team members and brief background information on Association A website so that internal and external stakeholders learn about additions to the workforce.

Communication is vital to workforce productivity and Association A performance. Senior leadership is transparent and shares the values, visions, and new initiatives with builder sector association members during annual and monthly meetings. The workforce plays a significant role in engaging Association A membership. Staff possess the knowledge level required to provide builder sector association members with excellent customer service. The builder sector association's leadership ensures effective customer engagement by the workforce, providing them access to training, motivating them, and rewarding them for achieving organizational goals. The executive officer also provides employees with informed and accurate information. New members also undergo an efficient onboarding process, which includes leadership welcoming them into the organization, inviting them to attend a board meeting where they are identified as new to the builder sector association, fostering formal and informal communication, and familiarizing them with organizational offerings.

An essential requirement for developing and maintaining a relationship with the Association A is that internal and external stakeholders behave ethically. As explained in the leadership triad section of this study, external stakeholders are attracted to the builder sector association for its quality brand developed over seven decades. As stated earlier,

leadership selects external partners who adhere to the behavior, conduct, and personal responsibility included in the Association A's Code of Ethics. All customers benefit from the builder sector association's established internal ethical principles.

Determination of Customer Satisfaction. The builder sector association does not have a formal system for determining customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and engagement, nor does it have a process for obtaining information on customer satisfaction with the organization relative to other builder sector associations. As such, the organization does not have a mechanism for using these data to support operational decision-making.

Results Triad: Workforce, Operations, and Results

Workforce

Workforce Environment

Capability and Capacity Needs. Senior leaders create an inspiring vision and values, but if employees lack the capacity and capabilities, the builder sector association cannot implement initiatives to help expand the organization. The executive officer and president meet once a month, between the monthly executive committee meetings, to discuss strategy for achieving annual goals. Employees are assigned specific roles and responsibilities, and the executive officer and directors routinely observe and monitor the workforce's performance to assess whether they are reaching their capacity to accept new projects and have the capability to perform tasks. The executive officer assesses each employee's skills, competencies, and the organization's staffing levels requirements. No certification is required to perform any position within the organization. Employees are

cross-trained, developing their capacity, so the builder sector association has the flexibility to respond to fluctuating workflows.

New Workforce Members. The turnover of the Association A's work staff is low. The builder sector association seeks to hire the best person for the job and encourages a culture of performance. Results matter and the staff members are held accountable for completing tasks. The executive officer ensures the employees are aligned and working together to drive success by promoting ongoing communication and coaching. The workforce is encouraged to take risks and accept new work responsibilities. The executive officer matches individual staff to each job explaining the task and outlining the desired result. Next, the executive officer ensures employees understand boundaries, have access to training and support. Directors and managers schedule interim check-in times to update progress.

Evaluating the current staff and staffing needs are ongoing to maintain business continuity while anticipating future demands. The executive officer reviews the budget to determine funds available to increase the necessary staffing level. The executive committee is responsible for additional funds to improve the staffing budget when the current workforce lacks capacity and capabilities. The executive officer oversees recruiting and hiring employees. Directors and managers manage the onboarding of new staff. Indeed.com and word of mouth are sources for identifying prospective candidates. Association A offers competitive salaries to attract and retain qualified talent. The first step is that the executive officer sources 100 resumes. The executive officer screens the resumes using keywords related to the role, experience, job history, and education.

The next step is the executive officer narrows the search to the top 15 to 20 resumes and screens the resumes further, scheduling six to eight candidates for a phone interview. After completing the phone interviews, the executive officer schedules four final candidates to participate in an in-person interview. Finally, the executive officer plans an additional phone interview to help determine the best candidate for the job. Association A provides new hires with an informal onboarding to integrate a new employee with the organization's culture, as well as getting them the tools and information needed to become a productive member of the team. The organization outsources part of the human resources functions to a third-party HR company.

Association A leadership believes employee onboarding helps empower new hires by providing them with a thorough orientation of the organization expectations and culture. The onboarding process is 90 days and benefits the builder sector association because it helps the employee adjust to their new role and quickly perform work. The director and managers meet with new hires on their first day of work to review the job responsibilities, introduce them to the office staff, and provide a tour of the office. Current staff members also help new employees become acclimated to the workplace. The new employee also meets with a representative from the third-party HR organization, which monitors and manages the administrative process (i.e., collecting payroll and insurance information, etc.). Current employees are encouraged to help new employees to feel welcome on the job and minimize the time needed to become productive in their positions. The executive officer encourages new hires to attend a committee or council meeting to understand the builder sector association better. Effective onboarding ensures

that new employees adjust to their new roles. Directors and managers meet daily with the new hire to provide mentoring and monitor their acclimation to the position and the work environment. Association A's leadership believes effective onboarding reduces employee turnover because it helps new employees to feel welcome on the job and provides them with the tools and knowledge to perform their tasks effectively.

The ethnic makeup of the Association's current workforce is over 90% White American. Senior leadership is committed to making a deliberate effort to include ethnic diversity in the membership and the workforce. Association A believes that a multicultural workforce provides a significant edge when pursuing a more diverse membership. The executive officer's strategy to increase ethnic diversity is by prioritizing creating a diversity and inclusion strategy in its recruiting and hiring process.

Workforce Change Management. The builder sector association promotes organizational agility and encourages the workforce to embrace change, spearhead innovation, and minimize disruption to organizational performance. The executive officer reinforces the importance of flexibility in staff meetings and daily interactions. The executive officer is transparent with staff, explaining why the organization is experiencing change, and ensures that the builder sector association has a transition strategy. The COVID-19 crisis is a significant disruption to the builder sector association's workflow. At the height of the pandemic, the workforce transitioned from the traditional workspace to telecommuting. The workforce's ability to react quickly to change demonstrates flexibility and agility in merging planned activities with adapted ones or changing course entirely. The builder sector association uses technology

platforms to manage workflow, collaborate on projects, and effectively communicate.

Employees log into Zoom and use other technology platforms to stay connected. Board members and council members also use virtual conference technology to participate in meetings.

The workforce understands their role in the change because the executive officer is transparent about the change and its purpose, sharing with team members as early as possible. The executive officer balances the needs of the workforce and the organization by ensuring the best person is hired for the job, supporting staff, being transparent, and reinforcing the vision and mission of the builder sector association. Transparency is essential to the workforce, adapting to change. The executive officer prepares employees to adapt to the changes by communicating changes the senior leadership approved. Cross-training of employees is encouraged. The builder sector association does not provide a formal cross-training program. Employee informal cross-training occurs when staff help each other complete projects and manage events. The executive officer ensures the team has accurate information, training, and support.

Work Accomplishment. Association A provides an informal process for organizing and managing the workforce. The executive officer, directors, and managers use an Excel spreadsheet to track project planning, management, and monitoring. The spreadsheet provides the executive officer with a visual overview of operations and milestones achieved. Directors and managers review the spreadsheet multiple times weekly to ensure staff meet crucial deadlines and maintain an overview of all active projects' progress. Before the COVID-19 crisis, the executive officer managed workflow

through in-person interaction and communication. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the builder sector association adhered to the CDC social distancing guidelines resulting in staff maintaining a virtual professional existence. The workforce worked remotely, the board of directors and council members participated in virtual conferencing, and the executive officer organized and managed workflow through phone communication. Since the CDC has relaxed the COVID-19 guidelines, the workforce has resumed working from the office. The executive officer capitalizes on the builder sector association's core competencies by leading by example. Leadership exemplifies moral standards within the organization and expects the workforce to adopt the same moral standards. Senior leadership fosters an ethical work environment with clear values, priorities, and standards.

Workforce Climate

Workplace Environment. The builder sector association's workforce environment thrives on a culture that values employees and treats them fairly. Association A helps to promote a united team by ensuring staff are informed, provided with resources to perform their job, and support to take risks. The builder sector association cultivates the workforce's organizational learning, innovation, and intelligence by supporting employee professional development. Funds to offer employees training development activities and opportunity to investigate and learn different kinds of approaches, methods, and techniques to perform their jobs. The builder sector association includes bonuses and funding in the annual budget, to provide the workforce with professional development activities.

Senior leadership ensures workplace health, security, and accessibility for the workforce by being aware of employee needs and assuring accurate information is used to make business decisions. As organizations around the world continue to reimagine their business model, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to create an evolving situation. Senior leadership recognizes the benefits of effective communication with the board of directors, council members, builder sector association members, employees, external partners, and the people and communities they serve. Association A leverages technology to help the workforce share information and remain transparent about decision-making. Association A owns the two-year-old office building that serves as the headquarters. The building is an American with Disabilities Act-compliant facility with surveillance cameras to ensure workplace security for employees and other stakeholders. The organization complies with federal and state regulations regarding all builder sector association operations.

Workforce Benefits and Policies. The builder sector association supports employees via services, benefits, and policies. Association A offers employees a good remuneration package. The executive officer monitors trends in the industry and region and offers employees competitive wages to retain and recruit top professionals. All employees receive comprehensive healthcare and a vacation package. To help the workforce manage their responses to professional and personal stress positively, the organization offers staff a wellness program to promote their well-being. The builder sector association also provides annual first aid training to all employees.

Workforce Engagement

Assessment of Workforce Engagement. The organization leaders have no systemic approach for measuring workforce engagement.

Organizational Culture and Performance Management and Development.

Senior leadership retains quality talent by making employees feel heard and nurturing a positive organizational culture. As stated earlier, the executive officers maintain consistent communication with staff by scheduling team meetings to relay updates and feedback. The executive director engages the workforce, using face-to-face meetings with staff members to enhance communication and build stronger employee-manager relationships. From the beginning, leadership establishes a positive rapport and sets standards and expectations with employees, especially with new hires.

Operations

Work Processes

Product and Process Design and Process Management and Improvement.

Association A leadership has not created a documented systematic approach for current programs and services.

Supply Network Management. As stated earlier, Association A uses several suppliers for certain aspects of the organization. The builder sector association selects suppliers depending on value for money, quality, reliability, and service. Business leaders have not created a formal vendor selection process nor implemented supplier evaluations to help the builder sector association choose the supplier that best meets their business needs. Executive leadership selects effective suppliers who align with the organization's

mission. The most effective suppliers offer products or services that meet the builder sector association's needs.

Innovation Network. Association A leadership prioritizes organizational agility and encourages the workforce to embrace change and spearhead innovation. The executive officer cultivates innovation by encouraging staff members to take risks to help the builder sector association grow. Senior leadership has not created a system to collect, monitor, and analyze data to help leaders make innovative value-creation and loss-prevention decisions. The board reviews and approves plans to pursue investments in new opportunities that will transform the builder sector association to generate continual growth.

Operational Effectiveness

Process Efficiency and Effectiveness. The organization does not have systematic processes for managing process efficiency and effectiveness. An example of how senior leaders ensure operational effectiveness is the board of directors reviewing financials and providing budget approval for builder sector association operations. In doing so, the board ensures effectiveness through managing the cost of operations. Executive leadership includes funding in the annual budget to provide the workforce with professional development activities. In addition to providing employees with support and training to ensure performance efficiency, the executive team uses communication skills to help clarify duties and increase employee engagement. Leadership recognizes employee performance, allocating resources for annual bonuses when the builder sector association has a successful year (i.e., team members reach productivity goals).

Security and Cybersecurity. The builder sector association has not created a system to monitor online business protection and automation. As such, executive team members have not created a plan to update and safeguard information systems and devices from cybersecurity threats.

Safety and Emergency Preparedness. While senior leadership has provided employees access to first aid training, the builder sector association has not created a formal plan to prepare and train staff for emergencies and hazards. Employees have not participated in rescue and emergency care training. As such, employees are ill-informed of the proper procedures to take when an emergency happens.

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement of Organizational Performance

Process Measurement. Association A does not have systematic processes to collect and manage feedback regarding programs, events, and daily operations or to measure, analyze, and improve organizational performance. As stated earlier, executive leadership evaluates the financial information.

The builder sector association does not have competitors in the local area. No comparative data or information is available to make fact-based decisions when senior leadership implements a new program, event, or service. Association A leadership neither collects nor maintains other data in a structured format. Executive team members need a structured system to manage or ensure the quality of organizational data and information.

Performance Analysis and Review and Performance Improvement. The builder sector association leadership have no systemic approach to performance analysis or performance improvement.

Information and Knowledge Management

Data and Information. Organization leaders have no systemic approach ensuring data quality and availability.

Organizational Knowledge. As stated earlier, senior leadership uses several strategies to improve retention. Association A leadership and members share information and knowledge throughout the organization through formal leadership meetings and smaller committee meetings. Best practices, such as reward programs, are implemented to engage the staff. Association A leadership has implemented various strategies to invest in employees and reduce turnover rates. However, the builder sector association does not have a systemic approach to assess or evaluate whether the organization's engagement strategies have impacted retention rates. Effective communication is a critical component of organizing builder sector association work. Senior leadership incorporates technology as the primary platform for sharing knowledge and information with employees. For example, email is still a mainstay of office communication, helping leadership disseminate valuable new information, clarify goals, and prevent misunderstandings.

Collection, Analysis, and Preparation of Results

Thematic Findings

Women are often significantly outnumbered in traditionally male industries (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). Females in leadership positions in male dominated industries

still need to be more present. Past researchers have been relatively silent in examining how leaders in male-centric industries achieve organizational sustainability through gender-diverse succession planning strategies. I read empirical and theoretical approaches and analyzed responses from study participants' interviews to research how builder leaders achieve organizational sustainability through gender-diverse succession planning strategies. I addressed the research question and the various succession planning strategies used by builder sector executives in the southeastern United States I organized the data into themes. The themes deduced from the transcribed data, additional information from the website, documentation, and artifacts are as follows; (a) gaining confidence and competency in your abilities, (b) networking and building relationships, (c) the influence of a mentor, and (d) leadership commitment to promoting women in male-centric industries. Table 12 depicts the four themes, a subtheme, and the number of times each participant commented about each theme.

Table 12*Composition of Participants and Number of Responses*

Name	Theme 1: Gaining confidence and competency	SubTheme 1: Developing a thick skin	Theme 2: Networking and building relationships	Theme 3: Mentoring	Theme 4: Leadership commitment
P01	3	1	1	1	5
P02	2	1	2	3	5
P03	2	1	2	2	4
Total	10	3	4	6	14

This qualitative single case study aimed to explore builder sector executives' strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. The targeted population was three builder sector executives in the southeastern United States who had successfully developed strategies to establish an effective gender-diverse succession plan in their respective construction organizations. Study participants and supporting documents provided rich data on gender-diverse succession planning strategies for organizational sustainability. Identifying the process used by builder sector executives formed the primary aspect of the study.

In the following subsections, I describe the four themes that emerged and how the data collected supported the central research question, aligned with existing research, and validated the choices of the human capital theory which formed the conceptual framework for this study. Three builder sector executives participated in a five-question interview to explore the central question of this research study. I formulated the research themes by coding, cataloging, and analyzing data. For anonymity, I coded participants as P01 through P03.

Theme 1: Gaining Confidence and Competency

The first theme related to candidates gaining confidence and competency in their abilities. P01 and P02 posited that maintaining a positive attitude is essential for women throughout their professional life, especially when pursuing leadership positions in a male-centric industry. All participants asserted that it is worthwhile to foster a confident outlook by trusting in your abilities. P01 advised that women have to be assertive and say where they want to go in their career.

Being a good leader requires confidence, vision, and effective communication (Matzler et al., 2008; Vasilescu, 2019). All participants affirmed that cultivating a healthy level of self-belief is the first step to realizing potential. Female talent benefits from introspection, which helps them understand themselves, discover how they work best, and react to stress. Participants explained that it is advantageous for women in the building sector to foster a confident attitude on how they perceive the world around them and how they experience work, relationships, and life. Participants P01, P02, and P03 posted successful employees are adaptive, possessed strong work ethics, and developed a reputation for being productive, reliable, and determined to be valuable team members. All participants discussed how to advance in the industry; both male and female employees must first have an interest and a dedication to doing their jobs. P01 and P02 made compelling points on its importance to women seeking to advance in a male-dominated industry. P02 shared, “you have to want to do it and you have to build your relationships. Getting exposure to knowledge about the area you want to enter is vital. This is why relationships are so important to career advancement.” P03 explained that his criteria for hiring is that

a candidate must express that she or he has a desire to do the job and work in the industry, be qualified, and have the ability to learn. P01 recalled how she was the only female in her organization who was not part of the administrative staff early in her career. She always saw herself as just one of the engineers; if she wanted to progress in her career, she had to be better than the next guy. The participant recognized how being assertive and speaking up provided opportunities to work on projects where she could solve problems, thereby developing her credibility in her organization and the industry. P01, P02, and P03 posited that women enhance their self-confidence through knowledge, mentorship, and networking. P02 remarked, “when women struggle with insecurities in the workplace, they miss the chance to spotlight their expertise and to develop their credibility within the organization.” P01 asserted that although there are challenges to being the only woman in a male dominate industry, the benefit is that qualified females are usually noticed and remembered.

During the interviews, it became apparent that a subtheme to gaining confidence and competency is ignoring people’s subtle verbal attacks and enduring team members’ crude and disrespectful language meant to reduce confidence gradually. Hurley and Choudhary (2016) posited that although executive leaders strive to create inclusive practices, women continue to battle bias as they navigate their careers. For women in male-centric industries, combating gender stereotypes and discriminatory factors while becoming influential leaders is challenging. Female talent should have good self-esteem and solid self-worth, to be successful. Participants P01, P02, and P03 summarized that women need to protect their self-esteem, but they must also refrain from being too easily

offended. P01 and P02 advised female talent to maintain calm when exposed to corrosive language. P01 shared, “there’s a lot that comes down to how the employee perceive situations like being the only women engineer. It depends on how you view the situation. You have to embody it you have to use it to your advantage. It takes being uncomfortable and intimidated to become more confident. It’s an everyday thing.” Confidence is essential for women to exceed expectations and show employers they have the initiative to take on more responsibility.

Theme 2: Networking and Building Relationships

The second emerged theme related to networking and building relationships. Just as important as confidence is networking and building relationships. Networking allows employees to gain exposure to different perspectives, create valuable professional connections, and build their reputation in the industry. Within the context outlined by participants, Inman (2020) affirmed that an individual’s ability to network has become crucial to advance in any industry. Participants posited that women are forced out of their comfort zone, when they participate in networking opportunities. Networking allows women to develop their communication skills by exposing them to different perspectives and different personality types. Another benefit of networking is female talent develop relationships with essential professionals in the industry who might aid them in their future career advancement. P02 explained how developing good people skills is essential to advancing in the builder sector. Women should cultivate their social skills and develop relationships with clients and colleagues. P01 advised that women, especially at the beginning of their careers, must make a conscious effort to become knowledgeable and

make an impact in the workplace. P02 echoed P01 and posited being knowledgeable is paramount to career advancement. Knowledge comes from doing the work and through relationships.

Good relationships with people in the specific area you want to enter are also critical to your success. Women, specifically, need to know the players in their industry sector. P02 emphasized that women have to get involved. P02 remarked, “you have to get involved and you need to be seen. Often, people in the industry don’t want to show up. Those that are successful have the drive to be successful.”

Association A leadership takes decisive and critical steps to provide members with opportunities to network with more seasoned colleagues and to develop essential, invaluable relationships as they pursue their career advancement. Participants posited that networking through industry organizations such as Association A, exposure to education opportunities, mentorship, and networking help women enhance their self-confidence.

Theme 3: Mentoring

The third theme elucidates the participants’ perception of the influence of a mentor. Women enhance their self-confidence through mentorship and networking. Having committed to promoting the leadership capabilities of women P01, P02, and P03 posited that mentoring opportunities were vital to their success and advancement in their career. This aligns with Wright’s (2021) assertion that future fit leaders should commit to developing the leadership capabilities of women professionals by providing them with mentoring programs to move into leadership roles or advance their careers in leadership.

Often in male-centric organizations, there are few role models for women.

Participants agreed that mentors can help women identify steps for career advancement and to navigate the demanding culture of the construction industry. Mentorship programs are critical to helping to inspire women and to aid them in recognizing their full potential as leaders. As with most relationships, mentoring comprises a certain amount of give-and-take. P02 explained how mentoring is beneficial to the mentor and mentees. P02 explained how mentees learn from the mentor, and seasoned mentors can also learn from mentees.

The finding supports conclusions from the research literature that senior leaders should provide emerging women leaders with mentors to ensure their success the earliest stages of their career (Wright, 2021). A mentoring culture enables leaders to focus on employees' personal and professional growth.

Theme 4: Leadership Commitment

The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis was leadership commitment to promoting women in male-centric industries. The findings support the conclusions in the literature review that future fit leaders should make a more robust effort to invite and inspire women to find a career in male-centric industries. Leaders at every level of the organization must share an ongoing commitment to actionable policies promoting gender parity of all levels of leadership. Broader-thinking leaders make a difference in performance. I used the Baldrige Excellence Framework in this case study to identify leadership traits that help cultivate essential leadership qualities and create a strategic plan to develop influential leaders in the workplace. According to the Baldrige

Performance Excellence Program (2019), central to the role of higher-level executives is that executive leadership teams possess and exhibit the executive behaviors associated with visionary leadership, systems perspective, ethics and transparency, and delivering value and results.

Creating a gender-diverse workforce can improve organizational performance and overall productivity. Organizations thrive and outperform their competitors when they have a robust pipeline of diverse talent to select (Rezaee, 2017). P02 posited that gender diversity can enrich a workplace culture and create an environment that attracts talented, skilled team members who perform optimally. P02 advised that the first step for organization's leadership to recognize the need for gender diverse succession planning. Next, leadership must commit to developing and implementing a plan. Exemplary leaders understand they are responsible for the organization's culture and the employee experience. Executive leadership should develop their organizational culture to maximize talent, leverage diversity, and increase performance. Nwabueze and Mileski (2018) affirmed that savvy leadership recognizes that culture is a critical component of promoting gender-diverse leadership and understanding the role of culture in development is essential. Future-forward leaders should develop a work culture that supports female leaders by ensuring they are adequately heard, understood, or granted opportunities to the same extent as their male peers. As female team members develop their career path to leadership advancement. Hurley and Choudhary (2016) posited that leadership should ensure a fair, equitable representation for all genders within an organization by addressing organizational culture in its policies. P01 asserted that culture

is a composite of her organization's core values. While all participants refuted the notion that there are positions within the builder sector which a woman cannot succeed, they acknowledged that women are less likely to fill industry positions that are more physically demanding and or time intensive. P03 explained that more women are entering the construction industry. One reason for the growth is that construction industry jobs are lucrative. P03 suggested that women are less employed in carpentry, perhaps because they are less prepared for how physical the work. P03 advised that women can perform any position (within the industry), depending on the quality of their work.

High-quality talent helps to create more growth opportunities. The underpinning theory of human capital theory is that an organization's employees are assets contributing to the growth and development of the business or organization (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). Hamza et al. (2022) affirmed that influential business leaders understand that prioritizing and investing in employee training and development opportunities and providing support yields employees more likely to generate new and better working methods and growth opportunities for the organization and their personal growth.

Whysall et al. (2019) contended that executive leadership teams should consider that an effective strategy to attract and retain qualified talent is providing ample development opportunities. Organization leaders should provide women with a formal career path to advancement, no matter the organization's size. P02 explained how, for example, national companies are more likely than smaller companies to provide female candidates with a clearly defined structured advancement program to better prepare them

to achieve the level of ability and knowledge required to advance to a more senior level position.

P01 and P03 own their business and neither have a formal gender-diversity succession plan. However, both participants believe succession plans are critical for organizational sustainability. P01, P02, and P03 agreed that gender-diverse succession plans are essential for organization sustainability. P01's organization has no formal gender-diverse succession plan but her executive team hires, and fires based on the organization's core value of rolling up your sleeves and getting the work done. P01 shared, "as long as they are striving to move on to the next step and take leadership and ownership of their work and their clients, then they're the ones who are going to progress."

P03 stated he makes a conscious effort to support the advancement of women in leadership positions within his organization. P02 and P03 posited how gender-diversity succession planning ensures organizational sustainability. P03 declared it is important that leadership need to make space for qualified women to advance. Forward thinking executives should include advancement of women in leadership in the business strategy.

Executive leadership teams should recognize that an attitude promoting employee growth requires intention. P02 advised that the first step for organization's leadership to recognize the need for gender diverse succession planning. Business leaders should commit to developing more diversity within the builder sector. Next, leadership must commit to developing and implementing a plan. Through the builder sector association's ELP, one of seven special councils and committees, program executives partner young

members with seasoned builder sector association members, from different areas within the construction industry. Graduates of the ELP are encouraged to serve in a leadership role within the organization. P03 echoed P02 and shared, “the benefit of gender-diversity is that organizations open themselves to different viewpoints. [Leaders] be open-minded. Ask your female candidates; where do you want to be in the next few years.” P03 explained that although his organization does not have a formal succession plan, he has a succession plan in place and has identified the person he believes could be his successor. The participant stated that he is a proponent of internal talent mobility. P03 explained how an advantage of providing new opportunities for top performers already in the organization is built-in organizational knowledge, surrounding culture, processes, and relationships. Talent engages more and will plan a long-term future with their organization, when they believe promotions are available.

Product and Process Results

Association A is a for-profit 501 (c) (6) builder sector association established to represent the interests of builders, developers, contractors, and affiliated industry members in cooperation to benefit and promote homeownership. As stated earlier, Association A is the largest builders association in State X and is among the top ten builders associations in the Nation. The builder sector association has more than 1,000 members. Professionals in construction govern Association A and represent the interests of its members legislatively on a local, state, and national level.

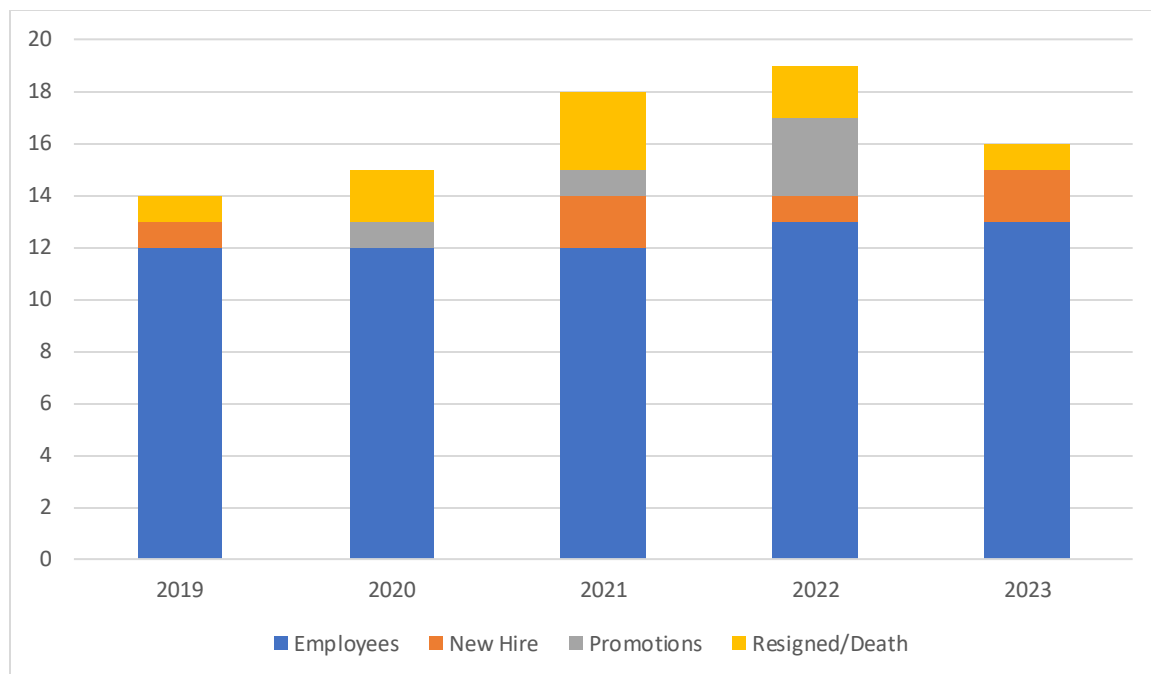
Customer Results

Customers are both internal stakeholders such as employees working within the organization to achieve goals and external stakeholders include groups who pay a fee for the products and services provided by the business (Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, 2019). The builder sector association has three suppliers, partners, and collaborators: (a) IT suppliers, (b) maintenance suppliers, and (c) general office suppliers. Association A does not have a formal process to measure customer satisfaction. However, participants indicated all the builder sector association members are encouraged to provide feedback after each program or event.

Workforce Results

As shared earlier, the Association A employee team consists of 16 people, three of which are volunteers. The builder sector association workforce are assigned specific roles and responsibilities, and the executive officer and directors routinely observe and monitor the staff's performance to assess whether they are reaching their capacity to accept new projects and perform tasks. Communication is vital to workforce productivity and association performance. Association A provides employees with informed, accurate, and detailed feedback.

The turnover of the builder sector association's work staff is low. Figure 5 depicts Association A turnover from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

Figure 1*Association A Turnover 2019–2023*

Note. The data presented in Figure 1 was provided by Association A executive officer.

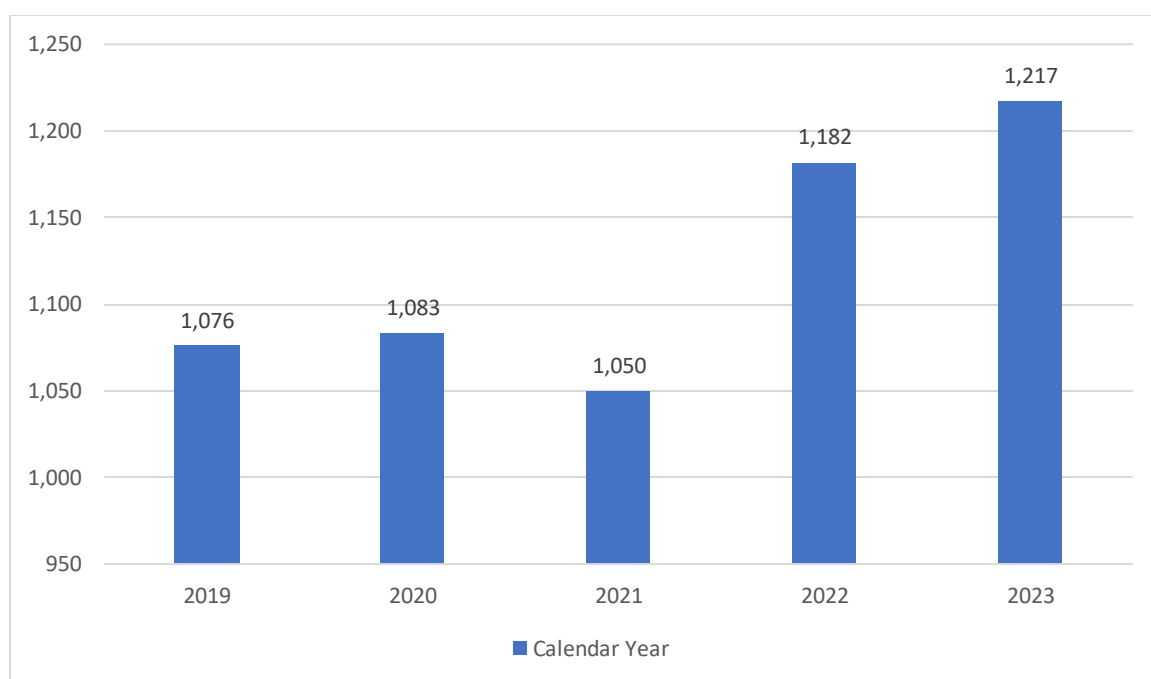
The data were collected from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

As stated earlier, increasing member recruitment and retention is a critical goal of the builder sector association. Leadership implements a membership metric to understand how well they perform around membership retention and meeting members' needs. The executive leadership team designs programs and events to increase member engagement, strengthen relationships, and attract new members. During the annual meeting, board members calculate a member retention rate of 80% annually. Leadership's recruitment and retention strategy includes offering qualified talent programs and events designed to encourage them to engage with their peers and educational opportunities to obtain essential accreditation required for advancement. The member director provides

onboarding which includes conducting new incumbent orientation and inviting new members to attend a board meeting. The member director identifies new member needs during onboarding and orientation. Association A retention rate continues to exceed goals set by executive committee members. Figure 2 depicts Association A membership from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

Figure 2

Association A Membership From 2019 – 2023



Note. The data presented in Figure 2 was provided by Association A executive officer.

The membership data were collected from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

Leadership and Governance Results

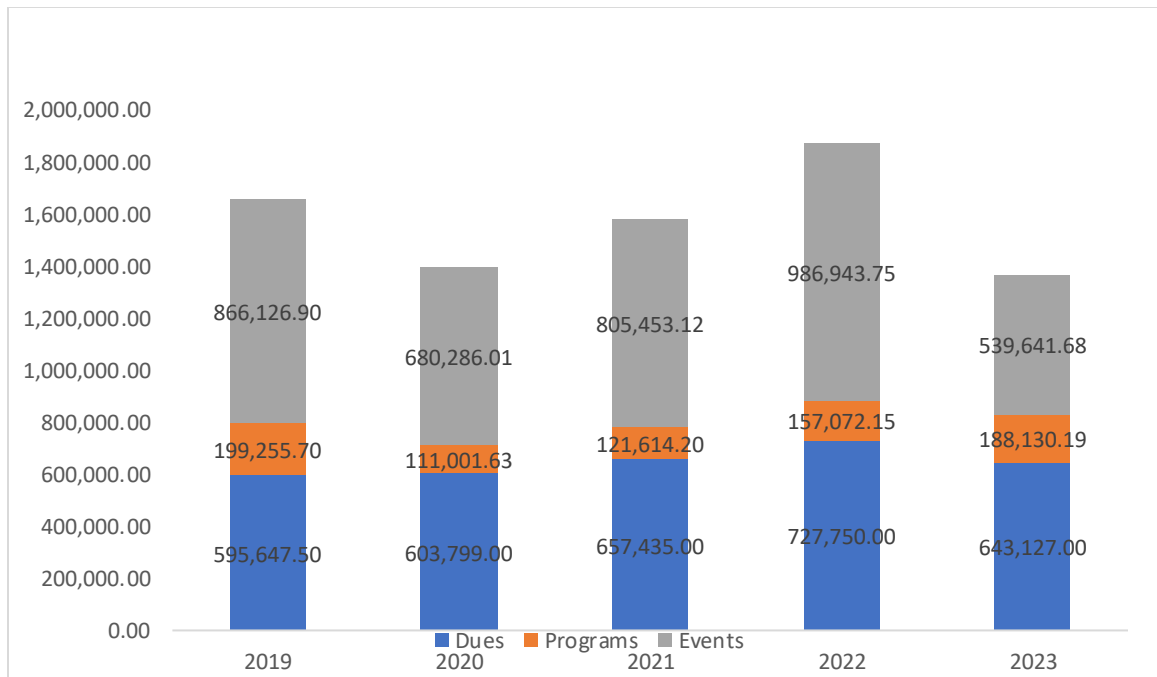
Senior leadership currently does not collect any data on leadership and governance.

Financial and Market Results

Leadership provided financial records used to support fact-based decision making. Association A has diverse revenue sources which includes membership dues, programs, and events. Figure 3 depicts Association A income and Figure 4 depicts the builder sector association expenses for 2019 to August 31, 2023.

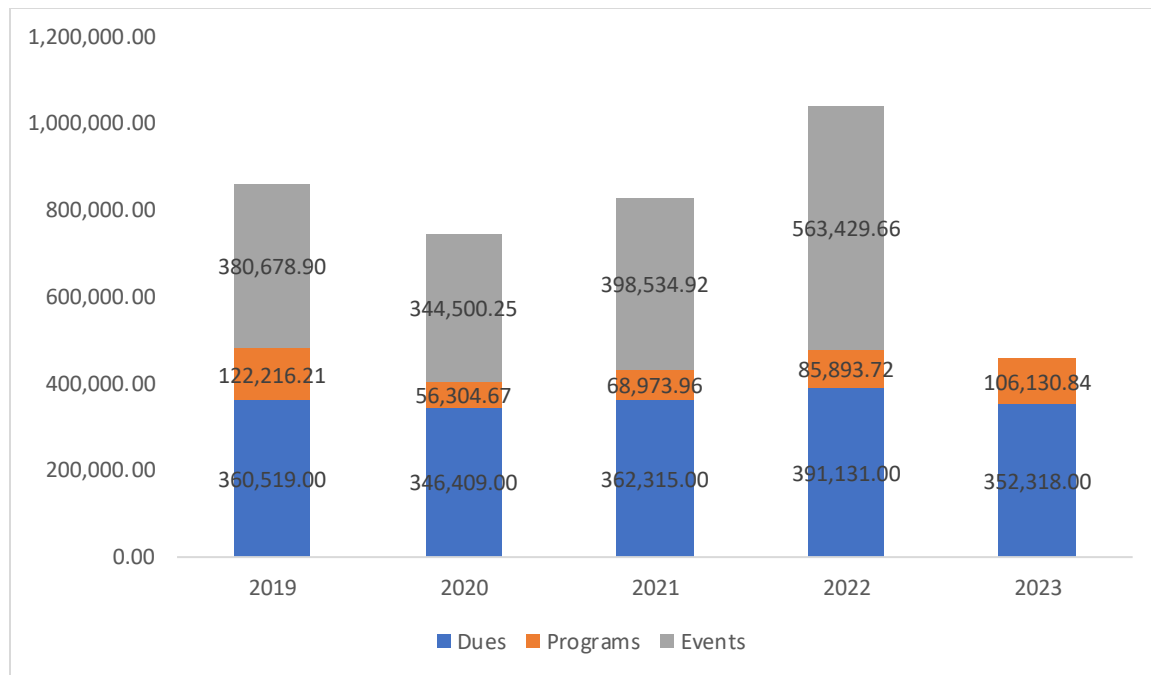
Figure 3

Association A Income From 2019–2023



Note. The data presented in Figure 3 was provided by Association A executive officer.

The income data were collected from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

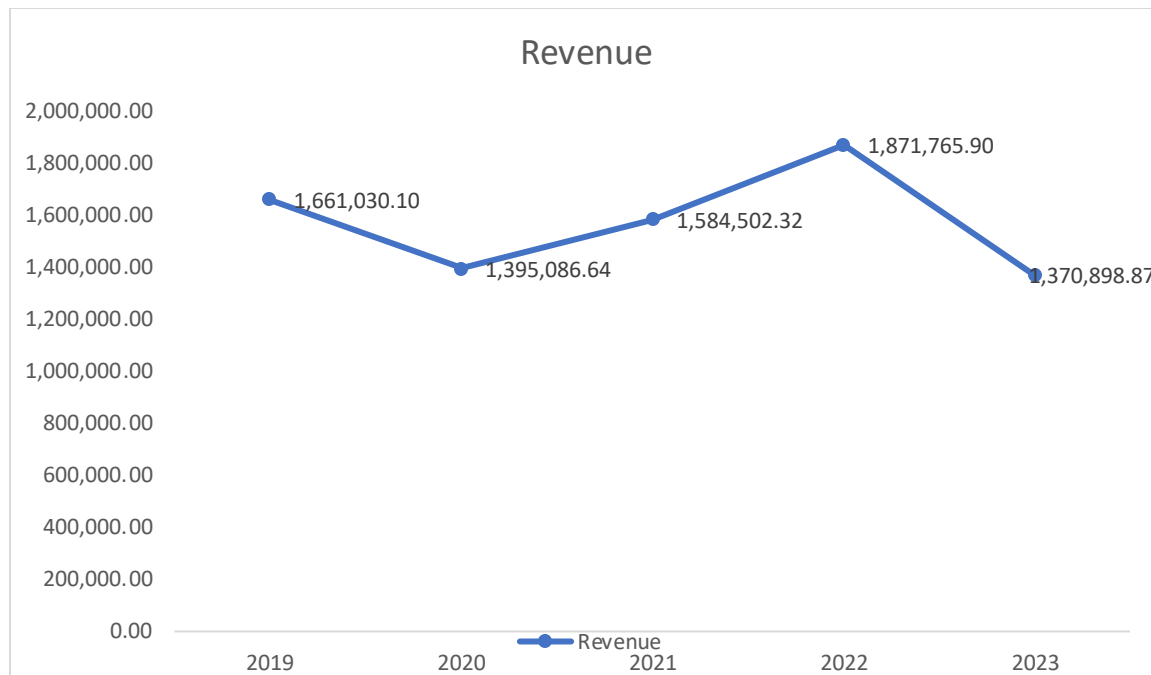
Figure 4*Association A Expenses From 2019–2023*

Note. The data presented in Figure 4 was provided by Association A executive officer. The expenses data were collected from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

Association A is a high-performing organization with a stable financial state. The executive leadership team is a good steward of the builder sector association. It can efficiently allocate resources, assess and manage financial risks, and maintain workforce levels. Senior leadership has enough revenue to meet short-term demands and enough capital to meet future requirements. Figure 5 depicts the Association A's total income from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

Figure 5

Association A Total Revenue From 2019–2023



Note: The data presented in Figure 5 was provided by Association A executive officer. The total revenue data were collected from 2019 to August 31, 2023.

Key Themes

The vital component of this study is determining the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes of Association A executive leadership. Themes that emerged during the examination of senior leaders and formal succession strategies consist of process strengths, process opportunities, results strengths, and results opportunities. The themes are from the 2019–2020 Baldrige Excellence Framework and criteria. The themes that emerged during the examination of the Association A’s senior leadership and formal gender-diverse succession strategies consist of process improvement in female employee development and leadership commitment to and support of gender diversity at all

hierarchy of the organization. Business leaders can promote gender equality in the workplace by focusing their efforts on career advancement. If business leaders are unable to develop and promote the women they hire, it is challenging to reach gender parity at senior levels. Organizations and their leaders must also begin eliminating bias while supporting and empowering female employees.

Process Strengths

After assessing the client organization according to the Baldrige Excellence Framework, it was evident that the process strengths are female talent development in the form of networking and mentoring and leadership commitment to promoting women in male-centric industries. Engaging employees through networking and mentoring opportunities helps to retain qualified talent and increase productivity (Cross et al., 2019). Developing systems and structures for networking activities allows women a platform to ask professional colleagues for advice, offer colleagues support, and a safe environment to discuss issues. Networking benefits female talent in that it helps them to share their personal experiences or aspects of their lives with industry people from outside the association. Association A leadership currently provides members with events and platforms to network. Senior leaders need to continue investing in networking activities and implement a system to gather participant feedback to ensure lasting mutual benefits. In addition, by continuing to invest in mentoring programs, leadership increases business value. For example, mentoring allows both the mentor and the mentee to participate in a two-way, trusted relationship wherein both participants learn and grow personally and professionally.

Successful leadership requires commitment, trust, and practical communication skills to engage all stakeholders. Association A leadership supports female talent and membership in developing additional competencies to help them achieve the skills and characteristics that can prepare them for the next level of success as a leader. Senior leadership recognizes the benefit of providing all employees and Association A members, especially women, with well-defined pathways for career advancement to ensure membership and staff remain engaged and committed to the builder sector association's mission. Senior leaders need to continue to inspire qualified female talent to take initiative and innovate. The executive leadership team needs to continue prioritizing female talent exposure to opportunities to further their growth and development to achieve long-term career goals.

Process Opportunities

Business processes are the foundation of an organization. After an extensive review of Association A's documents and participant's responses, I concluded that the organization has several process opportunities. To achieve primary goals, the builder sector association needs a standard operational strategy to align programs, events, resources, policies, and workforce operations. Leadership should design the strategy guide using the builder sector association's core objectives described in the organization's mission statement.

Future-forward executives need to review their organization's business processes to increase effectiveness and optimize performance (Farnese et al., 2019). As stated earlier, business leadership has no formal system to align relevant strategies and tactics to

meet customers' needs. Senior leadership needs a documented systematic approach to current programs and services. The builder sector association's executive team members need a formal customer engagement strategy to ensure staff have access to valuable data-driven customer insight into their success in meeting their business needs. For example, leaders can continually analyze member feedback and adjust the association's plan based on their input.

The executive leadership team recognizes the value of improving the workforce environment by ensuring employees and members can share their ideas or concerns without facing unfair repercussions. As stated in the earlier discussion of the determination of customer satisfaction, senior leadership does not have a mechanism for using customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and engagement data to support operational decision-making. The builder sector association has an opportunity to implement best practices implemented to engage employees, such as surveys and rewards. Senior leaders may also benefit from creating a formal process to collect feedback on the effectiveness of programs, events, and initiatives. Executive leadership may benefit from gathering membership feedback to ensure lasting satisfaction with Association A offerings.

As stated earlier in the study, creating performance measures is an area where leadership can improve for the builder sector association. The senior leadership's current method to measure, analyze, and improve organizational performance could be more effective and efficient. Senior leadership needs a formal process to collect feedback from the members, partners, and the workforce about the effectiveness and success of programs, events, and organizational performance. Executive leadership will benefit from

establishing a process to collect and analyze data for programs, events, and daily operations. For example, when Association A members, partners, or workforce provide feedback that a program is not beneficial or suggests improvements, leadership can evaluate the data to adapt the programs and events.

Association A leadership evaluates the financial information for the organization. Senior leadership has an opportunity to implement a performance system to evaluate all financial data quarterly. Executive leadership will also benefit from leveraging its staff and technology to offer Association A membership a broader range of programs and services with offerings not found in alternative builder sector associations. Senior leadership needs to expand their recruiting efforts and forge early relationships with female high school and college students.

Another process opportunity is that senior leadership can benefit from developing strategies for networking with female students participating in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education. The builder sector association should partner with elementary and high schools and college-level educators to develop a plan to ignite interest, curiosity, and excitement in STEM education, starting at the elementary level, ensuring they have mentorship opportunities and a support system to help nurture them. Senior leadership should explore a diverse set of industry-specific partnerships, such as the National Society of Engineers, to help them identify talented female students interested in a career in the construction industry.

The executive leadership team needs to continue to develop strategy to ensure the builder sector association provides women with an inclusive environment where

executives invest in its female talent's long-term professional growth. Members may be more likely to remain active in the organization and progress as future leaders. Lastly, senior leaders have an opportunity to transform the organization through technology. Communication is vital to workforce productivity and the builder sector association performance. The executive leadership team needs to leverage technology to enhance onboarding communication to integrate new employees into the workforce and new members into the builder sector association. As stated earlier in the discussion of security and cybersecurity, the senior leadership has not created a system to safeguard information systems and customer data from cybersecurity threats. Association A leadership has an opportunity to allocate resources to develop a plan to help protect against cyber-attacks.

Results Strengths

Association A is a high-performing organization with a stable financial state. As depicted in Figure 5, the builder sector association generates enough cash from its activities to meet its expenses. Senior leadership has funds to invest in initiatives to help grow the organization. The builder sector association's positive cash flow is a strength because the revenue is enough to cover the operating expenses.

Effective membership recruitment is critical for the association's organizational sustainability. The more members the builder sector association recruits, the greater the opportunities to foster networking and mentorship relationships. A high turnover rate can lead to decreased productivity and lower morale among employees. Figure 1 depicts membership growth over 4 years. The positive trend in the association's membership indicates the recruitment plan is effective. Association A's low employee turnover is also

a crucial aspect of the organization's success. A high turnover rate can lead to decreased productivity and lower morale among employees. To reduce turnover, it is essential to develop an action plan that addresses the fundamental causes of the problem.

Results Opportunities

Senior leadership has several opportunities to improve results. The workforce is at the center of the association's success. Figure 1 depicts the organization's new hires from 2019 to 2023. Expanding the association's workforce is a result of organizational growth. As stated earlier, the executive leadership team prioritizes onboarding new hires and new members. Senior leaders can leverage technology and tools to enhance onboarding communication to integrate new employees into the workforce. Figure 2 depicts membership growth. Leadership investing in onboarding tools can also help new members realize value in their membership.

Association A benefits from more skilled and more productive employees. The executive leadership team has an opportunity to invest in employee development, implementing training programs that the workforce will value. As discussed earlier, builder sector association leadership implements succession plans to ensure that business operations remain consistent after a planned or emergency vacancy. Senior leadership recognizes staff turnover and persistent vacancies help to stifle growth and hinder long-term productivity. The executive leadership team has an opportunity to invest in employee development, implementing valuable training programs that will benefit the workforce. When leaders implement a career development strategy, employees tend to experience higher job satisfaction, and the organization benefits from preparing high-

potential candidates to fill gaps in essential positions for business continuity. Association A leadership needs to implement a formal gender-succession plan to demonstrate their investment in and commitment to their employees. Senior leaders need to invest in tools for career development strategy.

Lastly, senior leadership will benefit from measuring and managing performance to increase productivity and revenue. Association A leadership needs an established performance management measure plan. Also, enacting performance measures helps employees know the evaluation criteria and goals they must meet. A formal performance measure will also aid executive team members in recognizing leadership abilities and strengths in employee ranks.

Project Summary

Unexpected events can leave an organization with vacancies in essential positions from C-suite roles to critical contributors. These transitions are never easy, but executive leadership teams can minimize potential negative impacts from inevitable departures, retirements, and promotions by developing a succession plan. Future-forward leaders can implement a gender-diverse succession plan to help professionals find their unique path to learn, grow, and advance (Ahmad et al., 2020; Tamunomiebi & Okwakpam, 2019). Without an effective gender-diverse succession plan, business leaders fail to equip women in the workforce with the skills and experience needed to help achieve organizational objectives. Senior leadership should prepare qualified female talent for advancement opportunities to ensure organizational sustainability.

Contributions and Recommendations

The key recommendation is that senior leadership implement gender-diverse succession plans to ensure qualified female talent is prepared to assume critical positions, including the sudden temporary or permanent loss of leaders. Senior leadership should ensure female employees not only have access to training to develop skills but also access to vital business relationships. Supporting qualified female talent benefits them individually and contributes to the organization's overall success (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961).

Application to Professional Practice

Previous researchers have conducted extensive research on gender-related issues. Unfortunately, researchers' existing literature fails to provide a comprehensive and clear picture of studies on gender-diverse succession planning in the construction industry, which could guide scholars in future research. The application to professional practice is that business leaders can apply the information gleaned from this study to ensure that they adequately implement gender diversity practices and equal opportunities in the workplace. Executive leadership teams have the authority to create a gender-inclusive atmosphere and create a more productive workflow among all workers.

Talented employees are crucial for executive teams to ensure adequate program implementation. Leadership should consider creating or hosting educational opportunities to equip qualified female talent with the skills, education, and awareness needed to help achieve objectives (Groves, 2007). Results from this research study indicated that female talent could operate successfully at a senior executive level position by expressing a

desire and a work ethic, implementing genuine determination, guidance from mentorship, and by leadership's commitment to promoting women.

Skilled and knowledgeable leadership is a crucial component of organizational sustainability. Development must have equal benefits for women and men (Lekchiri & Kamm, 2020). For example, the training and development program should provide the same benefits for male and female professionals in the industry. Executive teams recognize that the catalyst for improving business outcomes is providing qualified women with adequate training and development opportunities to gain the leadership skills necessary to operate effectively (Groves, 2007; Kim, 2010). Leadership should understand that to attract, motivate, and retain the best female talent to assume executive positions; they should treat them as vital assets and nurture their talent (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2019). It is essential that business leaders effectively interact with and develop each team member. By offering aspiring women a blend of learning opportunities to maximize their potential and agility to advance, executive leadership teams create an environment where female talent is more engaged, productive, and loyal.

Implications for Social Change

This study is significant because the results may provide new insights regarding builder sector executives' strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. The results from the study may contribute to a positive social change by promoting and facilitating the systematization of critical processes that focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. By adopting strategies related to gender-diverse succession planning, local governments and firms can

provide service to their customers and the community ethically, fairly, and honestly and create tangible improvements regarding the availability of building-sector services within underserved communities.

The results of the current study could help clarify the understanding of how gender-diverse succession planning strategies influence organizational sustainability. The research results may create positive social change in the following manner. First, findings may increase inclusiveness among team members and other stakeholders in the construction industry. Second, findings may yield a more prudent approach to recruiting, retaining, and engaging employees. Third, results may attract investment from organizations that value gender diversity. Finally, findings may yield innovation in ideas and problem-solving methods from people with different experiences.

Recommendations for Action

The first recommendation is for the senior leadership of Association A to create a gender-diverse succession plan that prepares female professionals to assume critical positions when essential employees change positions. The value of gender-diverse succession planning is well-supported throughout academic and professional literature. Association A leadership should align itself with the best practices for gender-diverse succession planning, including identifying and assessing qualified female talent, creating effective development programs, and monitoring and reviewing it for effectiveness. When an organization creates a viable succession plan, employees focus on their long-term goals and become more aware of the turmoil an unplanned departure can create.

Women experience unique challenges working in male dominated industries. Leadership should encourage female professionals to self-reflect to become self-aware individuals who recognize their strengths and weaknesses (Herbst, 2020). Association A leadership should recognize that women in the workforce aspiring to career advancement need self-confidence and a more positive outlook on new opportunities within the industry. Executive team members should design and implement programs to aid women in developing their inner strength. To help female talent to become self-confident, Association A senior leadership should create programs to aid them in developing their inner strength. The association's executive team should provide female talent with access to training to increase their confidence that they possess the qualities, skills, and knowledge to be successful.

Networking and career building go hand in hand according to all participants. Study participants agreed that networking and building professional relationships are vital components for women in the workforce path to career advancement. Participants P02 and P03 posited that networking helps female talent develop personal strengths, new perspectives and ideas, and qualified leaders. Senior leadership should aid female talent in developing self-confidence and assertiveness by providing them with networking opportunities. Currently, Association A executive leadership offer networking activities and events. Senior leadership should continue providing female members with networking events and activities to allow them to meet new people with different perspectives, expand their professional circle, create valuable life-long connections, and build their reputations. Most importantly, executive leadership should increase the

number of networking opportunities, both face-to-face at conferences and events and one-on-one sessions conducted using virtual platforms. Networking and building professional relationships are crucial for qualified female employees to advance their careers and achieve their long-term goals. Senior leadership should ensure female employees have access to vital business relationships. By connecting with others in their field, women can access opportunities that may otherwise be unavailable.

Executive leadership focuses on engaging, developing, and retaining qualified talent to improve output and create sustainable success. Organizations with greater gender diversity among senior leaders outperform those without and are more profitable (Brahma et al., 2021; Dell-Carmen Valls Martínez et al., 2019). The shortage of skilled female workers due to inadequate leadership can hinder organizations' ability to keep up with their competitiveness and growth potential (Osuzugbo, 2020; Wideasanti et al., 2019). Future-fit leadership design and implement mentorship programs to help recognize, nurture, and support qualified professionals (Heilman, 2001; Helms et al., 2016). Based on the study findings, one issue women in the workforce encounter is the need for more representation at all levels of the organization. Women benefit from finding mentors and role models who understand female professionals' unique experiences and can provide guidance and support. A recommendation to executive leadership is to provide women with access to a mentoring program to help them develop additional competencies vital to help them achieve the skills and develop the characteristics that can push them to the next level of success as a leader. Providing

female professionals with a mentoring program also helps leadership create a more supportive and inclusive organizational culture.

Association A executives currently invite young builder sector professionals to join the ELP. The association's senior leadership should continue implementing mentorship programs to give women the opportunities and guidance they need to succeed in their careers. The executive team leaders should expand the ELP program to include a platform to partner mentors with mentees from various areas of expertise within the construction industry. Female mentees benefit from the guidance and advice gleaned from experienced leaders. Participation in mentorship can also create mutually beneficial relationships between mentor and mentee.

Women continue to make up the workforce of organizations. Future-fit executives should make it easy for qualified female talent to advance to their full potential (Heilman, 2001). Senior leadership must understand the current experiences and future expectations of female employees. A recommendation from the study results is for leadership to develop a more inclusive and equitable workplace by committing to addressing female professionals' challenge and by modeling behaviors that promote inclusion and belonging. While the builder sector association has females in leadership positions, senior executives should continue to create an inclusive and supportive environment where female employees can thrive and reach their full potential. Association A's executive team should continue to foster a fair and equal work environment to ensure qualified female talent is in positions, especially when there is a sudden temporary or permanent loss of essential leaders.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for further research provide insight for other researchers to further the research beyond the scope of this doctoral study and field of study. As stated earlier in the manuscript, the study was limited in generalizability (i.e., the ability to generalize the findings to all business areas) because the sample size was small. When the sample size is small, a researcher's ability to generalize the study and produce reliable results decreases (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Different male-centric industries and other regions across the United States could add to future research on this topic to increase generalization.

Another study limitation was the participants' experience and knowledge of gender-diverse succession planning and strategies in the construction industry. The scope of this study was participants in a leadership position within their organization with at least 10 years of experience in the building sector, had a leadership position within an organization in the construction industry, and developed strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan within their respective construction organizations. The number of senior executives with gender-diverse succession planning experience limited the accessibility to participants of this caliber. To address this limitation, future researchers might use different criteria for selecting participants. Finally, inadequate supporting documentary material from Association A's files and or data sources to corroborate the interview data was a study limitation. To address this limitation, future researchers might identify different types of documentation to review.

The research findings help to inform leadership of strategies to implement effective gender-diverse succession planning. The dissemination of the conclusions of this study may be helpful to for-profit and nonprofit executive teams within organizations of all industries seeking to improve organizational sustainability. This study will be translated into lay language for Association A senior leadership to ensure the central message resonates with them and with other target audiences reflecting on their practices. I will also maximize the benefits of the research findings by sharing the results of this study with peers through journal publication. Finally, this study findings will aid leadership in designing strategic-led initiatives and events where team members participate in critical conversations to develop solutions to systemic barriers faced by women in male centric industries.

Reflections

Reflecting on my research experience, I found the process insightful and informative. As a woman who has worked in a male-majority organization, I identify with some challenges and obstacles that women often encounter when seeking to advance their careers in a male dominated environment. To conduct this research study, I needed to develop an unbiased approach to the research methodologies and designs to ensure I could identify gender-diverse strategies for builder leaders' succession planning in my country. I remained neutral throughout the process and did not want to bias the data.

My journey to accumulate big-picture knowledge regarding strategies for gender-diverse succession planning has required great discipline and commitment. In my quest, I have acquired essential research skills to propose solutions to business problems through

the evidence-based application of educational research. I have also deepened my knowledge and expertise in the complexities of leadership. Although the path to career advancement for women may not always be fair along the journey, I am convinced that how you deal with adversity will define your future. True power comes from self-confidence and knowledge. I have benefited from men and women who inspire me to continue to accomplish my goals and strive for more, regardless of the obstacles that may lie ahead. The single case study has demonstrated an increased need to ensure business leaders develop a business strategy emphasizing a gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability.

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Conclusion

Women remain underrepresented in leadership positions in male-centric industries. This study is significant because the results may provide new insights regarding builder sector executives' strategies to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability. I organized the data into themes. The themes deduced from the transcribed data, additional information from the website, documentation, and artifacts are as follows; (a) gaining confidence and competency in your abilities; (b) networking and building relationships; (c) the influence of mentors; and (d) leadership commitment to promoting women in male-centric industries.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview _____ Identifiable Code Number: _____

Pre-Interview Protocol

1. Email participant to introduce myself to each participant. Agree on a suitable meeting location, date, and time with the participant.
2. Send the participant a calendar invitation to attend an interview on Zoom once the individual agrees upon the date and time.
3. Send a meeting reminder note to the participant one day before the interview.

Interview Protocols

1. Begin with an introduction and greetings. I informed the participants of my concern about their time and thanked them for accepting to participate in the study.
2. Request permission to record the interview; if the participant accepts the request, I will commence recording. Restate the confidentiality of the recorded interview and other information received.
3. Restate the purpose of the research and review the consent form agreed by the participant.
4. Restate the research topic: Strategies builder sector executives possess to develop an effective gender-diverse succession plan for organizational sustainability.
5. I inform participants that the conversation duration is approximately 45 minutes to respond to the five interview questions and allow time for follow-up questions.
6. To start the interview, I announced the participants' identifying code (e.g., P01, P02), the date, and the time of the interview.
7. Ask each question (5 in total).
8. Ask following-up questions to probe further, where necessary.
9. Enquire if the participant has any additional information to share relevant to the research.
10. Discuss the importance of member checking with each participant. I inform participants that member checking is to ensure understanding of the questions and confirm the answers provided by the participant are correct as recorded.
11. Once the interview is complete, stop recording.

Post-Interview Protocol

I confirm the correctness of the response through e-mail with transcribed data attached, and I requested respondents to verify the accuracy of the recorded information within five working days.

Appendix B: Project Proposal

Project Proposal

This Project Proposal has been drafted by Lisa Hawkins-Saleemi for [REDACTED] and is dated 05/14/20.

Scope of Work

•My internship expectations are that I will conduct significant and rigorous research on succession planning. The deliverables of this project are to identify strategies to develop effective succession plans for construction sector executive, adding meaningful content to existing knowledge and fostering growth in the construction industry.

Work Phase	Estimated Time Required
<p>Online interactions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I emailed the client to schedule a time to introduce myself and discuss the Consulting Capstone. I called the client to discuss the scope of the project, deliverables for the Consulting Capstone, and expectations. The client and I discussed barriers to complete rigorous research. The client is flexible and will allow me to make the final decision of the topic that allows rigorous research in the timeframe allowed for the Consulting Capstone. 	Term 1
<p>Outcomes/Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The client and I discussed four unique areas to consider for research: (1) safety in the workplace (e.g., the impact of Corvid19 on construction practices), (2) technology (i.e., telecommuting during the pandemic), (3) identifying new revenue streams for the association, and (4) succession planning (i.e., developing talent to fill future business-critical positions) in the construction industry. The client and I discussed that time is a barrier to complete rigorous research. The client is flexible and will allow me to make the final decision of the topic that allows rigorous research in the timeframe allowed in the Consulting Capstone. I believe a research study on succession planning is most appropriate for this project. In my initial research on succession planning, I discovered that the average age of construction managers and builders is 45-55yrs old. As is the case with most business industries, the workforce is graying and there is need for a strategy to identify and develop high potential individuals to assume a leadership position when a business-critical position becomes vacant. Business leaders must include succession planning in their business strategy if they hope to remain competitive and have organizational sustainability. Provide s 	<p>Term 1</p> <p>Term 1</p> <p>Term 1</p>

Terms of confidentiality and compliance:

In all reports (including drafts shared with peers and faculty members), the student is required to maintain confidentiality by removing names and key pieces of information that might disclose an Institution's/individual's identity or inappropriately divulge proprietary details. If the Institution itself wishes to publicize the findings of this project, that is the Institution's judgment call.

The student will publish the case study in ProQuest as a doctoral capstone (with site and participant identifiers withheld). The case study will be based upon interviews with non-vulnerable adults on the topic of the Institution's business operations, review of public records, and review of internal records/documents related to the Institution's operations that the Institution deems appropriate for sharing with the student. The doctoral student will not use these data for any purpose other than the project outlined in this agreement.

Interview recordings and full transcripts will be shared with any interviewee (upon request), and the doctoral student will provide opportunities for clarifying previous statements. Transcripts with identifiers redacted may be shared with the doctoral student's university faculty, peer advisors, and site leadership (upon request).

The doctoral student is responsible for understanding and complying with all of the Institution's policies and regulatory requirements.

Ethical Conduct in this Consulting Relationship

The Code of Conduct in the Walden University Student Handbook and the ethical requirements for IRB compliance described in the Manual for the DBA Consulting Capstone bind DBA students in the consulting capstone.

Also, DBA students are required to uphold professional principles in fulfilling their roles as consultants and coaches to client organizations. Beyond the confidentiality requirements outlined above, three principles are key to ensuring ethical conduct in consulting relationships.

Principle 1: Protect the integrity of Walden University

- Not representing conflicting or competing interests or positioning themselves such that their interest may be in conflict or may be perceived to be in conflict with the purposes and values of Walden University
- Not intentionally communicating false or misleading information that may compromise the integrity of Walden University and of the consulting capstone experience

Principle 2: Exhibit professional conduct at all times

- Respecting the climate, culture, values, and regulatory requirements of client organizations and client workforce members

Principle 3: Protect the promise of confidentiality

- Not using or adapting client organization's data and information after the capstone experience, unless the information has been publically shared by the client
- Not conducting telephone conferences with the client organization in public places where information may be overheard

This Project Proposal has been approved by Bill Garrison:

SIGNATURE

The terms of this Project Proposal have been agreed to by Lisa Hawkins-Saleemi:

SIGNATURE

Document date: June 2016