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Strategies to Implement Succession Planning in a Nonprofit

Talecia Y. Parks
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Talecia Yvonne Parks

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Strategies to Implement Succession Planning in a Nonprofit

by

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MA, LaGrange College, 2012

BA, LaGrange College, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2018

Abstract

Surveys of nonprofit organizations conducted between 2004 and 2014 showed that 74% of the 6,923 leaders surveyed did not have a succession plan. In this qualitative single case study, the human capital theory was used as a guide to explore strategies used to implement a succession plan by 3 nonprofit leaders in a single nonprofit organization in a large metropolitan city in Southeastern Georgia. The participants were selected based on their implementation of succession plan strategies and geographical location.

Semistructured interviews and document review were used to collect the data, which were analyzed using Yin's 5-step approach. Three themes emerged: investments in human capital, evaluation metrics, and organizational structure. The findings of this study related to succession planning in nonprofit organizations is expected to contribute to positive social change in nonprofit organizations by creating organizational continuity and sustainability, which extends to the communities and individuals served.

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Dedication

God has blessed me to have the support to keep moving forward in life!

I would like to dedicate my doctoral study to my Grandfather Mr. Warner Parks Sr. My Grandfather passed during my doctoral journey which was difficult for me. Words can't express the appreciation I have for him. I was taught to be strong and independent which caused me to endure even when things were tough. My Grandfather never gave up on me; he believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. It takes a real Man to raise a child as his own. Growing up I never thought of acquiring a Doctoral Degree. Moreover, after working to obtain a bachelor's degree I began to think of the next steps to expand my knowledge to excel. Thus, I started working on a master's degree while still enrolled to complete my bachelor's degree. This was challenging! My Grandfather ensured that I had everything required to remain in school which included support for my son. He never wanted me to depend on anyone else for anything and he certainly ensured that I did not. Over the years, I have learned numerous valuable skills and lessons that I've shared with the world. My Grandfather is missed by many as he was a Father, Brother, Uncle, Cousin and Friend. Thanks Granddad!!! I know you're looking down smiling!!!

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank God who is the center of it all! Without God's Grace and Mercy, I would not be here today! I am thankful for my son who has helped mommy along the way; my son is my motivation. I want him to know that hard work and dedication yields results. I'd like to thank my mother for continuing to encourage me to excel. I would like to thank my family and friends for encouraging me to pursue my degree despite various obstacles. I would like to thank my Doctoral Chair Dr. Patterson for encouraging me throughout the process. I am forever grateful for the level of commitment by Dr. Patterson to ensure that I succeed. I'd also like to thank my committee members Dr. Dooley and Dr. Lentz. This has been a humbling experience. I will continue to allow God to use me to positively impact the lives of others. I give God the glory and praise.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Strong leadership is critical to the performance of nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit leaders often face challenges within organizations, which impacts leadership succession (Wolf, 2012). The inability to retain qualified leaders is an example of a major challenge that impacts nonprofit organizations. Executive exit can be planned or unexpected such as termination, retirement, promotion, merger, sale acquisition, internal transition, death, disability, unexpected resignation, investigation, or indictment (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Many nonprofit organizations have high executive turnover rates, which impacts the delivery of services to constituents (Bassi, 2013). The turnover of leaders is a result of the lack of planning. Succession planning is an essential component of retaining knowledge and streamlining processes behind the delivery of these services. Building practices between the successor and incumbent impacts performance by increasing the continuity in the organization. Using a qualitative case study design, the goal of this research was to explore successful strategies used to implement succession planning.

Background of the Problem

When a U.S. nonprofit leader exits an organization, the knowledge acquired by that individual is no longer accessible. Leaders of nonprofit organizations in the United States continue to struggle to retain professional leaders in complex and changing environments (Illies, 2014). Due to the retirement of nonprofit leaders and executives, research is required to examine exit strategies and the sustainability of the nonprofit sector (Gothard & Austin, 2013). More than 10,000 employees in the nonprofit sector

reach traditional retirement at age 67 (Gordon, 2014); demographic changes in the workforce are a concern for business leaders (Appelbaum, Gunkel, Benyo, Ramadan, & Wolff, 2012; Standifer, Lester, Schultz, & Windsor, 2013). A limited pool of qualified applicants presents a challenge in the process of leadership succession (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Leadership succession can cause fear, stress, and conflict within an organization (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Some nonprofit leaders do not have succession plans to capture the knowledge of employees exiting the organization. Formal succession planning can increase enthusiasm for work, reduce anxiety, and strengthen the hiring process (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Poor succession planning results in the loss of intellectual knowledge (Zhuang & Guo, 2013). Some nonprofit organizations lack strategies for developing and implementing succession plans. Strategies to implement succession plans may increase the organization's sustainability, decrease turnover, and reduce costs (Zhuang & Guo, 2013).

Problem Statement

Succession planning has been overlooked by an overwhelming number of nonprofit organizations (Chiocchio & Gharibpour, 2017). Surveys of nonprofit organizations conducted between 2004 and 2014 showed that 74% of the 6,923 surveyed did not have a succession plan in place (Santora, Sarros, Bozer, Esposito, & Bassi, 2015). The general business problem is that failure to have an employee succession plan to prepare individuals within an organization for future leadership positions can affect the organization's sustainability. The specific business problem is that some nonprofit

leaders lack strategies for developing and implementing employee succession plans that could improve organizational sustainability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies nonprofit leaders use to develop and implement employee succession plans to improve organizational sustainability. The target population included three nonprofit leaders in a single nonprofit organization, located in a large metropolitan city in southeastern Georgia who successfully implemented a succession plan. The positive social change is that the succession planning is expected to engender corporate longevity and provide employment opportunities to community members, as well as continuity in the services provided to the community.

Nature of the Study

This study used a qualitative research method. In qualitative studies, researchers conduct data analyses of responses to open-ended questions, which lead to the discovery of common emerging patterns and themes (Bishop & Lexchin, 2013; Frels & Obwuegbozie, 2013). Qualitative research includes an understanding of participants' views and experiences (Montero-Marín et al., 2013). Qualitative research contains interview questions that provide the interviewees with the ability to offer in-depth responses. Quantitative research does not involve exploring employee experiences through interviewing (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Therefore, a quantitative method would not have been effective because I explored and captured employee insights and viewpoints. In quantitative studies researchers test preconceived hypotheses. This study

did not include the testing of theories or variables which is applicable to quantitative research. Thus, the use of a quantitative or mixed method does not align with the purpose of the study.

An exploratory single case study design was best to identify information about the study's research question. A single case study is used to explore a specific case holistically in a real-life setting (Yin, 2014), and a case study can enhance professional practice or provide evidence-informed decision-making (Mannay & Morgan, 2015). Prior to selecting a case study design, I considered three other study designs such as phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative. Phenomenological researchers focus on describing the details and meanings of personal lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological design met the research criteria related to the participants' lived experiences, yet the design was not the most effective design for my study; the design did not meet the criteria to gain an in-depth analysis over a period of time. I focused on an in-depth inquiry of participants working for a single organization. The phenomenological research design requires researchers to combine the lived experiences of participants to form a collaborative narrative (Dowden, Gunby, Warren, & Boston, 2014). Ethnographic research is appropriate for investigating a problem through observations and interviews within a historical and cultural setting (Vesa & Vaara, 2014; Walker, 2012). A narrative design consists of collecting data through observation, documentation, interviews, or artifacts to contextualize participant experiences (Petty, Oliver, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). A single case study met the needs for this specific inquiry because of a small sample of

individuals who are unique in their position in human resources at a single nonprofit with success in addressing the issue of succession planning.

Research Question

What strategies do some nonprofit leaders use to develop and implement effective succession plans to improve organizational sustainability?

Interview Questions

1. What effective succession planning strategies do you use to develop succession plans?
2. What barriers, if any, were experienced during the first attempt to develop and implement the succession plan?
3. What succession planning strategies, if any, worked best to develop the succession plan?
4. What succession planning strategies, if any, improved the continuity of knowledge in the organization?
5. What succession planning strategies do you recommend to other nonprofit leaders?
6. What policies and procedures, if any, have you established pertaining to succession planning strategies?
7. Would you please provide any additional information that you feel would be helpful in the development of a succession plan for nonprofit organizations?

Conceptual Framework

Schultz (1961) developed the human capital theory. Schultz used the theory to explain the variances among individuals with respect to education and training. Human capital theory suggests that education and training increase the productivity and efficiency of employees (Jerzak, 2015). Human capital is any state of innate or acquired characteristic that contributes to productivity (Green & Roberts, 2012). As applied to this study, human capital increases the efficiency of succession in organizations. Succession planning must be linked with other processes such as individual development, career aspiration mapping, and manpower forecasting (Pandey & Sharma, 2014).

Definition of Terms

Explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is unambiguous information documented, codified, compiled into training manuals and archived (Sie & Yakhlef, 2013).

Human capital. Human capital represents the investments people make in themselves that enhance their economic productivity (Green & Roberts, 2012).

Knowledge transfer. Knowledge transfer is the process by which an organization recreates existing knowledge in a new setting (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). When applied to leadership, knowledge transfer is the process by which incumbent leaders share their strategies with their followers to raise successful future leaders (Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

Succession planning. Succession planning is the adaptation of the environment, organization and individuals during the process that involves strategic plans for mutual adjustments (Aaron & Watson, 2010).

Tacit knowledge: Tacit knowledge is acquired knowledge and requires the ability to decipher meaning and how to complete a certain task or set of tasks and is difficult to document and transfer to others because tacit knowledge exists in the minds and experiences of the incumbents who possess it (Iuga & Kifor, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are notions a researcher believes to be accurate (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The study was based on three assumptions: (a) nonprofit business executives would be available and willing to share experiences, opinions, and strategies used to implement a successful succession plan in organizations (b) participants would honestly answer the interview questions pertaining to the strategies used to implement a successful succession plan (c) will provide clear and precise responses and be truthful in their answers.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study (Jalongo, Boyer, & Ebbeck, 2014). Sample size, 1-hour maximum interview, time limit constraints to conduct the study, and limited researcher expertise are some examples of limitations (Connelly, 2013). The sample population was limited as the source of the participants is a single nonprofit organization in Metropolitan Southeastern Georgia. A limited sample size is a common limitation in qualitative research (Kolb, 2012). Document review was incorporated to expand the scope of inquiry. The focus of this qualitative research was to formulate an understanding of events, rather than to generalize the results.

Delimitations

Delimitations are design parameters in the control of a researcher such as the location and site of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The study was delimited to nonprofit leaders currently within a single nonprofit organization in Metropolitan Southeastern Georgia who have successfully implemented a succession plan. Another limitation was that the study is not generalizable because the study is qualitative in nature (Connelly, 2013).

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Nonprofit leaders fear the risk of knowledge loss associated with the exit of leaders within the organization (Wolf, 2012). The knowledge loss limits nonprofit leaders' abilities to make decisions, protect intellectual capital, develop human capital, and maintain a competitive advantage (Hagemann & Stroope, 2013; McEntire & Grene-Shortridge, 2011; Ropes, 2014). Effective leadership is an essential component for organizations to remain competitive. The growth of the organization is contingent upon the ability of the organizational leaders to retain knowledge. The development of strategies and processes to secure knowledge is critical. Generational succession accounts for the loss of knowledge among 76 million baby boomers (Appelbaum et al., 2012). The succession plan within the organization must include steps to foster executive leadership success regardless of age. Broughan (2013) noted managing succession accounts for the hidden costs of employee turnover. This single case study provides insights on new succession planning strategies required to transfer knowledge among employees who are

advancing or exiting the organization. Nonprofit leaders could use the findings to incorporate new learning objectives to provide clear strategic directions that might result in a sustainable organization.

Implications for Social Change

Due to the shortage of nonprofit leaders, alternative methods are needed to compensate for the increasing need for new leaders (Hoefler & Sliva, 2014). According to Appelbaum et al. (2012), there are 100 million members of Generation Y in the workforce, they but lack the training and strategies to assume leadership roles. The transfer of knowledge is the first step in the acquisition process in which nonprofit leaders must overcome the barriers associated with succession plans. The implications for social change may also lead to a more productive environment. Successful succession plans within nonprofit organizations are expected to contribute to positive social change by creating continuity within the organization that extends to the communities and individuals served.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I obtained literature through searching various scholarly databases to locate articles relevant to the identified subtopics. The search for peer-reviewed included articles published between 2012-2017. The literature review contains 91% (135) peer reviewed articles; 15% (21) books and the literature review contains 85% peer reviewed articles published within 5 years of the expected date of receiving the approval from Walden University's chief academic officer (CAO) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Sources

Source	2012 and before	2013 or newer	Total
Peer-reviewed articles	40	95	135
Books	10	11	21
Dissertations	0	1	1
Total	50	107	157

The Walden Library was a resource to search databases including Business Research Complete, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Academic Search Complete/Premier, Science Direct, and ABI/Inform Complete Database. I used Boolean operators including terms “and” and “or” to increase the search results. This review is organized by emerging themes based on key terms used to search these databases: *nonprofit leadership, nonprofit succession, knowledge transfer, tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, training, communication, trust, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and succession planning.*

Human Capital Theory

The rapid growth of global knowledge economy requires organizations to be embedded with intellectual capital to increase sustainability and competitiveness. In today’s knowledge economy, the influence of human capital indicates that investments in intangible resources are valuable (Muda, Ridhuan, & Rachman, 2016). Human capital refers to individual abilities, knowledge, know-how, talent, education, skills and experience. Recent studies have shown that internal social capital has a stronger level of influence in an organization requiring innovation (Cuevas-Rodriguez, Cabello-Medina, &

Carmona-Lavado, 2014). The linkages increase the efficiency of succession planning, which is an integral part of the human capital theory. Intellectual capital is an essential component in ensuring that an organization is sustainable (Patruti, 2013).

The economic perspective of the human capital theory posits that three human capital components influence performance and result in greater pay, which are education, tenure, and training (Hayek, Thomas, Novicevic, & Montalvo, 2016). A fundamental assumption of the economic perspective is that investments in education increase productivity, reflected in improved performance evaluation scores (Patruti, 2013). Longer tenure results in specific knowledge, which subsequently relates to increased productivity. Researchers focused on human capital development and skill development as effective mechanisms to ensure the efficient utilization of employees (Barnes, Ponder, & Hopkins, 2015).

Human capital can be categorized into three categories: capability and potential, motivation and commitment and innovation and learning (Muda et al., 2016). Capability and potential refers to the educational level, professional skills experience, attitudes, and personal networks values and the ability of current employees to evolve within the organization (Muda et al., 2016). Motivation and commitment refer to whether employees align their interests with those of the firm while innovation and learning show the degree to which employees embrace change (Muda et al., 2016). The human capital theory suggests that education and training provide knowledge and strategies that contribute to an increase in productivity and efficiency of employees (Jerzak, 2015; Schultz, 1961). Human capital is a collection of resources, knowledge, skills, experience,

and training (Schober & Winter-Ebmer, 2011). The failure to recognize individual resources as a form of capital within an organization would suggest that labor is physical work requiring little or no skills or education (Schultz, 1961). Nonprofit leaders must recognize the importance of implementing strategies to ensure succession within the organization. Succession planning provides continuity and improves efficiency (Jerzak, 2015).

Unger, Rauch, Frese, and Rosenbusch (2011) conducted research that showed a significant relationship between human capital and success. Gamerschlag (2013) identified human capital as an organization's most important resource; human capital refers to the process relating to education, training, and professional initiatives to increase the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees. There are many exceptions such as compensating differentials, labor market imperfectionists, and taste-based discrimination. Compensation differentials can be defined as an employee being paid less money because he or she receives part of his or her compensation in (hard to observe) characteristics of the job, which may involve lower effort requirements, more pleasant working conditions, and better amenities. In contrast, labor market imperfectionists suggest that two employees with the same human capital have different wages due to job modifications regarding their productivity and pay (Gamerschlag, 2013). In this scenario, the higher producing employee would receive increased pay. Last, taste-based discrimination allows employers to pay a lower wage to an employee based on gender or race due to their prejudices.

Disparities of human capital. Theorists have identified complementary and alternative analyses of human capital. To expand the depth of knowledge, I will focus on five distinctive ways of analyzing human capital (a) the Becker view, (b) the Garner view, (c) the Bowles-Gintis view, (d) the Spencer view, and (e) the Nelson and Phelps' view. The Becker (1993) view states that human capital is useful in the production process. Human capital serves as the catalyst to increase a worker's productivity in all tasks that differ regarding this situation (Becker, 1993). According to this view, the role of human capital in the productive process is complex and viewed as a unidimensional object such as the stock of knowledge or strategies and this stock is a component of the productive function (Becker, 1993). Becker (1993) divided human capital into two distinct categories: general and specific. General human capital is the individual's investment in their future and well-being including healthy living, learning outside of the work environment, and self-improvement. Conversely, specific human capital focuses on improving efficiency in the workplace, training and education, and involvement in programs established within the organization. Schultz (1961) and Becker agreed that an investment in employees increases profit and self-worth. Individuals who invest in their future and expand their horizons increase self-worth (Schultz, 1961). Human capital theory provides a relationship between the years of education and increased wages whereas the screening theory signals the relationship between the years of education and higher ability (Autor, 2014). Human capital theory does not address the rationale used by employers to seek candidates with degrees or certifications (Baker, 2011).

The social psychologist Howard Gardner, who contributed to the development of multiple intelligences, placed an emphasis on geniuses who were *unskilled* in other dimensions. The Gardner view supports the notion that human capital is not unidimensional since there are many dimensions of skill types (Gardner, 1994). A simple version of this approach emphasizes mental versus physical abilities as different strategies. Higher earnings result in higher competition on the labor market, which enforces a higher remuneration on employers to employees with higher education (Gardner, 1994). Becker (1993) argued that individual incomes are contingent on the extent of investment in human capital. An expansion of research will promote equality in the workplace.

The Schultz view (Schultz, 1961) suggests that human capital can evolve. Based on this approach, human capital is beneficial in handling disequilibrium in situations with a changing environment where employees are required to make adjustments. Other theorists such as Nelson and Phelps (1966) support the view. The Bowles-Gintis view has a hierarchical structure in which employees must obey orders and adapt to life in a capital society (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). According to Bowles and Gintis (2011), schools were founded to instill in individuals the correct ideology and approach toward life. The Spencer view is observable measures of human capital as a signal of ability versus a characteristic independently useful in the production process (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Leaders in the workplace must create strategies to retain knowledge. Employee turnover is reduced by managing succession (Broughan, 2013).

The first three views are similar in that human capital is valued in the market and provides the ability to increase profits within the organization. In many applications, the views of human capital would be a combination of these approaches. In contrast, the Bowles-Gintis (2011) view suggested that employees with higher education would receive higher wages and would follow rules in accordance to the hierarchy established. Spencer's (1911) view is also distinctive in that human capital is an observable measure that provides information about the characteristics of employees (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). According to Gray (2014), the development of a succession plan can promote organizational change.

Sources of human capital. There are various sources of human capital such as innate ability, education, school quality, non-education investments, training, and pre-labor market influences (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Innate abilities are the disparities in strategies, and human capital result from innate differences (Gardner, 1994). Research in biology and social biology includes the argument that some components of intelligence are genetic in origin (Gardner, 1994). Thus, there are two ways to view this notion. Garner (1994) noted that heterogeneity in human capital to access the same investment opportunities provides economic constraints. In empirical applications, strategies account for the differences in human capital due to other variables of interest (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Education plays a vital role in the research conducted because education is measurable. Education quality and non-education investments influence the level of human capital regarding the focus areas (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). For example, one individual may have worked harder or studied more for some subjects versus others for

some reason. One individual may have been more assertive or possess good communication strategies. Thus, understanding the strategies not observable is important; unobservable strategies may affect the wage structure. The lack of data to support this notion of human capital is problematic. The final two dimensions provide alternative ways to infer to human capital. The process of succession planning consists of aligning the organizational goals with capital needs (Flurea, Cheung, & Herndon, 2013). The lack of data will add depth to encourage other researchers to explore other pertinent topics regarding human capital.

Training. Training is the component of human capital acquired after formal education which is associated with useful strategies relative to a specific industry or particular set of technologies (Becker, 1993). Training is similar to education in that the employee has some degree of control as it relates to the level of investment (Becker, 1993). The complexity involves the need for employers to provide trainings, as it is difficult for an employee to make training investments on his or her own. The organization also needs to invest in the training of employees to establish and identify key focus areas. Training is a joint investment by organizations and employees, which adds to the complexity of the analysis. An element of investment is required (Becker, 1993). Other components discussed in the literature review are leadership development and mentoring.

Other theories. Rivera (2011) argued that the screening theory provided a criterion that supported employer's value for degrees and credentials. The screening theory can be used to maximize employer's abilities to obtain preferred candidates; the

screening theory is similar to the human capital theory in that both describe the effects of education on wages. Vatamanescu and Manuc (2013) identified human resource (HR) departments that used various tools in the screening process such as drug screening, criminal history and background checks, resume screening, driver's license, language skills, and social media to determine employee eligibility.

Credentialing theory is another theory that can be used to describe the relationship between formal education and the skills gained from work experiences to allow a person to qualify for employment (Baker, 2011). Credentials are used to provide an overview of skills employees possess (Rivera, 2011). Succession management is a process implemented to ensure that internal and external candidates' positions are based on specific core competencies. Bozer and Kena (2013) noted a positive relationship between succession management and development.

The stakeholder theory addresses groups or individuals who can affect or are affected by an organization's achievements. According to Wellens and Jegers (2014), the well-functioning of nonprofit organizations is influenced by diverse stakeholder relationships. Leaders within organizations have an obligation to a group of stakeholders and the development of an organization may be influenced by the process used to manage diverse relationships (Wellens & Jegers, 2014). Based on Freeman's (1984) definition, there are seven categories that affect an organization's achievements: governments, beneficiaries, private donors, board members, management, volunteers working at the grass roots level, and non-leadership staff (Wellens & Jegers, 2014). The

implementation of a succession plan will aid in sustaining the organization (Poveda & Young, 2015).

Succession of Nonprofits

Nonprofit organizations provide a wide range of services accounted for 9.2% of all salaries and wages paid in 2010 and 2011 contributed to over \$800 billion to the U.S. economy (Blackwood, Roeger, & Pettijohn, 2012). The nonprofit sector contributed an estimated 905.9 billion to the U.S. economy in 2013, composing 5.4% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP; McKeever, 2015). In 2014, total private giving from individuals, foundations, and businesses totaled 358.38 billion dollars, an increase of nearly 5% from 2013 after adjusting for inflation (McKeever, 2015). Research conducted by Giving USA (2015) showed a rise in charitable giving for the fifth consecutive year in 2014. After adjusting for inflation, this is the first year to exceed the previous peak set before the recession in 2007 (355.16 billion in 2014 dollars). Just over 25% of U.S. adults volunteered with an organization in 2014, contributing an estimated 8.7 billion hours, the most hours recorded since the Current Population Survey's volunteer supplement began in 2002; the hours volunteered equates to approximately 179.2 billion dollars (McKeever, 2015). Approximately 35% of nonprofits registered with the IRS were required to file form 990, Form 990-Z or Form 990-PF with the IRS (McKeever, 2015). The reporting accounted for \$2.26 trillion in revenues and \$5.17 trillion in assets (McKeever, 2015). Human Services groups such as food banks, homeless shelters, youth services, sports organizations, and family or legal services account for 35% of all public charities. Human Service organizations accounted for comparatively less revenue 12.4% of the total and

expenses 12.7% of the total. Although hospitals account for 24% of all public charities the revenues comprised of more than half of revenues received from charities at 49.8 and 50.7% respectively (McKeever, 2015). The lack of succession planning in service industries decreases the return of investment (ROI) in employees; planning adds value to the organization while decreasing cost.

Succession planning is essential for all organizations. There is a limited pool of qualified applicants which presents a challenge in the process of leadership succession. Organizations recognize the need to develop strategies and processes for succession. Many nonprofit organizations have not implemented strategies. Flurea, Cheung, and Herndon (2013) defined succession planning as identifying and developing potential successors by aligning organizational goals with human capital needs. Goal achievement must be measurable, time bounded, accepted, challenging but feasible and prioritized (Tschirhart & Bielefeld, 2012). Succession management includes the search of talent from both internal and external talent pools, linking selection criteria to a candidate's specific competencies and embeddedness within inter-and intra-organizational networks, and developing leaders whose strengths and experiences fits the organizations mission and values (Gothad & Austin, 2013).

Many nonprofit leaders have developed self-leadership to advance and or prepare for exiting an organization. Self-leadership strategies can help exiting executives develop an organizational climate of trust to address leadership change. Succession planning can be implemented by developing talent or seeking external candidates (Garg & Weele, 2012). A common pitfall among nonprofit executives is the practice of grooming

potential successors without board knowledge or approval. Nonprofit leaders should engage in transparency, which includes dialogue with board members. Formal policies and procedures should be established. The implementation of organizational change and culture shifts demand a more comprehensive model for leadership succession: the rise of self-career management and external recruiting, increased diversity issues, the prevalence of mergers and acquisitions, new technologies, downsizing of middle management and the flattening of organizations (Gothard & Austin, 2013). As illustrated in Figure 1, intentional departure-based succession planning for leaders can depend on the amount of time remaining prior to departure. Figure 1 captures themes relative to the frameworks for succession planning as outlined in Appendix A.

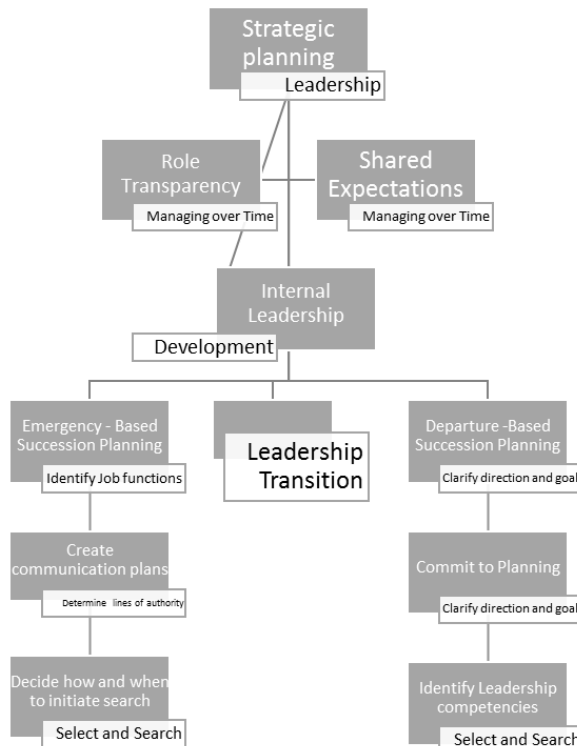


Figure 1. Succession model.

Status is an important factor of human behavior within the workplace as a determinant of the economy's efficiency (Auriol, Friebel, & Bieberstein, 2016). The goal of gaining a higher status in an organization motivates people to work hard for long periods of time. To ensure that an organization is sustainable, a relationship must be maintained with stakeholders. There are three elements of succession management, which include corporate governance, finance reporting, and management systems (Gray, 2014). The model integrates extended internal reporting with a broad set of measures and provides a means to link social, environment, and ethical concerns of financial performance. To have an effective model, leaders must understand the causal relationship between the alternative actions on sustainability performance linking reactions of the corporate stakeholder's performance.

Most nonprofit leaders do not plan for executive successions. The primary purpose of succession planning is to increase engagement and retention by providing a career ladder (Gray, 2014). A nonprofit organization is a group that supports public causes on a non-profit basis in the form of arts, charity education, politics, public policy, religious issues, scholarship, and environment (Liao & Huang, 2016). Other challenges include reduced government funding, competition with other non-profit and for-profit organizations, requirements from funders for more accountability, governmental scrutiny of tax-exempt status, and changes in technology increases the pressure on non-profit organizations (Petrescu, 2013). The development of a plan to aid in the continuity of nonprofit succession planning requires a sequence of steps (see Figure 2).

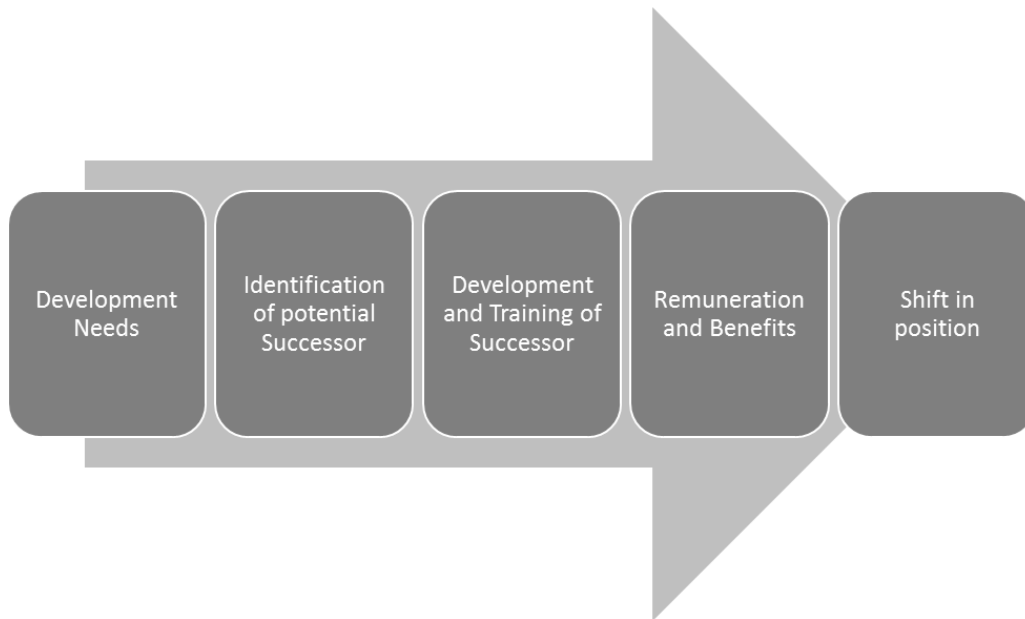


Figure 2. Succession planning as a sequence of steps.

Nonprofit organizations are subject to change in the workforce (volunteers and staff), governance, and management practices. Flurea, Cheung, and Herndon (2013) defined succession planning as identifying and developing potential successors by aligning organizational goals with human capital needs. There is a limited pool of qualified applicants which presents a challenge in the process of leadership succession. The development and implementation of a succession plan can also be used to create a talent development culture that affirms individual strengths and develops competencies that foster results (Gray, 2014). Organizations recognize the need to develop strategies and processes for succession. Moreover, many organizations have not implemented strategies.

Succession management. Succession planning is similar to estate planning and is often neglected (Bozer & Kena, 2013). The succession process in organizations is

complex and exhausting. Planning is essential in ensuring the continuity of the organizations. The lack of succession planning increases conflict and disorganization. According to Rothwell (2011), the succession process is a systematic effort by an organization to ensure its continuity, maintain and develop new skills, and leverage its development based on strategies for the future. The main objectives are to align current talents with leaders needed in the future while overcoming strategic and operational challenges. Self-preparation is a major factor to ensure success and continuity. The implementation process is complex and requires trained professionals with the skills to resolve. Rothwell created a step-by-step model for establishing and maintaining a systematic succession plan program (see Figure 3). The systematic process is applicable across industries.

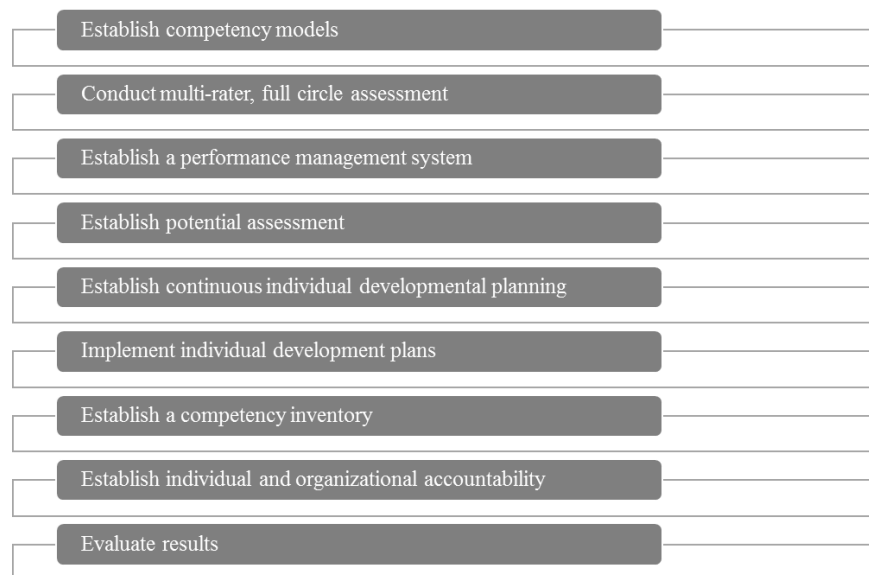


Figure 3. Rothwell succession plan model.

A business strategy combined with succession planning in conjunction with Lewin's Three Step Change Theory should be implemented. A succession planning project should be structured using a four-phase approach by human resources to apply to any organization (Hamann, 2016). Phase 1: Establish the scope (a) reviewing the organization's strategic plan in order to link training and development with organizational goals, (b) assessing retirement projections and attrition rates by all causes, and (c) determining the impact of external factors impacting certain positions in the organization (Hamann, 2016). Step 1: A business/leadership action plan can be implemented by any leader in an organization to unfreeze the culture to allow senior leadership to move from current status quo of minimal attention to succession planning and staff development (Hamann, 2016). Data involving demographics may increase the likelihood of change. The identification of restraining forces must be identified and addressed. The senior leadership team will be helpful in identifying challenges, brainstorming solutions, and allocating resources. Step 2: Senior leadership must move to a level of equilibrium with a vested interest and intent of developing new leaders (Hamann, 2016). The organizational culture will change after key components of succession planning stages are identified and implemented. Productivity data metrics and trends can also be used to evaluate the outcomes of the individual development initiatives. Step 3: Sustainability measures can build organizational support with the assistance of education and training, and organizational effectiveness. Human resource development departments will embed new strategies with the opportunity to expand employment to other divisions and institutions (Hamann, 2016; see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Career expansion.

Succession plan process. Succession plan development begins with the (a) identification of leaders that may require replacement within the next 3 years (b) list of job competencies and personalities for each role and make recommendations, (c) access internal talent pool and potential skills, ability, longevity, and health; and (e) actively identify people based on experience level to ensure that they are prepared for advancement (Gray, 2014). The succession plan process can be used by organizations to develop a sustainable model. Leaders can tailor the model in accordance with the core competencies of the organization.

Carrie et al. (as cited in Hamann, 2016) identified eight common strategies in the comprehensive review process used in succession. The strategies used are (a) strategic planning, (b) identifying desired needs and skills, (c) identifying the most valuable key positions, (d) identifying possible succession candidates, (e) coaching and mentoring, (f) providing additional career and personal developmental processes, (g) sourcing and

allocation of resources, and (h) evaluating the process (Hamann, 2016). Nonprofit leaders should hire internally if there are candidates that meet the qualifications. The external talent pool is secondary (see Figure 5). Research shows internal promotions lead to higher levels of retention and engagement at lower costs (Gray, 2014). High potential leaders may be selected to develop a breakthrough product or leadership training. Pairing leaders with other high potential leaders for mentoring and coaching sessions is an inexpensive way to develop talent. An outside vendor should be contracted to implement the succession plan in accordance to the scope if internal expertise is not available. The implementation of a succession plan can be achieved by combining multiple processes; investing in human capital can increase continuity and productivity within organizations.

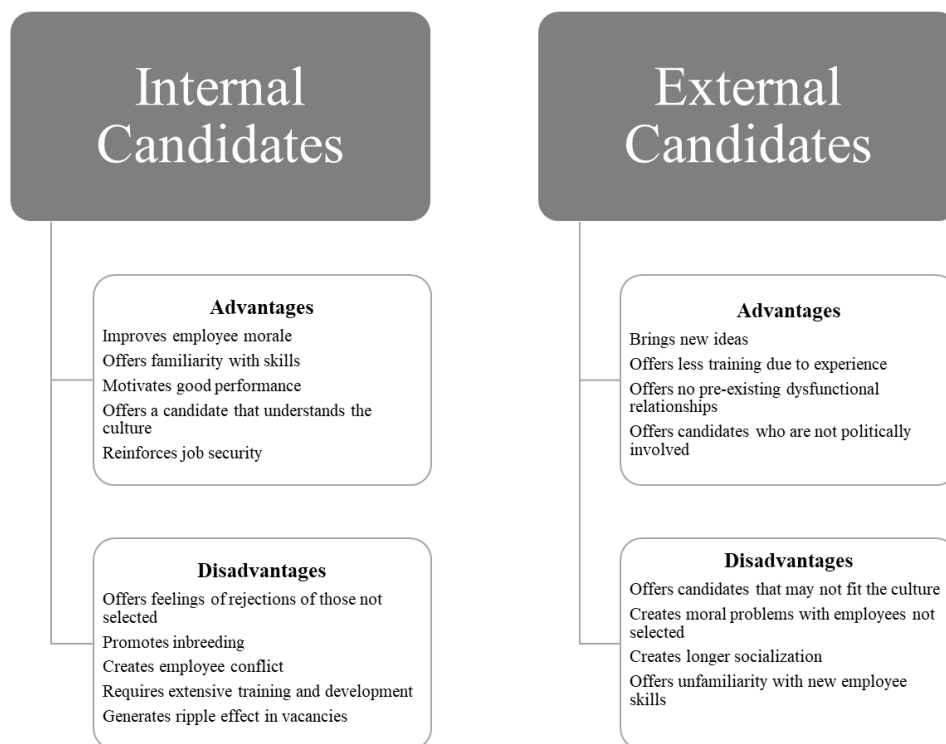


Figure 5. Advantages and disadvantages of internal and external candidates.

Succession challenges. Succession planning challenges arise due to the process and technology related issues. Non-formation of a talent pool and lack of clarity in future needs are examples. The lack of an assessment tool is a technology challenge. According to Cappelli and Keller (2014) identifying employees who will carry out strategic work in the future is essential. Another challenge in the succession planning process is the perceived threat of a candidate that is more competent than the mentor which reduces the commitment of some executives to foster new leaders (Trepanier & Crenshaw, 2013). Communication is essential in overcoming challenges (Waters, 2014). Scheduling and time allocation for succession planning and mentoring is critical.

Other challenges are: external recruitment, lack of collaboration between colleagues and stakeholders, financial capacity and the alignment of a succession plan that supports the organization's strategic plan (Trepanier & Crenshaw, 2013). Each organization must tailor succession plans to fit the organization based on the size of the organization, future development of the organization and future needs of employees with the qualifications and the development of knowledge (Chebikova, Misankova, & Kramorova, 2015).

Zepeda, Bengston, and Parylo (2012) explored the planning and management succession strategies for principals in the Georgia school system. A multiple case study approach with semistructured interviews was conducted in conjunction with the organizational leadership succession theory. The study focused on 32 superintendents, assistant superintendents, central office leaders, and principals. Zepeda et al. examined the strategies used by school systems to fill the gaps in leadership roles. Findings showed

a difference in the sense of urgency for the planning and management of the succession of principals and leaders along with the value added as a result of partnerships established with outside agencies to manage the succession process (Zepeda et al., 2012). Wilhem (2012) showed a correlation between knowledge management and succession planning by business leaders viewing knowledge retention and succession planning as a mutually inclusive source of complete advantage.

Walt Disney is ranked as one of the Millennials favorite employers in a study conducted (Sun, 2016). The departure of Tom Staggs who served as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) was unexpected. Staggs was the candidate identified to serve as the successor of the current Chief Executive Officer, Bob Iger in 2018 (Sun, 2016). Disney has experienced challenges with transitions in the past. Thus, Stag's abrupt resignation was of concern for many stockholders. The cost associated with identifying and grooming a successor is substantial. Other problems with succession include wage inequality, which is problematic within organizations because the average ratio between the highest and lowest salary is much higher than 50 years ago (Gross, Guc, & Charness, 2015). Structured changes such as strategies-based technology or capital skill could lead to higher wage inequality through performance pay (Gross et al., 2015). The lack of a succession plan could jeopardize projects and disrupt business continuity (Ganu & Boateng, 2012).

Sustainability. New employees and retirement eligible employees have the highest turnover rates (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Sustainability can be defined as meeting the current needs of the present without affecting the future through strategies that align with

the stakeholder's vision and expectations (Poveda & Young, 2015). Metrics used to evaluate the sustainability of an organization can be implemented by managing people, planet and profit which is commonly referred to as the triple bottom line (Poveda & Young, 2015). Nonprofit leaders must incorporate all inputs to formulate effective sustainability strategies. Research has shown that sustainability strategies are top down, and the most effective ones involve top management commitment to the strategy. Senior leaders must be knowledgeable to support the organization and effectively communicate the mission, vision, and strategy to other members of the organization. Top leaders are responsible for creating an environment that promotes sustainability (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014). The implementation of a sustainable model must include a management system such as product cost, capital budgeting, performance measurement, and evaluation systems (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014). Some organizations do not have a strategy for addressing environmental, social and economic concerns or systems to evaluate leaders and their impacts.

The lack of structure makes organizations more prone to crises. The peer competition, funding shortfalls and sustainable resource management issues impacts the delivery of services and operational effectiveness and efficiency (Liao & Huang, 2016). The consequences include an increase in legal claims and damages to the organization's reputation. Thus, human resources could implement succession planning strategies to increase the return on investment and transfer knowledge to incoming generations. The development of organizational strategies ensures the sustainability of nonprofit organizations. The following six core principles can help improve sustainability:

leadership, engagement, alignment, diversity, evaluation, and responsibility. An alternative strategic model developed for government organizations focuses on three key areas: the public value to be created, the sources of legitimacy and support for the organization, and the operational capacity for delivering value (Lia & Huang, 2016). The metrics used as indicators of sustainable practices are integral tools in decision-making within organizations. Sustainable modification efforts require leaders who have the ability to implement change. Change leadership a skill set required throughout any organization from designing, implementing, executing, and sustaining improvements. Change leadership is essential for both high-level executives and program leaders responsible for creating the vision, communicating the vision, and executing the plan.

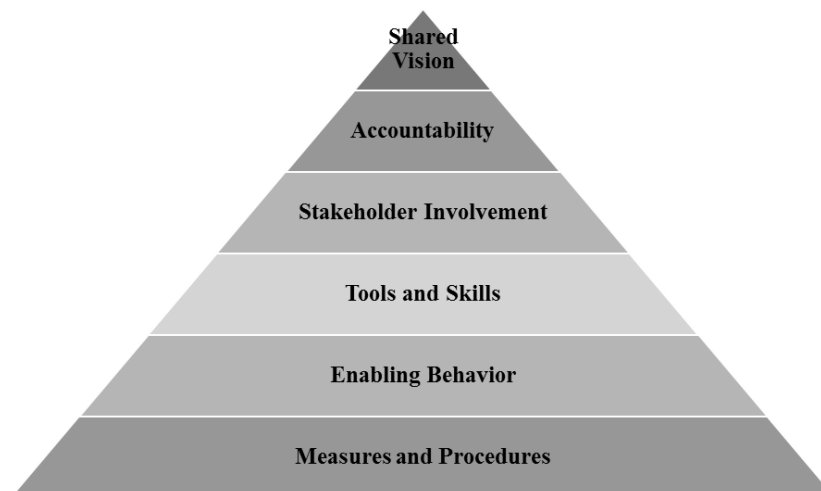


Figure 6. System pyramid.

Adapted from “Analysis of strategic leadership simulation models in non-profit organizations,” by N. K. Dimitrius, D.P. Sacks, and D. S. Vlachos, 2013, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 73, 276-284. Adapted with permission.

Nonprofit leaders must incorporate all inputs to formulate effective sustainability strategies. The lack of knowledge of senior leaders to implement strategies may result in

an unsuccessful outcome. The implementation of post-retirement strategies aids in retaining and transferring knowledge through social networks and programs (Markkula, 2013). The lack of structure makes organizations more prone to crises. Nonprofit leaders must address challenges to enforce the organization's mission and sustainability. The Board of Directors has six principle areas of responsibility (Wolf, 2012).

1. Determine the organization's mission and set policies for its operation
2. Engage in long-term planning to establish the general course for the future
3. Establish fiscal policy and boundaries
4. Provide adequate resources for the activities of the organization
5. Select, evaluate and terminate the appointment of the executive director
6. Develop and maintain communication promoting the mission of the organization.

The six principles are designed to promote continuity in the organization. Leaders must ensure that all stakeholders and employees adhere to the core principles established by the Board of Directors.

Knowledge transfer. Due to the rise in the number of nonprofit organizations, the accountability increases which leads to fostering a competent workforce through continual learning (Chang, Huang, & Kuo, 2015). Organizations such as academic institutions, government, think tanks, and knowledge-based organizations rely on strategies to disseminate information (Anderson, 2012). Knowledge is the concept, skill, expertise, and vision that provides a framework for creating, evaluating and using information (Navimipour & Charband, 2016). Knowledge transfer is the process by

which an organization recreates existing knowledge in a new setting (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Knowledge can be expanded by transferring employees, tasks, tools, or networks embedded from one social unit to another and modifying responsibilities (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). The transfer of knowledge is an important strategic factor associated with an organization's ability to acquire, retain, manage, and exchange knowledge (Durst & Evardsson, 2012). Knowledge can be divided into two categories: explicit (codified) and tacit (know how). Explicit knowledge can be codified and is easier to transfer compared to tacit knowledge, which is hard to codify or write as explicit knowledge must be acquired through practical experience (Lindstrom, Delsing, & Gustafsson, 2015).

Knowledge sharing enables employees to accept the required knowledge from knowledge owners to improve their work performance (Navimipour & Charband, 2016). Knowledge transfer is commonly referred to as vicarious learning which entails learning indirectly from the experiences of others known as knowledge spillover (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). Researchers have found empirical evidence that personnel mobility is an effective mechanism for transferring knowledge between and within organizations (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). The skill of sharing knowledge remains positively associated with superior organizational performance (Pollock, 2012b). Leaders who create environments conducive to interpersonal trust increase the transfer of knowledge sharing. Personnel mobility can also serve as a mechanism for transferring routines across groups.

Knowledge is a source of competitive advantage. Individual members are powerful mechanisms for transferring tacit and explicit knowledge (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). The increase in global economic challenges has caused businesses to enhance competitive advantage and organizational performance by leveraging knowledge management and intellectual capital (Seleim & Khalil, 2011). Intellectual capital is an intangible strategic asset synonymous with knowledge, skill, and intellectual property that contributes to knowledge creation which sustains organizations (Cricelli, Greco, & Grimaldi, 2014). Organizations must develop a sustainable method or system for knowledge management. Knowledge management can involve a process for creating new knowledge, identification of sources of new knowledge and the elicitation and distribution of new knowledge (Lindstrom et al., 2015). Learning is an important element in improving the effectiveness of an organization (Chang et al., 2015). Daud, Vazhathodi, and Khan (2015) suggested that the strategic direction of the organization in conjunction to understanding employee's accountability and the sharing of knowledge create alignment between the organization and employees.

Knowledge management. Control over information is a source of power which involves both access to vital information and control over its distribution (Ciulla, 2003). Leadership positions often provide access to information not available to followers and peers (Ciulla, 2003). A leader may use deliberate discretion of information to persuade people for a particular course of action. Similarly, a leader who controls the flow of vital information to followers influences their perception and abilities (Ciulla, 2003). Examples include selective edition of reports and documents, biased interpretation of data

and presentation of false information. Some leaders attempt to increase subordinate dependence on them by hoarding information required to solve tasks, resolve conflict, manage operations, and make strategic decisions (Ciulla, 2003). If only the leader possesses valuable information, followers lack the knowledge required to dispute the leader's decisions and justification (Ciulla, 2003).

Leaders use knowledge management and tacit knowledge to contribute to the organization's strategic performance (Venkitachalam & Busch, 2012). Barriers to working on problems outside of an employee's scope of inquiry must be identified to prevent the breakdown of processes (Anderson, 2012). Control over information makes it easier for a leader to cover up failures and mistakes that would undermine their image and expertise. Followers who have access to information required by leaders to make decisions can be used as a source of influence over the leader's decisions. Some followers use this type of influence to assume more responsibility for collecting, storing analyzing, and reporting operational information (Ciulla, 2003). If a leader depends on a follower to interpret complex analyses, the subordinate gains access to participate in meetings based on knowledge and skill set. Expertise is a source of power in solving problems and performs important tasks is often referred to as expert power (Ciulla, 2003). One major challenge for implementing knowledge management practices within an organization is its culture (Connell, 2013). The organizational structure established within organizations increases the complexity of knowledge sharing. Leaders could facilitate training to foster knowledge transfer (Connell, 2013).

Learning. Learning is an important element in improving the effectiveness of an organization (Chang et al., 2015). Edward T. Hall identified three types of learning: informal, formal, and technical (Hooker, 2003). Informal learning is achieved by mitigation as when a child is learning the native language. Little instruction is provided. Formal and technical learning involve explicit lessons in which the learner is told something to do. The differences between formal and technical are that formal learning is normative and transmits cultural values whereas technical learning is neutral. Leaders use formal and technical instruction to model behaviors (Hooker, 2003). Formal instruction can change behaviors in an instance and result in new rules with new boundaries. The study will promote the creation of new avenues for learning. Other important elements linked to human capital theory discussed in the literature include leadership development, leadership implementation and mentoring.

Employee development consists of both formal and informal learning strategies in organizations. Formal learning refers to the training primarily controlled by the organization whereas informal learning is based on the individuals' pace and ability to retain information (Chang et al., 2015). Strategic leadership filters the practicable information, creating an environment where learning can be developed. When developing strategies, analysis of the nonprofit organization and environment's current state and future development is important. The analysis must be implemented both on an internal and external level to identify possible threats of external environment and strengths and weaknesses of the organization (Dimitrius et al., 2013). The study is designed to provide

different perspectives used by an organization to develop sustainable succession plans and foster growth in organizations.

Education and training. Education and training are essential components in human capital. Human capital analysts assume that education increases earnings and productivity by providing knowledge. Training requires a paradigm shift within the organization (Sawitri & Muis, 2014). An alternative view suggest that school is not a determinant and that credentials that degrees and education carry do not impact abilities, persistence and other traits. Most employees remain with the same organization for a long period of time due to role familiarity. Employment changes are common among unskilled employees. Resources are usually spent by organizations to familiarize new employees with their organizations. Acquired knowledge is a form of training due to an increase in production. Other forms of human capital include employment agency fees, expenses incurred by new employees in finding employment, time, inventory, testing, reference checks, and book keeping.

On-the-job education and training can result in raises because of the expansion of knowledge. For example, information about prices charged by distributors would enable an individual to produce at a lower cost. Consequently, information relative to wages earned would increase a person's willingness to work for an employer with a higher salary. Students often make decisions about educational attainment based on future returns (Huntington-Klein, 2015). Another way to invest in human capital is to improve emotional and physical health. A large number of young adults are in school or receiving on-the-job training. Another assumption is that human capital is heterogeneous.

According to Schultz (1961), human capital theory is robust in that it allows one to gauge the outcome of quality. Other countries have made investments in people over the last 3 decades. There has been a significant investment in people that accounts for a 40% increase in life expectancy (Schultz, 1961). Economists agreed that measures of ability that include intelligence test, school grades, and personality test do not measure talents required to succeed in the economic sphere (Huntington-Klein, 2015). Political affiliation and social oppositions play a vital role.

Horvat (1995) developed the formula to observe the optimum rate of investments with knowledge and skill as a critical investment variable in determining the rate of economic growth. Human capital consists of five essential categories: health facilities, services, on-the job training, formal education, study programs for adults, and migration of individuals and families to adjust to changes in employment opportunities. Education cost rose three and a half times as rapidly as gross formation of physical capital in dollars. Younger employees overestimate life satisfaction whereas older employees underestimate life satisfaction (Schwandt, 2016). The errors are significant as 9.8% of 21-year-olds overestimate life satisfaction and decreases to 4.5% by age 68 (Schwandt, 2016). The pattern stabilizes overtime within cohorts across socioeconomic groups. When considering an investment in education the quality and value is considered along with the changes in market conditions (Eckel, Johnson, & Montamarquette, 2013). Investments in human capital's impact varies among cohorts.

Generations. As a new generation of employees enter the workforce the realms of leadership shift that influences the processes used by leaders to transfer knowledge. By

2020, some 25% of the workforce will consist of baby boomers over age 65 (Gray, 2014). Employers are beginning to acknowledge the advantages of a diverse workforce with different skill sets (Swan, 2012). The viability of the organization is impacted by the departing expertise and limited number of employees to replace the aging baby boomers (King, 2012). There are four generations in the workplace, which includes veterans who were born before 1945, Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964, members of Generation X born between 1965 and 1979, and members of Generation Y born between 1980 and 2000 (Angelie, 2011; Coulter & Faulkner, 2013). Baby boomers account for nearly 85 million, whereas Generation X accounts for 50 million and Generation Y accounts for 76 million (Deyoe & Fox, 2012).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), an estimated 20% of the 150.9 million jobs in the United States require replenishing because baby boomers are exiting the workforce. Today, the largest population cohort in the United States is Generation Y, known as the millennials (Doherty, 2013). Millennials and Generation X value separation of work and personal life (Gursoy, Chi, & Karadag, 2013). There is a reduced employment commitment among younger employees and they are less likely to allocate personal resources to implement work assignments (Park & Gursoy, 2012). Strategies, processes, and methods used to enhance intergenerational or multigenerational knowledge transfer were explored by Harvey (2012) and Kuyken (2012). The generation of recruits, up through their early 30s, are constantly ranked and rated by supervisors and peers. Age 37 to 40 are identified as high potential employees for leadership roles in organizations. Most senior leaders range in age 50 and beyond. Senior leaders set the

course of the organization and should allocate time and resources to identify successors (Geuss, 2002). The preferences of younger generations should be included in human resource policies to retain millennials (Park & Gursory, 2012).

According to Marcinkus-Murphy (2012), the exploration of social, reverse mentoring of corporate alumni or social networks to capture and transfer the knowledge of baby boomers mitigates barriers. Employees are guided through the ranks in a process that results in development which can be acquired through training, which requires risk taking. Seasoned leaders require more creative efforts to draw forth their potential. All leaders should spend a minimum of 25% of the time developing staff members (Geuss, 2003). Transferring the human capital of baby boomers to less-experienced generations is challenging for leaders (Pollouck, 2012). Baby boomers have tacit knowledge which requires specific strategies to ensure the efficiency within organization (Joy & Hayes, 2011). Developing talent in organizations is essential for role transitions; the study will encourage organizations to increase morale.

Leadership development. Many nonprofit leaders have developed leadership strategies to prepare leaders and executives exiting an organization. Leadership is the ability to motivate employees in an organization to focus their attention on problems the leaders find significant (Helmig, Ingerfurth, & Pinz, 2014). According to Gentry, Eckert, Munusamy, Stawiskil, and Martin (2013) leadership development is a critical component to the success of an organization. Nonprofit leadership is the capacity to develop and sustain multiple key relationships toward a common purpose (Center for Social Leadership, 2013). Nonprofit leaders develop and empower other leaders and staff

members. United States nonprofit leaders devote less than 10% of the time to developing their employees' capabilities through training (Winn, 2014). Leadership is a key factor in the organization that can facilitate and motivate followers to engage in creating courses of action (Qu, Janssen, & Shi, 2015). Developing individuals' leadership strategies through training allows leaders to create a path for current employees to become leaders within the organization (Hoefer & Sliva, 2014).

Strategic planning is a process that defines the strategy or direction and makes decisions on allocating resources to pursue the strategy. To define the direction of the organization the current position and alternatives to shift the organization's direction must be defined (Dimirius, Sakas, & Vlachos, 2013). Strategic planning involves at least one of three questions: What do we do? For whom do we do it? How do we excel? In many non-profit organizations, strategic planning is viewed as a process for determining where an organization is going over the next 3 to 5 years although some may extend the vision over 20 years. New leadership strategies acquired must align with role assignment (Austin, Regan, Gothard, & Carnochan, 2013). Improving leadership capacity strengthens organizations to allow the provision of essential services (Center for Nonprofit Management, 2014). Empirical evidence showed the dismissal of top executives has increased in the last 20 years (Hilger, Mankel, & Richter, 2013). The increase is a result of the lack of planning that aligns with the organizational climate.

Turnover. Executive leadership turnover is linked to three factors: lack of independence, unclear performance evaluation standards, and pressure inherent to the process of deciding on dismissal (Hilger et al., 2013). Effective leadership development

may increase turnover in an organization (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Highly qualified employees have more options for employment. As illustrated in Figure 2 organizations can create conditions for successful development and retention: aligning the organization's mission and goals with the overall leadership development strategy by creating a supportive organizational culture that fosters learning and a healthy work-life balance, providing training opportunities that align with the agency's current needs and future directions, and evaluating the development strategy process and outcomes. Internal leadership strategies can be developed by using measures such as: the organization's capacity to fill vacant positions with internal candidates, the average number of qualified internal candidates per open position, the ethnic and gender diversity among individuals promoted, the percentage of employees who complete and implement development plans and staff management retention rates (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Some organizations may need to modify their organizational culture to create an environment that facilitates leadership retention, healthy succession planning and transition. This may require an adjustment in work/life balance, compensation rates, investing in young leaders and holding leadership accountable to policies and procedures, examining the organizational structure, values, goals, technologies, and fostering promotion based on leadership skills and competencies (Gothard & Austin, 2013).

Leadership transition can result in challenges within an organization. Political, social/cultural, economic, technological and other environmental factors can determine the outcomes. Research conducted by Wright (2013) found that some founders and long-term chief executive officers (CEOs) reported delayed retirement plans due to the

economic climate or to complete a capital project. Other leaders were determined to retire due to a variety of environmental factors such as health, regulatory mandating and family changes (Wright, 2013). The shift of leaders exiting the organization impacts the relationships previously developed. Specialized assets such as reputation and social/political networks that facilitate relationships are personalized and lose value when transferred to the predecessor (Fan, Wong, & Zhang, 2012).

Transformational leadership. The leadership styles of leaders in today's organizations shape the success of the organization. Transformational leaders create vision and help employees realize the value and meaning of work and encourage them to excel. Transformational leaders act as creative enhancing forces. Transformational leadership has continued to evolve over the years (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013). Transformational leaders allow employees to challenge their thinking, imagination, creativity, and opinions to solve problems (Lan & Chong, 2015). Bass (1985) believed that transformational leadership allowed employees to realize the task and significance to motivate subordinate high-level needs and build an atmosphere of trust (Lan & Chong, 2015). This form of leadership allows followers to implement creative ideas without the fear of being penalized (Qu et al., 2015). Transformational leadership consists of the ability to transfer tacit knowledge (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013). Transformational leaders empower employees to exceed expectations (Northouse, 2016). Empowering employees involves using existing knowledge assets to train employees in assigned roles. The ability to transfer knowledge is a unique quality of transformational leaders that separates them from controlling leadership styles such as transactional leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Historical transformational leaders such as Socrates and Plato transferred their vision to their followers in such a way that perpetuated their vision and motivated their employees to outperform expectations and to share their knowledge to benefit the team (Bass, 1990). This form of leadership is most effective in encouraging employees when the rhetoric connects to the individual recipients of their work (Grant, 2012). This behavior stems from the history of transformational leadership that emerged to introduce a shift in how organizations are managed, from autocratic to democratic leadership paradigms and from command and control management to an employee-supportive approach. The study will encourage organizations to implement leadership strategies to promote success.

The transformational leadership approach has a relationship to knowledge transfer in terms of how a leader communicates expectations to employees. Transformational leadership is defined by using the four I's: (a) individualized consideration: gives each employee personal attention, coaches, and advises (b) intellectual stimulation: promotes problem solving, intelligence, and rationality (c) inspirational motivation: communicates high expectations and (d) idealized influence: a behavior that exhibits high ethical conduct (Bass, 1990). Research suggests that transformational leadership yields higher levels of performance in comparison to transactional leadership (Saleem, 2015). The study will allow readers to gain applicable succession leadership skills.

Perceived organizational politics has an influence on outcomes because it often interferes with the normal process of organizations like rewards, decision-making, and promotions (Saleem, 2015). Perceptions about the politics in organizations are connected

to justice and fairness that increase or decreases the level of satisfaction of employees (Saleem, 2015). Effective leadership minimizes organizational politics and increase job satisfaction. Leadership style and organizational politics are both important factors that may affect employee satisfaction regarding their employment. An increased understanding between leadership styles, perceived organizational politics, and job satisfaction decrease negative outcomes (Saleem, 2015).

Transactional leadership. Transactional leadership involves the exchange between leaders and followers; this is a leader-follower exchange based on an exchange of rewards or punishment in conjunction to the task performed. Transactional leaders exhibit a decrease in engagement when outcomes are not favorable (see Figure 7). According to the social change theory and expectancy theory the responsibility of a leader is to create a fair and healthy atmosphere that fulfills the needs and expectations of employees. Based on the equity theory leaders should exhibit fairness to employees. A balanced and fair relationship between leaders and employees is essential to the success of an organization. By strengthening the fair and social exchange relationship, the level of politics in an organization may be reduced which influences job satisfaction (Saleem, 2015).



Figure 7. Mediating role of transformational and transactional leadership.

Situational leadership. Situational leadership consists of knowledge transfer behavior by focusing on leading to match an employee's situations. The notion of a situational leadership approach is that different leader and employee interactions require different leadership styles (Northouse, 2016). An effective situational leader adapts his or her leadership style to the demands of different employee needs. In this case, a situational leader is guided by a principle that is composed of directive and supportive behavior depending on a given situation. The four components of situational leadership are: (a) directing, (b) coaching, (c) supporting, and (d) delegating (Northouse, 2016). Knowledge is transferred from an experienced leader to a trainee (Northouse, 2016).

An effective situational leader ensures that a trainee has grasped the fundamental principles of goal achievement before advancing to the next level. When a situational leader directs he or she focuses on communicating goal achievement and provides systematic instructions (Northouse, 2016). Although an incumbent situational leader supports a trainee, he or she still has the responsibility to supervise and ensure that quality is delivered. Once the incumbent leader clarifies the desired outcome, he or she gives trainees full responsibility to perform the task and refrains from interfering and intervening. The situational leadership approach is accommodating to leadership knowledge transfer by encouraging leaders to develop followers into leaders. Knowledge transfer occurs each time a situational leader assesses the growth level of a trainee and advances him or her to the next level (Northouse, 2016). This approach can foster leadership knowledge transfer from incumbent baby boomer leaders to potential future leaders. Situational leadership applies to leaders at all levels. In this regard, situational

and transformational leadership styles complement each other by encouraging a behavior of knowledge sharing.

Leadership implementation. Leaders can implement knowledge transfer procedures in a work setting. Organizations often face problems when employees with tacit knowledge leave organizations without transferring intellectual property to others within the organization (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). The development of training programs allows organizations to capture the information. Tacit knowledge is often hard to retrieve mainly because the individual must share the knowledge (Iuga & Kifor, 2014). Explicit knowledge is information documented, codified and compiled into training manuals and archived. Establishing trainings to capture the tacit and explicit knowledge assists in ensuring that the organization retains the information (Zhuang & Guo, 2013).

Success is the goal of every leader both personal success and organizational success. Paradoxically, embedded in success are factors that lead to the downfall of both leaders and the organization (Ciulla, 2003). Power and influence increases status, personal achievement, rewards and perks, and personal latitude on the job are all byproducts of leadership success (Ciulla, 2003). As organizations experience success and growth, revisions in management and leadership are required to handle the organization's increase in complexity (Wright, 2013). Leaders have control of resources, decisions and processes. Leaders set their own agendas with no direct supervision.

The downside of leadership is less apparent. Some leaders have unbalanced personal lives and lose touch with reality. Successful leaders can be emotionally unstable (Ciulla, 2003). Some leaders lose the ability to be content and often desire more. Leaders

may become isolated and lack intimacy in their lives due to the inability to share their problems with friends and families. Status can increase stress and fear which may increase anxiety levels. In addition, leaders may become ego-centric, which may lead to abrasive, closed-minded disrespect and display negative emotion leading to megalomania (Ciulla, 2003). The creation of a strong leadership team should boost the bottom line and increase creativity, profitability, and productivity (Johns, 2013).

Mentoring. Mentoring is a collaborative approach between experienced senior leaders and followers with a leaning environment conducive for both parties. Mentoring is emerging as a popular strategy for leadership development because it has two major benefits: strategic effectiveness and cost effectiveness (Corner, 2014). Mentoring in the workplace enhances leadership development and increases the decision-making process (Poulsen, 2013). Workplace mentoring is not common among business organizations (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). A formal mentoring plan with well-developed goals enhances employee succession. Programs such as mentoring, training, and leadership development for nonprofit business leaders are beneficial for organizations because it promotes the organization's vision, mission, goals, and objectives (Shah, 2011). Training that includes demonstrations and opportunities to observe is more effective to promote knowledge transfer (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). Second, training members of a group improves group performance as a result of facilitating the distribution and sharing knowledge among group members (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). A third approach to measuring knowledge transfer is to measure changes in routines or practices associated with experiences (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016).

Employee trust. Employee trust is another element that impacts organizations. Employee trust in the workplace influences behaviors and affects the overall performance within organizations (Brown, Greg, McHardy, & Taylor, 2015). Trust can be defined as a set of learned expectations (Brown et al., 2015). Initiating, increasing and maintaining trust is important to leadership and organizational performance as trust promotes voluntary cooperation which is essential since work environments have transformed over the years (Nair & Salleh, 2015). According to Algan and Cahuc (2013), the level of trust between employees and leaders impacts the growth potential of employees. Brown et al. (2015) identified a link between employee performance, quality of services offered and employee trust in leaders. Trust influences an employee's willingness to exchange and use knowledge in the decision-making process (Casimir, Lee, & Loun, 2012; Wang, Wang, & Liang, 2014). An employee's trust in the leader affects the level of trust in the organization, commitment, job performance, and engagement, which influences the commitment to change (Hurley, 2012; Ning & Jang, 2012). Trust in leadership is essential because trust fosters a positive outlook for the organization (Hurley, 2012). The extent to which employees' trust leaders effects the level of engagement (Brown et al., 2015).

Sustainable reporting tools. Sustainable development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations is essential. Sustainability can also be defined as sustaining and expanding economic growth, stakeholder value, prestige, corporate reputation, customer relationships and the quality of products and services (Siew, 2015). Sustainable development includes adopting and

pursuing ethical business practices, creating sustainable jobs, building a foundation for all stakeholders and meeting the needs of the underserved (Siew, 2015). Stakeholders are demanding more disclosures which includes environmental and social practices which led to the development of measurement tools (Siew, 2015). The terminology varies-corporate social responsibility (CSR), Sustainable development (SD) reporting, Triple bottom line (TBL) reporting, non-financial reporting and environmental social and governance (ESG) reporting. Sustainable reporting tools (SRTs; see Figure 8) make it possible to display results, measure progress, and clarify consistency between activities, outputs, outcomes, and goals (Siew, 2015).



Figure 8. Sustainable reporting tools.

Sustainable reporting tools can be divided into three categories: frameworks, standards, ratings and indices as shown in Figure 8. Frameworks refer to principles, initiatives, or guidelines provided to organizations to assist them in their disclosure efforts (Siew, 2015). Standards have similar functions as frameworks but exist in the

form of more formal documentation that outlines requirements, specifications or characteristics that can be used to ensure that sustainable efforts are measurable (Siew, 2015). Ratings and indices are third party evaluations of an organizations sustainability or ESG performance (Siew, 2015).

Competitive advantage. Success in an organization is contingent upon leaders in competitive markets. The competitive advantage of an organization is not sustainable if resources are mobile and homogenous because of allowing competitors to duplicate resources (Ritthaisong, Johri, & Speece, 2014). A positive association between employee engagement and performance management is one of the many human resource management practices that contribute to ensuring that organizations remain competitive (Nair & Salleh, 2015). Business leaders should develop solid resources that are difficult to duplicate by competitors (Ritthaisong et al., 2014). Leaders must accelerate the rate in which they learn to prevent their competition from out pacing them. Success equals maximum profits and the optimum combination of production factors. Knowledge is also transferred by perceiving, embedding, comprehension, and coding (Geuss, 2002). An important indicator that an organization is evolving consists of hiring leaders who are not like themselves and leaders from different ethnic backgrounds (Geus, 2002).

The competitive advantage in organizations is impacted by compensation levels. Compensation is one of the most important factors influencing the effectiveness of employees (Gupta & Shaw, 2013). Research shows that organizations that invest in training efforts for employees experience higher employee productivity and higher financial perforations (Coget, 2011). Many organizations focus on training because

training provides a competitive advantage for the organization (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012). Employers of lower paid labor often make the self-serving claim that reducing the pool of unskilled employees in the United States would cripple the economy (Halstead & Lind, 2001). Structure labor markets and higher wages would encourage technological innovation and diffusion by creating greater incentives for the substitution of new technologies (Halstead & Lind, 2001). The economist Lester Thorow argued that a major reason for low productivity in the U.S. service sector is an overabundance of low-wage labor (Halstead & Lind, 2001).

External environmental pressures force business leaders to access strong leadership to maintain the competitive edge (Latham, 2014). Wright (2013) noted mutual influence between the three components of leader succession-environment, organization, and leader. The economic constraints of the environment challenge the growth of the enterprise and may demand new strategies or operations which may cause the leader to avoid risk. Examining the core competencies within an organization can be used as a performance indicator. Benchmarking can be used as a tool of measurement to identify best practices in comparison to strategies developed by other organizations. Some organizations can identify when a shift is required to sustain the organization. A change-ready organization consists of the following characteristics: leaders that are respected and effective, people motivated to change, nonhierarchical organization, collaborative work, the culture of accountability, and rewards. Organizations with these characteristics are in a better position to implement new strategies. Organizations that do not have these

characteristics may face challenges. Management practices are critical factors that affect performance such as a return on capital, labor, productivity, and growth (Hourn, 2014).

A Competitive advantage can be achieved through improved sustainability performance. Improved product quality, improved production yields and improved profitability are factors that increases the competitive advantage in organizations. Performance metrics must be used. An audit report should be generated and readily available to the head of sustainability, senior leaders, board of directors, and department leaders. The audit should be a part of comprehensive programs of evaluating the social, environmental, and economic performance of the organization. Many organizations have created internal and external auditing. When conducting audits, organizations should consider strategies and objectives used to measure performance. The benefits of creating a succession plan within a nonprofit organization are: financial payoffs, reduced operating costs, increased revenues, lower capital costs, stock market premiums, increased customer satisfaction, product innovation, market share increases, improved reputation, new market opportunities, process innovation, production gains, reduced cycle times, waste minimization, employee satisfaction, improved stakeholder relationships, reduced risk, and increased learning and training (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

Transition and Summary

Managing change within an organization can present a number of challenges. The demographic shift in the United States of America requires nonprofit leaders of organizations to reexamine strategies used to lead and train leaders. The literature review

provides a foundation upon which new knowledge can be obtained pertaining to strategies used to develop succession plans. In this section, I explored the existing body of knowledge relative to the human capital theory, knowledge transfer process, leadership styles, and succession planning from both the historical and contemporary perspectives. The implementation of succession plans can aid in guiding nonprofit leaders through challenges that may arise. The development of leaders is linked to the strategy used by organizations and social conditions and organizations. The learning process should never end. Modern organizations have recognized this fact and view the potential of humans as key capital of organizations. The association of performance and competitiveness with the formation of labor potential is characterized by a high level of talent, knowledge, skills and motivation. A formal succession plan will contribute to improving the organization's financial health, strategic continuity and operational effectiveness (Trepanier & Crenshaw, 2013). Findings from this study may help identify effective strategies used to implement succession plans and increase sustainability. Section 2 will cover the (a) research methods and design, (b) data collection process, and (c) reliability and validity of the study.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I describe the plan for the research design: (a) study method, (b) population and sampling, (c) data collection techniques, and (d) data analysis. Section 2 includes the steps taken to enhance reliability and validity, as well as the tools for collecting the data. This section set the foundation for, transition to, Section 3, which includes (a) interviews, (b) study conclusions, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, and (e) personal recommendations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies nonprofit leaders use to develop and implement employee succession plans to improve organizational sustainability. The target population was three nonprofit leaders in a single nonprofit organization located in a large metropolitan city in southeastern Georgia who had successfully implemented a succession plan. The social change is that the succession planning might yield corporate longevity, provide employment opportunities to community members, and continuity to the services provided to the community.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary data collection instrument. Lincoln and Guba (1985) first introduced the notion of humans acting as a research instrument to convey the uniqueness of the qualitative researcher's role throughout the data collection and analysis process. Only human beings can provide the responsiveness, flexibility, and sensitivity needed for scientific inquiry, making humans the most appropriate instrument for inquiries targeting understanding, meaning, deconstruction, or critical awareness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

No previous relationship existed between me and the business problem of succession planning strategies. Similarly, no previous relationship existed between me and the participants.

As a researcher, I followed guidelines outlined by the 1979 Belmont Report to protect participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the course of the interviews, a researcher must remain unbiased to the subject matter. Moustakas (1994) noted that epoché is the first step of the reduction process. Personal views and judgments must be set aside to avoid compromising the integrity of the data. To achieve epoché, researchers must be cognizant of avoiding predeterminations and rely solely on the study data provided (Moustakas, 1994). Similar to bracketing, the maintenance of personal discretion, judgment, and presuppositions achieves valid results. To ensure protocol and ethical standards were met, I maintained confidentiality. In further support of ethical conduct, I adhered to the 1979 Belmont Report protocol's three principles: (a) respect for people, (b) maintenance of beneficence, and (c) ensuring the justice of persons (Sims, 2010). Participants were provided a consent form to ensure that they understood their of privacy and rights.

As the primary research instrument, I employed an interview protocol (see Appendix B). Marshall and Rossman (2016) argued that semistructured interviews are the most effective strategy for the researcher to gain a clear understanding of an individual's experience and to address the research question. The rationale for including an interview protocol was to provide a consistent environment for each participant and a guide to help avoid any bias.

Participants

The primary data sources for this study included participants who met the predefined eligibility criteria (a) senior leader in a nonprofit organization, (b) work in a nonprofit organization in Southeastern Georgia, and (c) successfully implemented a succession plan. To select participants, the study included the use of purposive sampling to ensure that alignment exists between the participant's experience and connection to the research question (Frels & Onwuebuze, 2013). To identify and gain access to participants, I contacted local nonprofit organizations in Southeastern Georgia through calls, emails, and social media networks such as LinkedIn. Yin (2014) suggested ensuring criteria for participation are met after individuals confirm interest. The strategy for establishing a working relationship with participants included meeting with the individual in a comfortable environment to provide an opportunity for them to ask questions and to provide background information about myself and the topic of interest.

Research Method and Design

A review of current research methods identified three methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2011). All three methods were viable research options each with their inherent strengths and pitfalls (Case & Light, 2011). I conducted a thorough evaluation of each method and selected a qualitative method and explorative single case study design. Case study research is an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case used to capture the complexity of the object of the study (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014).

Method

The qualitative method is used to obtain an understanding of the participants' beliefs, values, and perceptions (Montero-Marín et al., 2013). Moustakas (1994) supported Montero-Marín et al.'s (2013) conclusions that qualitative research allows for discussions enriched with personal experiences. Qualitative studies also incorporate open-ended questions that represent the basis for the in-depth exploration of the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The intent of conducting this study was not to test objective hypotheses or theories. Thus, a quantitative method did not meet the purpose of this research. Researchers conduct quantitative studies to address a problem by testing objective theories through examining the relationships and differences among sets of variables (Frels & Onweugbuzie, 2013). The goal of this study was not to test objective theories, but rather to explore the strategies that nonprofit leaders use to implement succession plans. Frels and Onweugbuzie (2013) further explained that in quantitative research, the researcher quantifies the results and highlights issues based on testing of the preconceived hypotheses. The qualitative research method was appropriate based on the desired goal of the study. This approach met the needs of this study to capture participant conjecture in response to open-ended inquiries.

Quantitative research method focuses on interpreting numerical data resulting from a statistical analysis of identified variables (Bannon, 2015). A survey format does not allow follow-up questions based on the respondent's participant's answers for clarity and understanding. Although broad perceptions and themes may be obtained using surveys, the format or structure of a survey frame the phenomenon for the participants

within response categories. Mixed methods research is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative forms of inquiry within a single study (Thomas et al., 2011). Mixed methods were not appropriate based on the topic and nature of the study.

The purpose of the study was not to support quantifiable results based on preconceived hypotheses, but rather to explore and capture detailed information regarding the strategies used by senior leaders and executives to implement succession plans. A quantitative or mixed-methods approach was not a viable research option. A qualitative approach was appropriate to explore a specific group of individuals, bound by experience, time, and place.

Design

According to Yin (2014), a case study is implemented by using knowledge from an individual's group or organization. I used a single case study research design in the study to identify strategies used by nonprofit leaders to implement succession plans. Alignment exists between the central research question and case study design. The study included a design to gain information relative to strategies used to implement succession plans. A case study design supports retaining holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2014). Before selecting the case study design, consideration included other qualitative designs. Other research designs considered including narrative, phenomenological, and ethnographic. A narrative design consists of collecting data through observation, documentation, interviews, or artifacts to contextualize participant experiences (Petty et al., 2012). The narrative research design did not meet the criteria for my study. I did not want to study lived experiences of participants. The

phenomenological design met my criteria for the research related to the participants lived experiences. Phenomenological researchers focus on describing the details and meanings of personal lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The goal of this study was to explore a group of people bound by experience, time, and place. Thus, the phenomenological design was not appropriate. Ethnographic research is appropriate for investigating a problem through observations and interviews within a historical and cultural setting (Vesa & Vaara, 2014; Walker, 2012). Yin (2014) grouped case study into three categories: (a) descriptive, (b) explanatory, and (c) exploratory. According to Yin, descriptive case studies are focused on propositions relative to a phenomenon where the researcher carefully scrutinizes the phenomena. Explanatory case studies differ from descriptive case studies as explanatory case studies aid in the explanation of casual relationships used to develop the theory. Exploratory case study research is used to investigate a distinct phenomenon in areas with minimal preliminary research in the field.

Qualitative research requires a researcher to obtain data saturation, a point where no new information is retrieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015). If new information is obtained the researcher must ask additional questions until no new information is retrieved (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated that saturation is easier to achieve with a small sample size. I selected a sample size with the best opportunity to achieve data saturation. The study included interviews of three nonprofit leaders with experience developing and implementing a succession plan. To augment information gleaned from semistructured interviews, review includes organizational documents.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of a purposive sample of three nonprofit leaders in metropolitan Southeastern Georgia. The participants are employed at a nonprofit organization in single nonprofit organization located in Metropolitan Southeastern Georgia to obtain strategies used to implement successful succession plans. Purposive sampling was justified because the sample is small and specific and, as the researcher, I was confident in my ability to select appropriate participants from the population. Patton (2002) and McMillan and Schumacker (2005) suggested that restrictions in qualitative inquiry do not exist regarding sample size.

In this study, the data were the personal perceptions of the participants. McMillan and Schumacker (2005) suggested that the insights generated from a purposive sample via qualitative inquiry rely on the information richness of the individual experiences and the analytical capabilities of the researcher, rather than on the sample size. However, a smaller sample size is preferable when conducting exploratory-focused interviews (Patton, 2002). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) agreed that purposive sampling within a qualitative study included the use of a small number of individuals and locations to collect information to generalize the findings to a larger population. The use of purposive sampling justified the sample size of three nonprofit leaders within a single organization. A purposive sample helped capture the data that represented the participants' views (Montero-Marín et al., 2013).

Data saturation occurs when no new findings or themes are retrieved (Bowen, 2008). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), additional interviews may allow the

researcher achieve data saturation. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) described data saturation as exhaustion of new data or themes. Data saturation was obtained when no new information was acquired. Data was collected using semistructured interviews and through the review of organizational documents.

Criteria for selecting participants included nonprofit leaders who have developed and implemented a succession plan. Participants participated within a comfortable setting (Rowley, 2012). The setting for the interview were in-person and through online communication tools, depending on the participant's preference. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable setting as determined by the participants by one of the following (a) in person, (b) online communication tool, or (c) phone.

Ethical Research

I conducted this study following Walden University IRB approval (IRB approval #03-22-18-046145). Researchers must be aware of conduct to ensure they do not cross ethical boundaries and maintain participants' protection (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013). Interviewees provided informed consent for their participation in the research (Ahern, 2012). Nonprofit business leaders received an email as part of the process to request participation and included the informed consent form. All potential participants were informed that they maintained the right to withdraw from the study at any time by sending an email. The benefits to emailing the invitation included the time allotment for participants to review the study procedures in advance and follow up with any questions or concerns the participants may have in regard to their role in the study. None of the participants received any incentives for participation.

Participants were informed and updated throughout the duration of the process and all information retrieved will remain confidential (Pollock, 2012a). Participants may be more inclined to produce open and honest results if they are aware that the recorded interview responses will remain confidential (Ivey, 2012). I invited participants to participate in a transcript review following the interviews to ensure accuracy and to increase the validity and reliability of the information. The study included records of the data, which included organizational documents, interview responses, and forms used for the study on file in a locked container that only I have access to for 5 years as required by Walden University IRB. All participant names were coded to ensure confidentiality. Codes were assigned to identify each participant (P1, P2, and P3) to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument. Lincoln and Guba (1985) first introduced the concept of humans acting as a research instrument to convey the uniqueness of the researcher's role throughout the qualitative data collection and analysis process as only human beings can provide the responsiveness, flexibility, and sensitivity needed for scientific inquiry. As the key research instrument, semistructured interviews were held using an interview protocol (see Appendix B).

According to Yin (2014), effective use of the interview protocol improves the credibility of instruments and serves as a critical aspect of data accuracy and quality. I used an interview protocol to improve data credibility. I maintained consistency by using the same sequence of interview questions for each participant. I analysed answers to each

question and conducted an in-depth review of the interview transcript of each participant to ensure data validity and consistency. Each participant reviewed the final interview transcript to review and validate. Document review of organizational documents will augment data collected in the semistructured interviews. Documents were requested in the semistructured interviews and included succession planning material, such as organizational policies, manuals, and reports.

The assurance of data reliability and validity can be obtained by using transcript review (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). After the successful completion of data collection, researchers may opt to include transcript review to provide research participants with the opportunity to contribute new or additional perspectives on the issue under study (Mannay & Morgan, 2015).

Data Collection Technique

Marshall and Rossman (2016) concluded that semistructured interviews are the most effective strategy for the researcher to gain a deep understanding of an individual's experience and fully address the research question. Researchers use probing questions to obtain the most relevant, accurate, and in-depth information (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Case studies involve the use of several data methods (Yin, 2014). For this qualitative single case study, the first method to collect data was semistructured interviews with participants and the second data collection source was document review, to include succession planning material.

Semistructured Interviews

I used semistructured interviews to explore strategies used to implement succession plans. Established contacts within the organization aided in allowing me to gain access to participants for my study. The initial contact with potential participants were via email. The initial e-mail included an overview of the study's procedures as well as the informed consent document, which the participants will review before the interview. The abridged process required to complete the semistructured interviews included a review of the study processes and participant roles, agreement to participate in the study by providing e-mail consent and answering the interview questions.

Interviews were held at locations and or/via online communication tools and phone as suggested by each participant. I began each interview with an overview of the intent of the study followed by a review of the informed consent form with the participants, including rights to withdraw from the research at any stage without any penalty. Interview questions consisted of the same sequencing for each study participant. I used a digital recorder as the primary source of documentation during the interviews. I also used a pen and a notebook. Doody and Noonan (2013) indicated that the use of an audio recorder provides access to a record of rich data source. I used an interview protocol to guide each interview (see Appendix B). An interview protocol can include instructions pertaining to the reading of the consent form to participants, note taking process during interview, and a list of semistructured interview questions (Gibson et al., 2013).

Semistructured interviews as a data collection source has many advantages. One advantage is the ability to structure questions in a manner that guides participants through the different aspects of the phenomenon (Gibson et al., 2013). Another advantage is the interviewee's ability to focus specifically on the case study topic (Yin, 2014). Last, interviews are a source of evidence to provide insightful and personal views such as perception, attitudes, and meanings (Yin, 2014). The disadvantages to data collection through semistructured interviews include that the quality of data often depends on the ability of the interviewer; the potential for bias in responses because of poorly articulated interview questions and reflexivity, where the interviewee gives what the interviewer want to know. The researcher has the responsibility of pinpointing themes of importance and frequency within interview responses (Yin, 2014), which can be another disadvantage.

I completed a written transcript of each interview and provide each participant with a printed copy for validation. The participant was given the opportunity to review the interview data and provide any information omitted to increase accuracy.

Document Review

Document review involves examining and interpreting data from existing documents to gain understanding (Yin, 2014). In addition to data obtained from in-depth semistructured interviews, I reviewed succession planning documents that included organizational policies, manuals, and reports. The advantages of document review are: accessibility to confidential information, the ability to review documentation to strengthen and support the information retrieved in interviews, and the ability to

determine whether or not the information should be researched more in-depth (Yin, 2014). Disadvantages of using document review as a method of data collection is that access to sensitive documents might not be feasible (Yin, 2014).

Case study researchers often opt to review existing documentation related to the research questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). During the facilitation of the semistructured interviews, I requested copies of the organization's related documentation. I reviewed the succession documentation of the organization. Case study researchers benefit from incorporating multiple forms of sources into data collection strategies. Assimilating more than one data source will assure the validity of the findings as the various units of data are compiled to support an improved understanding of the case (Mannany & Morgan, 2015).

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is an important component for analyzing and interpreting the data within the study. Case study research requires organization, exploration, and interpretation of the data, unlike other forms of research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Fusch and Ness (2015) argued that organizing data into themes and codes is a critical component of the qualitative research process. I organized the data from the study using an electronic filing system to support simplicity and ease of data retrieval. Data organization will ensure alignment with the research questions (Basurto & Speer, 2012). Participants' contact information on a different file, without reference to participants' assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. I am the only individual with access and awareness of the names of participants and the organization selected. All data

obtained will be stored in my home for 5 years that only I will have access. After the 5-year retention period, I will destroy all data.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis and interpretation are two important components of the research process (Basurto & Speer, 2012). I transcribed the data. Methodological triangulation is an exploration of different perspectives of the same phenomenon (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). I achieved methodological triangulation by conducting semistructured interviews and document review. After carefully transcribing and compiling information in Excel, I imported data to NVivo 12 to further organize the data and aid in analysis.

Using Excel to initially organize the data, I focused on the key themes by the use of numbers and color coding. Categorization allows classification, sorting, and arrangement of the information in the most efficient, uniform manner (Basurto & Speer, 2012). Once sorted, I identified themes that support the findings of common themes or trends. From there, I imported the data from Excel to NVivo 12 for further organization to aid in analysis.

NVivo 12 is a qualitative software for coding thematic categories and extracting themes from a qualitative data (Clark, 2015). I used a procedure to reduce underlying data to common traits and themes. First, I uploaded the data into NVivo 12 software. Second, I used NVivo 12 software to organize the data, code the information, and display the codes. To create groupings for the data, the creation of smaller groups in accordance with the derived themes yields results. Last, I developed and arranged similar data categorization to generate the emerged themes.

I used Yin's (2014) thematic coding data analysis technique to identify and highlight succession planning strategies used to implement and develop succession plans identified by participants during the interviews and during the document review process. According to Yin, a five-step approach can be used to analyze the data that include (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpreting the meaning of the data, and (e) concluding the data.

As indicated in Step A, after compiling data in Excel I imported the Excel spreadsheet to NVivo 12 to develop groupings. As listed in Step B, I disassembled the data to reduce and eliminate themes. For Step C, I reassembled the data core themes. As listed in Step D, I checked for patterns against the interview transcripts and existing documentation review to interpret the meaning of the data. In Step E, I summarized the data into the individual structural description of strategies. I analyzed participants' responses to the seven open-ended interview questions and information from document review and identified themes pertaining to strategies used to develop succession plans. I then correlated these themes with the literature, exploring ways that the findings align or contrast with the literature. I correlated the findings with the conceptual framework, human capital theory.

Reliability and Validity

The design and data of the study must support the ability to make accurate conclusions (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Qualitative researchers have presented varying perspectives on the meaning and applicability of assuring and assessing studies' reliability and validity. Reliability is a direct result of data collection that allows for study

replication in an alternative setting (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative researchers must consider the reliability and validity while planning a study design, analyzing data results, and assessing the overall quality of the study (Patton, 2002). The most important component of qualitative research is the information retrieved. Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) noted the selection of the appropriate method and instrument ensures the assembly of accurate data and enables the formation of accurate conclusions.

Dependability

Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed the notion of dependability as an alternative criterion for judging the reliability and trustworthiness of qualitative research. Dependability requires the researcher to consider the constant changes within the context of which the research occurs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Dependability needs to be established using other qualitative means, such as transcript review and triangulation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Transcript review can provide the interviewees with the opportunity to clarify, confirm, and provide additional perspectives on the study (Harvey, 2015).

Credibility

Qualitative credibility is an alternative criterion for judging the internal validity in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The concept of credibility is essential to qualitative research because it describes a phenomenon from a participant's perspective; the participants are the only sources who can accurately assess and validate the truth of the data and the credibility of conclusions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). All participants were invited to take part in a transcript review. Methodological triangulation also supports and

enhances credibility by diversifying sources of data. For this study, I used transcript review and methodological triangulation to ensure credibility. The interview protocol helped to ensure that the semistructured interviews were consistent across all participants, further ensuring credibility.

Transferability

Guba and Lincoln (1994) also proposed the notion of transferability as an alternative criterion for judging the external validity of qualitative research. Transferability refers to the degree to which the unique findings can transfer to other settings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Transferability is only possible when a reader applies the information to another context. To achieve transferability, I provided rich descriptions and detailed, specific analysis.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the assurance that other researchers will be able to confirm a study's findings (Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen & Kyngas, 2014). Confirmability adds to the trustworthiness of the study's findings (Elo et al., 2014). To achieve confirmability, transcript review ensured that participant responses were accurately recorded and will add to the trustworthiness of study's findings.

Data Saturation

Bowen (2008) stated that data saturation occurs when (a) no new data emerge, (b) no new themes emerge, (c) no new coding is required, and (d) another researcher can replicate the study to achieve the same results. I obtained data saturation by following this guideline. Although the sample size is small, Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that data

saturation is not guaranteed in large or in small sample sizes. The richness of data collected is more important than sample size. Even, so, Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that additional interviews might be required until the researcher achieves data saturation. If required, I would have requested follow-up interviews to help ensure the retrieval of sufficient information to achieve data saturation.

Transition and Summary

Equal consideration of Section 2 included an in-depth view of my study design by outlining the focus of the project and the details of the study. Providing further detailed information regarding the (a) research method, (b) study design, (c) population sample, and (d) data collection technique served as a strategy to increase reliability and validity. Section 3 includes interview data and organization documentation with my interpretations, analysis, and presentation of themes. I compared findings to the conceptual framework and current literature to provide the (a) study conclusions, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, and (d) personal recommendations.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

Section 3 contains (a) presentation of findings, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implication for social change, (d) recommendations for action, (e) recommendation for future research, (f) reflections and (g) conclusion. In addition, Section 3 includes an analysis of how the findings exhibit a need to increase awareness of effective strategies to sustain nonprofit organizations.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies nonprofit leaders use to develop and implement employee succession plans to improve organizational sustainability. The target population included three nonprofit leaders in a single nonprofit organization located in a large metropolitan city in southeastern Georgia who had successfully implemented a succession plan. A review of existing documentation was used as a method to add depth to the themes: investments in people (human capital), evaluation metrics, and organizational structure. I analyzed the findings and each theme in relation to the human capital theory.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question used to guide this qualitative single case study: What strategies do some nonprofit leaders use to develop and implement effective succession plans to improve organizational sustainability? To answer the research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with three nonprofit business leaders. I used Yin's (2014) thematic coding data analysis technique to identify and highlight succession planning strategies which are used to implement and develop succession plans

identified by participants during the interviews and during the document review process. According to Yin, a five-step approach can be used to analyze the data: (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpreting the meaning of the data, and (e) concluding the data. I used NVivo 12 to code the data and identify emerging themes. The emerging themes were consistent with my analysis of the existing literature on strategies to implement succession plans in nonprofit organizations. NVivo 12 was also used to cluster and analyze the coding stripes and node summary reports. Core themes emerged when constituencies and associations were identified within the cluster of constituents. The following three core themes emerged: (a) investing in people (human capital), (b) evaluation metrics, and (c) organizational structure.

The major components of nonprofit sustainability are decisive, strategic, and accountable leadership; financial and programmatic adaptability; and the resources to deliver core programs. Leader vision and internal leadership are prerequisites for effective management. As organizations evolve, there is a need to become more knowledgeable about understanding and acquiring the service delivery skills. As organizations grow, leaders need to focus on the quality and quantity of services (York, 2009). Leaders should not only connect with and be motivated by a common vision and mission, but they should be able to convince staff that there are real consequences for individuals, groups and the community if leaders are unsuccessful (York, 2009). Sustainable organizations exhibit leadership that is visionary, strategic, inclusive, inspirational, motivational, and accountable (York, 2009). Leaders must establish decision-making processes that align with the organization. According to Zimmerman

and Bell (2014), the decision-making process is critical to sustain organizations in a competitive global market. Therefore, nonprofit leaders should make decisions based on accountability and fairness. For example, if challenges persist in certain areas leaders should shift the team to strengthen the alignment with the organization's mission and vision.

Emergent Theme 1: Investment in People (Human Capital)

Five constituents emerged from the core theme: training and education, competitive salary, mentoring, on-the-job training, and diversity and inclusion. Table 2 displays the core theme and respective constituents. Participant 1, 2, and 3 (100%) indicated that training and education were important components in succession planning. P1 stated "Organizations need to spend more time focusing on educating personnel to ensure that they are equipped to lead an organization." P2 stated

You can not expect someone to lead in any capacity in an organization if they have not received the proper educating, training and ongoing support to be successful. Even if someone has served in that capacity elsewhere, it is important to ensure that they are well-prepared for based on the workplace culture.

According to P3, "The problem today is everyone wants to lead, but no one wants to receive the proper training and education to do so. That's the real problem with organizations. We have to focus on investing in people." According to Sawitri and Muis (2014) a paradigm shift within the organization is required to implement training. The second constituent was competitive salary. P1, P2, and P3 (100%) placed an emphasis on the importance of a competitive salary was important. P1 stated that "People want to feel

good about the work they are performing.” P2 stated “leaders are always looking to transition into positions where they can move up the ladder and the pay matters.” P3 stated “you can’t expect someone to continue to work hard without offering a nice salary with benefits.”

Mentoring is the next constituent where two participants (67%) indicated that mentoring was an important factor to implement a succession plan. P2 stated “I wish I had someone to mentor me while I was learning how to lead. Since I didn’t I had to learn by trial and error.” P3 stated “organizations should incorporate mentoring into their staff development plans and follow-up on the progression of the leaders.” All participants (100%) identified on-the-job training as a major factor to determining the longevity in an organization. P1 stated

Once you’ve identified a candidate whose skill set fits a position, the work doesn’t stop there. Programs such as mentoring, training, and leadership development for nonprofit business leaders are beneficial for organizations because it promotes the organization’s vision, mission, goals, and objectives. Continuous training and support will increase the likelihood of the leader remaining with the organization.

P2 stated “One of the strategies I’ve used to implement a sustainable succession plan is ongoing training for leaders.” P3 stated “after you get a position the work is just beginning. That’s the time to learn the role that you are in.” Mentoring in the workplace enhances leadership development and increases the decision-making process (Poulsen, 2013). Participants P1, P2, and P3 (100%) indicated that diversity and inclusion is an

important element in succession. P1 stated “There are a lot of organizations that now have diversity and inclusion departments in human resources, but succession must involve looking for candidates who have unique characteristics.” P2 and P3 both indicated that diversity and inclusion would improve the continuity in the organization.

Table 2

Investments in People (Human Capital)

Investment	Number of Participants	Total
Training and education	3	100%
Competitive salary	3	100%
Mentoring	2	67%
On the job training	3	100%
Diversity and inclusion	3	100%

Ongoing education and training. Education and training are essential components in human capital. Human capital analysts assume that education increases earnings and productivity by providing knowledge. Many employees remain with the same organization for a long-time due to role familiarity. Job changes are common among unskilled employees. Resources are usually spent by organizations to familiarize new employees with their organizations. Acquired knowledge is a form of training due to an increase in production. Other forms of human capital include employment agency fees, expenses incurred by new employees in finding jobs, time, inventory, testing, reference checks, and book keeping. Internal leadership strategies can be developed by

using measures such as: the organization's capacity to fill vacant positions with internal candidates, the average number of qualified internal candidates per open position, the ethnic and gender diversity among individuals promoted, the percentage of employees who complete and implement development plans and staff management retention rates (Gothard & Austin, 2013).

Mentoring and on-the-job training. Mentoring and on-the-job training requires a collaborative approach between experienced senior leaders and followers with a leaning environment conducive for both parties. According to Corner (2014) mentoring is emerging as a popular strategy for leadership development because it has two major benefits: strategic effectiveness and cost effectiveness. Workplace mentoring is not common among business organizations (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). Leaders' ability to mentor and groom predecessors for leadership positions is paramount. The development and implementation of a formal mentoring plan with clear goals and expectations can decrease disruption during transition. On the job training that includes demonstrations and opportunities to observe is more effective promoting knowledge transfer (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). Mentorship efforts to train members of a group improves group performance due to the facilitation, distribution and knowledge transfer among group members (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016). Another approach to promoting mentoring to transfer knowledge is to measure changes in routines or practices associated with experiences (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2016).

Diversity and inclusion. The U.S. workforce is composed of more minorities, immigrants, and women and will continue to expand. The cross-cultural leader must be

patient, willing to learn and open to new experiences which are components of cultural sensitivity to understand people from other cultures. Virtually all of the 500 largest U.S. industrial corporations maintain operations in more than one nation. In the new leaders: Guidelines on Leadership and Diversity in America, Ann Morrison reported the results of her study on diversity practices in U.S. based private and public organizations which includes the following ten focus areas: top leadership personal involvement, targeted recruitment, internal advocacy groups, emphasis on equal employment opportunity statistics, inclusion of diversity in performance evaluations, inclusion of diversity in promotion decisions, inclusion of diversity in leadership succession, diversity training groups, network and support groups, and work and family practices that promote diversity (Northouse, 2013). Diversity in the workplace can be an opportunity for excellence in organizations valuing: increases in workforce creativity, broad range of knowledge and skills, better decisions based on different perspectives, better services provided to diverse populations, and ability to recruit excellent talent from the entire labor pool (Northouse, 2013).

Emergent Theme 2: Evaluation Metrics

Six constituents emerged from the core theme: standard operating procedures, quarterly monitoring, develop corrective action plans, follow up on findings, focus groups, and video conferencing. Table 3 displays the core theme and respective constituents. P1, P2, and P3 (100%) indicated that the development of standard operating procedures served as the foundation of the success of an organization. All participants indicated that policies and procedures that included guidelines for succession and

transition aids in minimizing impact in the organization. For example, P3 stated “You never know what’s going to happen so it’s best to have a plan to make sure the organization continues to thrive in unforeseen circumstances.” The next constituent was quarterly monitoring. Surprisingly P1, P2, and P3 (100%) of the participants agreed that despite the time and effort to continuously monitor programs and services offered, it is a strategy that works best. The constituent develop corrective action plans was identified by P1 and P3 (67%) of the participants. P1 stated “I would highly recommend that leaders spend time developing corrective action plans for the organization. It’s time consuming but helps in the long run.” P3 stated “In our organization one of our most useful evaluation tools is the corrective action plans.”

All participants (100%) identified following up on findings as essential element. For example, P1, P2, and P3 indicated that follow-ups were the most successful strategy to determine whether or not the measurement tools were effective in sustaining the organization. Sustainable reporting tools make it possible to demonstrate results by measuring progress and clarifying consistency between activities, outputs, outcomes, and goals (Siew, 2015). The constituent focus groups was identified by P3 (33%). P3 stated “Nonprofit leader should develop focus groups to discuss topics of high importance and brainstorm to develop solutions.” All participants P1, P2, and P3 (100%) highly recommended the use of technology that involved video conferencing to maintain effective communication and evaluation tool. P1 and P2 both indicated that weekly video conference calls were essential due to teleworking and connecting with global partners.

P3 stated “I look forward to scheduled weekly calls because it strengthens us as leaders and it allows us to provide useful feedback and innovative ways to make things better.”

Table 3

Types of Evaluation Metrics

Metrics	Number of Participants	Total
Standard operating procedures	3	100%
Quarterly Monitoring	3	100%
Develop corrective action plans	2	67%
Follow up on findings	3	100%
Focus groups	1	33%
Video conferencing	3	100%

Evaluation metrics. Leaders today rely on new technology to enable communication across time and geographic distance; leadership succession requires an understanding of group behavior and the ability to collaborate (Northouse, 2013). Executive leadership turnover is linked to three factors: lack of independence, unclear performance evaluation standards, and pressure inherent to the process of deciding on dismissal (Hilger et al., 2013). A shift in measuring economic growth, stakeholder value, prestige, corporate reputation, customer relationships, and the quality of products and services is essential (Siew, 2015). Sustainable development includes adopting and pursuing ethical business practices, creating sustainable jobs, building value for all stakeholders, and meeting the needs of the underserved (Siew, 2015). Stakeholders are

demanding more disclosures which includes environmental and social practices which led to the development of measurement tools (Siew, 2015).

Tracking system. Research shows that an evaluation of leaders is a valuable tool to improve leadership effectiveness. Performance management requires organizations to have a clear vision, values, vitality, persistence, and concern for others (Northouse, 2013). Communicating goals to develop plans and coaching others to succeed and correcting poor performance are essential components of evaluations. Evaluation metrics should be measurable. For example, measurable objectives for improving the organization are:

1. Develop and implement a system that allows tracking
2. Follow up and resolve complaints
3. Identify the number and type of complaints
4. Record the actions taken and by whom and date of resolution
5. Maintain visual charts and graphs for employees
6. Set date for goal attainment

Approximately 90% of Fortune 100 organizations use some form of multisource assessment including evaluations for leaders, employees, peers and constituents (Northouse, 2013). The assessments are called 360-degree feedback because the individual is rated by a circle of people. Performance reviews are communication tools to motivate employees. Performance reviews should include three steps: preparation, implementation, and follow-up. All leaders should be trained to implement each step.

Emergent Theme 3: Organizational Structure

Three constituents emerged from the core theme: organizational design, procedures, establish goals, and collaboration. Table 4 displays the core theme and respective constituents. Participants P1, P2, and P3 (100%) identified organizational design as a constituent. For example, P1 and P2 both indicated that the design is the foundation to sustaining the organization. P3 stated

I have no idea how an organization can function without a design that supports the mission and vision of the organization. Leaders can not be expected to transition into a role without clear expectations that align with the mission and vision. Well, I know that it happens, but it's unfortunate.

The second constituent was establish goals. Participants P1 and P3 (67%) indicated that establishing goals was a strategy used to develop and implement succession planning. Collaboration was a constituent identified by all participants (100%). P1 stated "You must be willing to work with others who do not look like you or share your beliefs. It's always good to have an organization that is built on collaboration." P2 stated "Leaders must be open to being led by other leaders. No matter how many years of experience you have, you can always learn from someone who may be much younger than you are." P3 stated

Communication and collaboration is also a major barrier in the organization. It's something that we have to continuously work on because we are all different and that's okay... as long as we continue to develop sustainable workplace practices and prepare leaders from all backgrounds for success.

Table 4

Organizational structure

Metrics	Number of Participants	Total
Organizational design	3	100%
Establish goals	2	67%
Collaboration	3	100%

Organizational structure. Nonprofit organizations provide direct services, engage in community development, advocate for issues and foster preservation of initiatives. Approaches are blended to achieve the desired goal. To achieve goals, it is essential to develop a cohesive list of objectives and timelines for completion. For example, organizations may provide educational programs, community outreach, and advocacy. Collaboration is an integral component of goal attainment. According to Northouse (2013) the formal study of groups began in human relations in the 1920s and 1930s as collaborative efforts were created to balance individual efforts emphasized by scientific management theorists. In the 1990s and 2000s the focus shifted to high-performance teams to design products, serve customers, and improve quality to maintain a competitive advantage in a global economy (Northouse, 2013). There is a tapestry of 12 qualities that characterize collaborative groups: clear mission, informal atmosphere, lots of discussion, active listening, trust and openness, disagreement is ok, constructive criticism, consensus as the norm, effective leadership, clarity of assignments, shared values and norms of behavior, and commitment (Northouse, 2013). An evaluation of the

characteristics can be used to determine if an approach is exploitive, impoverished, supportive, or enlightened (Northouse, 2013).

Methodological triangulation is used in case study research to explore different perspectives of the same phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The review of documents served as an additional method to confirm and strengthen the results of the single case study. According to Yin (2014), document review is an examination and interpretation of data from existing sources to gain understanding. I reviewed documentation provided from the organization from 1973 to 2017 which included transcripts of interviews conducted by leadership; corrective action plans; evaluation metrics, and organizational development plans. For example, an interview transcript conducted in 2017 by leadership indicated that collaboration and goal establishment served as the basis of success in the organization. In the interview the leader explained that collaboration is a barrier in a fast-paced environment. In the interview, the leader further explained the importance of conference calls to track progress and outcomes.

A document review of the organization's vision, mission and goals reflects the importance of establishing and maintaining a clear and cohesive organizational structure. Additional information retrieved from reviewing the standard operating procedures further supports the importance of clear policies and procedures aligned with succession. P1 stated "this is what we have used to sustain the organization. Explicit knowledge is information documented, codified and compiled into training manuals and archived; investing in people (human capital) by establishing trainings to capture the tacit and explicit knowledge increases the retention rate of knowledge (Zhuang & Guo, 2013). P1,

P2 and P3 (100%) indicated that standard operating procedures serves as an essential evaluation metric during the interview. The review of documentation aligns with human capital theory because the review of documentation supports the integral components of the theory. The inclusion of multiple data sources increases the validity of the findings (Mannany & Morgan, 2015).

Goal development. Effective leadership development may increase an organization's turnover because of higher employability thus organizations should be prepared (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Organizations can create conditions for successful development and retention: aligning the organization's mission and goals with the overall leadership development strategy by creating a supportive organizational culture that fosters learning and a healthy work-life balance, providing training opportunities that align with the agency's current needs and future directions and evaluating the development strategy process and outcomes. Some organizations may need to modify their organizational culture to create an environment that facilitates leadership retention, healthy succession planning and transition. This may require an adjustment in work/life balance, compensation rates, investing in young leaders and holding leadership accountable to policies and procedures, examining the organizational structure, values, goals, technologies, and fostering promotion based on leadership skills and competencies (Gothard & Austin, 2013). All participants have worked in the organization for more than 35 years (see Table 5).

Table 5

Years at Organization

Years	Number of Participants	Total
15-25 years	0	
25-35 years	0	
35 years or more	3	100%

Applications to Professional Practice

The research findings are applicable to the professional practice of business from various perspectives. An astounding 7% to 9% of nonprofit leaders have given notice and are in the process of exiting an organization (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bell, 2011). Top leadership transition processes are critical to ensure that continuity remains in organizations. The strategies to implement succession have profound implications to sustainability, funding and constituent support and the effectiveness of the organizational mission (Tebbe, Stewart, Hugues, & Adams, 2017). The research findings are based on real world experiences as opposed to theoretical concepts. According to Poveda and Young (2015) the sustainability of an organization can be implemented by managing people, planet and profit which is known as the triple bottom line. The current case study provides insights on new succession plan strategies required to transfer knowledge among nonprofit leaders exiting the organization or role transitions.

Leadership succession. Due to the increased demands to remain competitive in today's market, investments in developing processes to manage leadership succession and transitions have become an area of interest in all industries. Leaders must have the

ability to encourage employees to focus on significant problems identified in the organization (Helmig et al., 2014). The development of leadership is a critical component to the success of an organization (Gentry et al., 2013). Nonprofit leadership is the capacity to develop and sustain multiple key relationships toward a common purpose (Center for Social Leadership, 2013). Nonprofit leaders must integrate ongoing practices that include the development and empowerment of other leaders and employees.

Nonprofit leaders devote less than 10% of time to training in the United States (Winn, 2014). Leaders can motivate followers in organizations to excel by being positive role models (Qu et al., 2015). Developing individuals' leadership strategies through training allows leaders to create a path for current employees to become leaders within the organization (Hoefer & Sliva, 2014). Generational succession accounts for the loss of knowledge among 76 million baby boomers (Appelbaum et al., 2012). A step by step approach that includes strategies to promote leadership success regardless of age fosters success (Northouse, 2013). Broughan (2013) noted managing succession accounts for the hidden costs of employee turnover.

Corporate social responsibility. Within a 30-year time span corporate social responsibility (CSR) has yielded positive results in research and practice; the outcomes range from positive reputation, talent attraction, financial performance, consumer brand loyalty to organizational commitment, employment engagement and job satisfaction (Haski-Leventhal, Roza, & Meijs, 2017). Leaders use knowledge management and tacit knowledge to contribute to the organization's strategic performance (Venkitachalam & Busch, 2012). Barriers to working on problems outside of an employee's scope of inquiry

must be identified to prevent the breakdown of processes (Anderson, 2012). Constructs and patterns are based on observation and understanding outcomes when the two constructs socially responsible identity and socially responsible behavior are connected or separated (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017). Leaders in organizations must exhibit socially responsible behavior focused on the promotion of social good (Werther & Chandler, 2014). The identity and behavior of leaders is profound in determining the longevity of the organization. The organizational identity, often referred to as the uniqueness of the organization is described by the business strategy, espoused values, and philosophy (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017). The theories of person-environment fit and person-organization fit of individuals attitudes and behaviors within an organization are influenced by the level of goal congruence between the individual and the organization (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017).

Connections to human capital theory. Human capital can be categorized into three categories: capability and potential, motivation and commitment and innovation and learning (Muda et al., 2016). The economic perspective of the human capital theory posits that three human capital components influence performance and result in greater pay, which are education, tenure, and training (Hayek et al., 2016). According to (Schultz, 1961) human capital can evolve to handle the disequilibrium in situations with a changing environment where employees are required to make adjustments. New knowledge is created when tacit knowledge becomes explicit and crystallized into innovation that is re-creation of new insight or ideas (Northouse, 2013). Organizations are investing in human capital by conducting research for publication, hosting workshops

and seminars for leaders. Human capital is a collection of resources, knowledge, skills, experience, and training (Schober & Winter-Ebmer, 2011). Strategic choice theory, learning organization theory, complexity theory, and knowledge management theory lack application and prescription implied by human capital theory. The management of learning effectiveness is best described by Donald Kirkpatrick's model The Four Levels Approach: satisfaction, learning, application, and impact (Northouse, 2013). It is essential to develop a culture where practice standards have minimal disruption to the operations and constituents served (Tebbe et al., 2017). According to Stewart (2016, 2017) a significant gap remains in relation to the adoption of leadership succession and transition tools as standard management practices; business practitioners report inconsistencies among best practices and tools.

Implications for Social Change

During the 1990s and 2000s, the philanthropic community and investments in developing practices to manage leadership succession and executive transitions redefined the roles and practices of leadership (Tebbe et al., 2017). According to Appelbaum et al. (2012), there are 100 million members of Generation Y in the workforce, but there is a lack of training and strategies to assume leadership roles. The transfer of knowledge is the first step in the acquisition process in which nonprofit leaders must overcome the barriers associated with succession planning. A well-developed succession plan may improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover, increase diversity, and improve social equity. The implications for social change may also lead to a more productive environment in the United States. Successful succession plans within nonprofit organizations might

contribute to positive social change by creating continuity within the organization and extend to the communities and individuals served.

Recommendations for Action

Research and business practitioners have explored various concepts and strategies to explain executive turnover and to predict factors that mitigate disruption (Tebbe, et al., 2017). In empirical research, few researchers have focused on nonprofit executive succession. A few researchers have used a case study approach to examine antecedents of turnover. Although a broad inquiring of knowledge exists around executive turnover, there is a lack of data to support the core features of executive transition including the use and role of interim leadership.

Research has shown that sustainability strategies are top down, and the most effective ones involve top management commitment to the strategy. Senior leaders must be knowledgeable to support the organization and effectively communicate the mission, vision, and strategy to other members of the organization (Carter, 2013). Top leaders are responsible for creating an environment that promotes sustainability (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014). Leadership succession planning and transition management mainstream practices must be integrated into the organizational culture (Renz & Herman, 2010). There are various challenges that must be addressed to transform nonprofit organizations. First, increasing the conscientiousness of the problem by ensuring that leaders are aware of the availability and succession planning tools, executive management approaches and intentional interim executive leadership resources. In addition, the urgency to implement strategies to sustain the organization must be enforced. Secondly, a clear understanding

of succession challenges and transition is an integral component to hiring highly qualified individuals who are a good fit for the role. The lack of education results in a limited perspective which may impede the hiring process.

Interim leaders should be hired to allow adequate time to address the health and stability of the organization. New leaders should be given a fair opportunity to display talents and strategies to strengthen the mission and goals of the organization. Hiring highly-qualified intentional interim leadership reduces the exposure to disruption and stress while focusing on rebuilding a sustainable model for success. To ensure success leadership executives must communicate to employees and constituents that certain roles are in an interim status. Interim leaders serve as bridge leadership to aid in the preparation for permanent leadership. Lastly, succession planning and leadership tools can be used to establish best practices in accordance with the goals of the organization. Active planning for leadership succession along with the management of transition requires hard work and dedication. The following recommendations for action will minimize disruption in nonprofit organizations: development of leadership succession standards; development of practical tools; training; design case studies; publishing and the inclusion of leadership succession plan development as a requirement for grant applications. To increase awareness and promote planning I will distribute my study to all potential participants contacted who did not have a succession plan; I will also publish my study in journals, magazines, and websites.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations to improve business practices in nonprofit organization are integral to expand the scope of inquiry as the single case study was limited in scope. The study relied on the honesty of the three participants disclosing their real-world experiences implementing succession planning strategies, the reliance on subjective views, the potential for participants to disclose responses, a 1-hour maximum for interviews, and researcher expertise (Connelly, 2013). The sample population was limited as the source of the participants is a single nonprofit organization in Metropolitan Southeastern Georgia. A limited sample size is a common limitation in qualitative research (Kolb, 2012). Future research to expand the scope of inquiry are reflected based on the following research questions: What barriers prevent nonprofit organizations from implementing leadership succession and executive transition management practices and tools; what are the major impacts of interim executives; what are the outcomes of organizational instability and executive transition; what emerging trends and developments influence the responsibilities and competencies for future leadership; and what evaluation models will result in an increased understanding of the efficacy of existing leadership and transition practices.

Reflections

The doctoral process has changed my outlook on life. As a consultant with more than 10 years of experience working with high-profile clientele across industries, I have learned that while businesses are growing at a rapid rate, planning is not prioritized. Disruption forces organizations to modify strategies and processes to remain sustainable.

The development and implementation of successful succession planning strategies will foster success. As a scholar for social change, I will continue to have a positive impact by encouraging forward thinking. Conducting the interviews confirmed my thoughts pertaining to leaders' wealth of knowledge; the strategies and success stories can transform an organization. I have developed patience as the process has taught me to endure even when goal attainment seems impossible. The experience has been humbling and I will continue to educate others along the way as I embark on a new chapter in my life.

Conclusion

Many nonprofit organizations are not investing in human capital and lack strategies to implement succession planning. Managing succession accounts for the hidden costs of employee turnover (Broughan, 2013). The three emerged themes: investing in people (human capital), evaluation metrics, and organizational structure aligned with human capital theory. Leadership succession is an essential component to ensure that organizations are sustainable. This single case qualitative case study to implement succession planning can be used to (a) minimize disruption within organizations by developing sustainable practices, (b) identifying measures and concepts leaders can use to close the gap in leadership, and (c) promote future research opportunities to expand the scope of inquiry to transform the culture across industries.

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Appendix A: Succession Plan Strategies

Nonprofit		
Author	Title	Elements of Framework
Wolfred, 2008	Succession Planning for Non-Profits	Strategic Leadership Development (define strategic vision and identify, recruit, and retain leadership) Emergency Succession Planning (identify job functions, roles, lines of authority; develop of cross training plan, communications plan, and procedures) Departure-Defined Succession Planning (identify goals; determine successor skill set; capacity building with board, managers, and systems)
Jones, 2007	Greater Stability During Nonprofit Leadership Changes	Manage risk (create an emergency succession plan in the case of an unplanned leadership change) Use a strategic approach to develop leadership throughout agency (staff and board) Manage leadership transitions
Adams, 2005; 2006	Executive Transition Management Approach (ETM)	Plan (emergency planning and ongoing strategic planning or pre-departure planning) PREPARE: Transition and search planning (clarify direction, stabilize, outline capacity building efforts) PIVOT: Search, select, prepare (outreach, prepare staff, strengthen infrastructure) THRIVE: Post hire launch and support (define roles, responsibilities, and expectations)
Axelrod, 2002	Ongoing Succession Planning	Perform instructional self-assessment Define core leadership and management competencies Create chief executive profile Develop and implement communications plan Search, select, appoint Orient and coach new leader
Gersick et al., 2000	Continuity Planning in Family Foundations	Select a planning leader and committee (diversity in age, gender, and family branch) Decide who will participate Complete the Foundation Continuity Survey and summarize results (survey is included in succession workbook with selections that assess mission and vision, organizational structure and leadership, developing successors, and family dynamics) Plan a retreat Facilitate retreat to discuss continuity planning and readiness, family structure, assumptions Explore culture, history, and values

For-Profit		
Ip, 2009	Modified Quality Function Deployment for Business Succession Planning	Assess competencies of business, incumbent, future business, and successor Use matrix to systematically compare results Specify and plan tasks
Public Health		
Collins & Collins, 2007	Succession Planning Conceptual Framework	Evaluate organizational goals Focus on essential positions Analyze available candidates Match organizational skills with candidates Examine gaps Identify the development process of proposed successor Address transition issues Attempt to retain talent Evaluate and begin process again
Lynn, 2001	Sequential Steps for Succession Management in the Public Sector	Systematically identify organizational needs Discover a pool of high-potential candidates Provide learning experiences to increase knowledge, skills, and abilities of potential leaders Select leaders from pool

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Succession Planning Strategies		
Date, time, location		
Interviewee number		
Step 1	Introduction	Hi my name, is Talecia Parks. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you for agreeing to participate in this brief interview.
Step 2	Purpose	I have a few questions that I'd like to ask pertaining to strategies you've used as a nonprofit leader to implement a successful succession plan. (I will watch for nonverbal ques during this time. I will also ensure that my body language is tactful)
Step 3	Describe why they are participating	Participation in the study will aid in providing practical knowledge that business leaders can use as a guide. Participation also serves as partial fulfillment for the Doctor of Business Administration in Walden University.
Step 4	Describe the benefit of participating	The benefit of the study involves an increased understanding of succession planning strategies to sustain organizations.
Step 5	Discuss ethics	To protect your privacy, I would like to request permission to keep notes of the entire session which includes the opening discussion and the interview.
Step 6	Discuss confidentiality	All information provided will be confidential. Research records will be maintained in a password protected database. All files pertaining to data supplied will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the research. Any information as a result of this session will be confidential and only used for the purpose of the doctoral study. All notes will be destroyed immediately following transcription.
Step 7	Ask if the participant has any question	Do you have any questions or concerns as to the process just discussed?
Step 8	Transition to the interview questions	This is the semi structured interview.

Step 9	<p>Conduct the interview</p> <p>Ask probing questions as required, observe body language, and verbal cues.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What effective succession planning strategies do you use do develop succession plans? 2. What were barriers if any experienced during the first attempt to develop and implement the succession plan? 3. What succession planning strategies worked best to develop the succession plan? 4. What succession planning strategies improve the continuity of knowledge shared in an organization? 5. What succession planning strategies do you recommend to other nonprofit leaders? 6. What policies and procedures if any have you established pertaining to succession planning? 7. Would you please provide any additional information that you feel would be helpful in the development of a succession plan for nonprofit organizations?
Step 10	Wrap up	<p>Thank you for your participation in the study. I would like to schedule a day and time this week if possible to review the data retrieved which should take no longer than 30 minutes. The primary purpose for the follow up interview is to ensure that I have recorded the data accurately and to ensure that it is reflective of your thoughts and to ensure that I have not misinterpreted any information. Will a follow up interview be permissible? Is it acceptable to contact you for any clarification of information if needed? Do you have a preferred method of communication? Thank you again for your time and participation.</p>