Template Guidelines: Identify and Select High-Potential Employees

The *Succession Planning Status Worksheet Example* shows that five positions should receive the highest priority in the succession planning strategy. However, limiting the strategy to only these five positions would limit the number of potential leaders targeted to receive leadership developmental opportunities, and who could fill leadership vacancies.

We recommend developing an acceleration pool (sometimes called a talent pool) of high-potential employees to receive enhanced developmental experiences. By using an acceleration pool, your agency can increase the number of employees who will be prepared to step into higher-level jobs.

Your Succession Planning Team will need to exercise care in developing a plan for selecting high-potential employees for the acceleration pool. Your team should consider the following when identifying high-potential employees:

- Your agency will be expending significant resources on the enhanced development of those in the acceleration pool – it is important to include only those who have real potential for leadership positions.
- It is equally important to develop a process that ensures that every employee with leadership potential is fairly and thoroughly considered for participation.
- If yours is a public agency, your selection process may have to conform to certain merit system standards of fair and open competition.
- Your agency will also want to ensure that the selection process results in a diverse group of employees to include in the acceleration pool.

Building your Acceleration Pool

Nomination Criteria: Your agency's size, organizational structure, merit system regulations and culture will in part determine the nomination criteria you'll use. Employee requirements to consider include:

- Educational level/degrees
- Years with the agency
- Current or prior supervisory experience
- Classification level

It is important to remember that you are basing your criteria on the future potential of the employee, rather than their current capacity.

Use the *Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile* to help you determine the type of criteria your agency will use to nominate employees to the acceleration pool.

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Management Nomination/Self Nomination: We recommend a system where employees can nominate themselves to the acceleration pool, and managers can nominate employees from within their organizational units. In both cases, nominees would have to satisfy the nomination criteria you've established for the pool.

Inviting employees to nomination themselves sends an important message about the openness of your process and is most consistent with merit system principles. Some employees may be too modest to nominate themselves; inviting management-initiated nominations may include some high-potentials who would not have self-nominated.

You can use or adapt the *Acceleration Pool Nomination Form* to meet your agency's needs. Asking nominees to also provide the information on the *Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile* will provide you with a more complete picture of the nominee's background and capacity.

The Selection Process: You should establish a screening process for the nominees to the acceleration pool in order to decide who to select. The three-step screening process outlined below is sufficient; there are also some additional optional steps from which to choose.

- **The Succession Planning Team does an initial screening** (Optional): your team can use the nomination materials and the *Acceleration Pool Nomination Summary* to summarize the information from the individual nomination forms. This step is most useful in those organizations with a large number of applicants and relatively few slots in the acceleration pool.

- Written answers to behavioral-based questions (Optional): Ask nominees to submit written answers of not more than two pages each to several questions related to the nomination criteria in the Acceleration Pool Nomination Form. We recommend that the answers be scored by individuals within your agency who are trained on behavioral interviewing. This written exercise accomplishes has several goals:
  - Asking applicants to prepare a lengthy written document will screen out those who are not seriously interested in the process.
  - It provides a screening tool that helps reduce the number of applicants who will be given an in-person interview. (This may not be an issue in small agencies with few initial applicants.)
  - If you use "blind scoring" (the names of applicants are coded and removed from the answer sheets), the process adds credibility.
  - You can easily evaluate the applicants' writing skills.

  See the *Gap-Closing Tool Kit - Tool 3* for detailed information on how to develop behavioral-based questions.

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Succession Planning Templates

Sample: Completed Succession Planning Status Worksheet

Position Title	Incumbent Name	Retirement Status	Criticality	Number of Staff Ready Now	Number of Staff Ready in 1-2 Years	Succession Planning Priorities
Agency Director		A	1	1	1	
Chief Deputy			1	0	0	x
IT Director		B	1	0	2	x
Finance Director		A	1	1	2	
Budget Dir		C	2	0	1	
Accounting Dir		B	2	0	0	
HR Director		A	1	2	3	
Labor Relations		C	2	1	2	
Personnel			2	1	1	
Staff Development		B	2	2	2	
Communications Dir			1	0	0	x
Director of Policy		A	1	0	1	x
Quality and Planning			2	0	0	
Field Operations Dir		B	1	2	3	
Office A Director		B	2	1	2	
Office B Director		C	2	2	2	
Office C Director			2	0	0	
Office D Director		A	2	1	2	
Clinical Specialist		A	1	0	0	x

Retirement Status:
A: Retirement likely within 1 year
B: Retirement likely within 3 years
C: Retirement eligible within 5 years

Criticality:
1: Critical - Must "hit the ground running"
2: Very Important - Fully functional within 6 months

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Worksheet: Succession Planning Status

Position Title	Incumbent Name	Retirement Status	Criticality	Number of Staff Ready Now	Number of Staff Ready in 1-2 Years	Succession Planning Priorities

Retirement Status:
A: Retirement likely within 1 year
B: Retirement likely within 3 years
C: Retirement eligible within 5 years

Criticality:
1: Critical - Must "hit the ground running"
2: Very Important - Fully functional within 6 months

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Acceleration Pool Nomination Form[1]

Nominee Name: **Classification**:
Nominated By: **Date**:

Leadership Area	Strength	Proficient	Developmental Need
Support of Agency Values	☐	☐	☐
▪ Behaves Consistently with values	☐	☐	☐
▪ Displays respect for others	☐	☐	☐
▪ Is a good team player	☐	☐	☐
▪ Identifies with management	☐	☐	☐
Leadership Promise	☐	☐	☐
▪ Is motivated to lead	☐	☐	☐
▪ Accepts leadership responsibility	☐	☐	☐
▪ Mobilizes resources/people to action	☐	☐	☐
▪ Leads teams that have high morale	☐	☐	☐
Interpersonal Skills	☐	☐	☐
▪ Communicates clearly and effectively	☐	☐	☐
▪ Makes effective presentations	☐	☐	☐
▪ Demonstrates diplomacy	☐	☐	☐
▪ Is trusted and respected	☐	☐	☐
Demonstration of Results	☐	☐	☐
▪ Shows positive team/unit results	☐	☐	☐
▪ Displays objective indicators of success	☐	☐	☐
▪ Accomplishes major assignments	☐	☐	☐
Developmental Orientation	☐	☐	☐
▪ Has accurate self-insight	☐	☐	☐
▪ Is coachable; accepts feedback	☐	☐	☐
▪ Has history of learning from experience	☐	☐	☐
▪ Quickly learns new tasks	☐	☐	☐
▪ Self-initiates development activities	☐	☐	☐

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[1] Adapted from Byham, William C., Audrey B. Smith, Matthew J. Paese. 2002. *Grow Your Own Leaders. Acceleration Pools: A New Method of Succession Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

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Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile[2]

Employee Information
Name:
Title:
Job Classification:
Length of Service:
Time in Current Job:
Current Supervisor:

Career Goals
1 to 3 Years:
3 to 5 Years:
Beyond 5 Years:

Educational History

Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:

Special Skills/Expertise
Languages:
Technology:
Professional Expertise:
Other:

Developmental Experiences - Past 3 Years

Formal Training:	Competencies/Skills Developed:
Special Assignments:	Competencies/Skills Developed:
Other:	Competencies/Skills Developed:

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[2] Adapted from Byham, William C., Audrey B. Smith, Matthew J. Paese. 2002. *Grow Your Own Leaders. Acceleration Pools: A New Method of Succession Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

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Acceleration Pool Nomination Summary

Name	Support of Agency Values	Leadership Promise	Interpersonal Skills	Demonstration of Results	Developmental Orientation
Applicant A	S	S	S	P	S
Applicant B	S	S	P	P	S
Applicant C	P	P	S	S	P
Applicant D	P	S	P	S	P
Applicant E	P	P	P	P	S
Applicant F	D	P	P	P	P

S = Strength
P = Proficiency
D = Developmental Need

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