

Case Study: Succession Planning and Leadership Development at
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

By

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Abstract

Baby boomers reach retirement age at alarmingly high rates throughout the United States daily. Thus, creating deficiencies in production, efficiency, and institutional knowledge in countless public and private entities. Organizations that focus on succession planning and leadership development emphasize building pipelines of supervisors and managers ready to step into recently vacated executive and senior-level positions. This study focuses on succession planning and leadership development at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). By utilizing a model developed in previous Applied Research Projects (Sharon Ley, 2002 & Melissa Whitmore, 2006), a thorough literature review of the latest research suggests organizations still struggle to grasp the importance of implementing succession planning and leadership development programs. Secondly, strategies were assessed and gauged by applying the practical ideal type characteristics to TPWD's approach to succession planning and leadership development. Finally, based on the review, the case study includes recommendations to improve TPWD's procedures and policies on effectively implementing a successful succession planning and leadership development program. Document analysis and focused interviews provided the optimal methodology to evaluate the research. The findings indicate department-wide recognition on the importance of implementing a succession plan, but lack of resources prevents fully establishing any dynamic program. Additional recommendations include a dedicated position coordinator, integrating succession planning into the existing leadership development program, creating a tracking system to monitor employee progress, immediately commencing their mentoring pilot program, improve communication between supervisor and manager with employees regarding career advancement, and identifying specific positions as "linchpin" or critical. Full implementation of the recommendations can improve and ensure a strong foundation of future leaders to continue the stewardship Texas natural and cultural resources.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Public and private organizations all across the United States face many challenges: rapid technological change, economic diversity, partisan political hostilities, and racial and gender inclusion issues. Perhaps a more significant problem over the next decade will be the anticipated high turnover rate among baby boomers. Today, baby boomers account for approximately one-third of the workforce. As these aging workers approach retirement, many organizations will be ill-equipped to handle the loss of institutional knowledge created by losing many senior-level managers and staff. The result could mean disruptions in day-to-day operations such as quality control processes, missed deadlines, and lack of institutional knowledge by less experienced staff.

In response, organizations must focus on creating succession and leadership development plans to minimize the loss of productivity and service neglect. Unfortunately, many organizational leaders will rely on a list of names in their desk drawers neglecting to look at a strategic and dynamic leadership development plan (Weisblat, 2018). As a result, succession planning and leadership development are ignored by public, private, and non-profit organizations to their detriment.

Nowhere is the need for succession planning and leadership development more relevant than the public sector. Government organizations have a moral and legal obligation to maintain public safety and confidence in services provided. Without proper measures in place to groom and develop potential leaders, government functions will become inefficient and no longer useful. Succession planning and leadership development is the bridge between an aging workforce and a younger generation of future leaders.

Succession Planning

Succession planning and leadership development is a dynamic, deliberate, proactive, and flexible approach to identifying and developing potential employees for future supervisory and management positions resulting in leadership continuity. Program implementation must be well-designed at developing leaders for the future and preparing organizations for the eventual loss of highly skilled managers and leaders. By cultivating and fostering talent for those linchpin positions (Gabour, 2007), which are positions essential to the long-term health of any organization and usually tricky to replace, organizations can better prepare for potential losses. Despite more studies to the contrary, organizations still neglect leadership development and identifying employees with potential. Organizations tend to be reactive and hire to replace, rather than taking the proactive approach of development.

Jack Welch said in an interview in 1991, "From now on, choosing my successor is the most important decision I will make" (Gordon and Overbey, 2018, p. 17). Dynamic and confident leadership can institute organizational change more readily because they are not scared to fail or embrace change. Succession planning must be more than a piece of paper, and it must have buy-in from management to all employees. Most important for any succession plan to work, management must not think in terms of replacing people, but in terms of building leaders. Institutional knowledge should not die, when an experienced manager leaves, instead the wisdom, understanding, and expertise should be passed down through a proper mentoring program. Please note, mentoring will be discussed later but is essential to any succession planning and leadership development program.

Texas Parks and Wildlife

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is one of the larger state agencies and provides Texans with outdoor recreational opportunities, manages and protects fish and wildlife habitat, and is a steward of the state parks and many historical sites. Currently, TPWD has more than 3,200 employees, and 13 percent is now eligible to retire, while 25 percent will be eligible to retire by Fiscal Year 2023. The TPWD turnover rate (FY 2017) was relatively low hovering around 12 percent, while the statewide average was approximately 19 percent. Currently, TPWD has in place individual professional development opportunities designed to assist employees in guiding them toward a management path, with a high degree of self-reliance and personal ownership of their future.

Succession planning at TPWD will be examined based on the ideal components and elements identified in previous Applied Research Projects (Ley, 2002 and Whitmore, 2006). The practical-ideal type developed by Ley (2002) and Whitmore (2006) will be updated based on a thorough review of the literature. TPWDs current succession planning and leadership development practices will be gauged using this model. The intended result will be recommendations for improvement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to 1) conduct a thorough review of the literature to identify critical elements of an ideal succession management and leadership development plan 2) be able to utilize the practical ideal type characteristics to assess and gauge existing strategies for succession planning at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department 3) provide valuable recommendations to improve and implement a more defined succession plan at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of the following chapter is to review the relevant literature related to succession planning and leadership development. Every year, organizations and businesses face many challenges associated with replacing an aging workforce and retaining valuable employees who have demonstrated leadership skills. Replacing employees with institutional knowledge and proven leadership ability can be disruptive to the organizational flow and create a "disturbance in the force" (Cavanaugh, 2017, p. 22). Professional development opportunities reinforce organizational success by identifying potential leaders, promoting advancement opportunities, and evaluating success in a transparent process.

Program or policy evaluation utilizes the gauging/practical ideal type (Shields & Rangarajan, 2013). The conceptual framework will advance and update the past practical ideal type frameworks previously developed by Sharon Ley (2002) and Melissa Whitmore (2006). Succession planning at TPWD will be examined based on the ideal components and elements identified in previous ARP's (Ley 2002; Whitmore 2006). However, new research has allowed for the components to expand by identifying new features within the elements. Ultimately, the study will allow for the comparison and analysis of TPWD's current succession planning and leadership development practices to the identified practical ideal type. The intended result will be recommendations for improvement.

By utilizing existing literature and past components and elements of a successful succession plan and leadership development program, the conceptual framework consists of the following categories:

- Senior-Level Management Support
- Dedicated Responsibility

- Needs-Driven Assessment
- Professional Development
- Focused Individual Goals
- Extends to all Organizational Levels
- Strategic Plan Inclusion
- Unique Public Sector Issues

Senior-Level Management Support

Historically, organizational leaders have not prioritized succession planning or leadership development for a variety of reasons, but most top-level leaders find it challenging to plan for the transfer of power. Although any succession plan will depend on the support of organizational leadership, "For succession plans to be successful, support from senior executives is needed..." (Phillips, Evans, Tooley, Shirey, 2018, p. 242). If leadership does not adopt the fundamental notion of succession planning and leadership development, then any effort will fail.

Authentic organizational leadership will always look to the future and make sure they will be set up to succeed long after they are gone (Harrell, 2016). Top management must coordinate and share responsibility with human resource departments for implementation of their succession planning and leadership development efforts to ensure all the tools are available to guarantee success (Collins, McKinnies & Matthews, 2013). However, success is dependent upon an awareness between management and human resource departments of the organizational strategy and "preparing talent to meet the demands of the strategy" (Fulmer & Conger, 2004, p. 16). Thus, a lack of preparedness can have a high cost not only in the public sector with increasing employee turnover rates but a decrease in private-sector stock returns (Harrell 2016).

Any effective succession plan must become part of the overall organizational culture and strategy. Culture must transcend individual leaders (Weisblat, 2018).

Dedicated Responsibility

Once succession planning and leadership development are prioritized by senior-level management, the implementation and oversight will be crucial to success. A designated position dedicated to program monitoring formalizes the structure with consistent metrics and benchmarks (Weisblat, 2018). Leadership continuity maintains organizational flow according to the latest literature, "Organizational leaders and HR personnel must have a clear understanding of who will champion this strategic initiative, retain the organization's intellectual capital, build talent from within, and ensure leadership continuity" (Gordon & Overbey, 2018, p. 16).

The succession planning and leadership development program needs a set of metrics, and a systematic approach should be developed to monitor and measure the progress of designated employees in the program (Conger and Fulmer, 2003). For example, the United States Postal Service (USPS) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), a division of the United States Department of Agriculture, both developed and implemented systematic methodologies to identify, monitor, and analyze potential managerial candidates with leadership qualities. The USPS designed a web-based system and an online application process on a shared-level throughout the entire organizational structure. The FSIS utilized a competency-based method to develop guidelines and a template, which would align with federal guidelines and agency needs. A model was developed based on competencies as part of their succession planning and leadership development program (Endres & Alexander, 2006). Both approaches proved successful because of their reliable system of progress analysis.

Although any competency model can be valuable, it can also become complicated and frustrating. As a result, it is imperative for human resource departments to balance and monitor these models, so they do not become cumbersome and outdated (Kesler, 2009). Maintaining a database tracking system ensures benchmarks meet deadlines promptly. Senior-leaders or mid-level managers utilize the system when vital decisions or promotions are under consideration. Since senior-level leadership supports succession planning and leadership development, they will appropriate a dedicated operating budget to the succession plan coordinator (Rothwell, 2010). Finally, by installing a coordinator and earmarking a budget dedicated to succession planning and leadership development, an agency assures accountability, organization, and implementation of its program mission and goals.

Needs-Driven Assessment

A needs-driven assessment is the same as data-driven workforce planning. Human Resource departments are the most qualified group to monitor succession and leadership programs. A needs-driven assessment follows three analyses focused on organizational, operations, and individual employee (Holton 2000). To fully grasp the scope of the program, it is essential to identify organizational culture and mission; how the organization functions, and most importantly determine employee skills and "linchpin" or critical positions (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Kurec 2012).

Excellent communication with other organizations in particular state agencies regarding their approach to succession planning is an integral part of a needs-driven assessment. Ley (2002) and Whitmore (2006) call this "external benchmarking," which can be valuable to identify gaps between "current capabilities and future requirements" of the designated "linchpin" positions. By consulting with agencies who have successfully and unsuccessfully implemented

succession planning an organization can evaluate best practices, which will fit best into their culture (Rothwell 2010). Program development can rely on comparisons between different agencies on similar challenges, requirements, and outcomes.

Developing competency levels of current employees will help in determining those individuals most capable of developing into future leaders (Whitmore, 2006). TPWD utilizes a matrix during the hiring process, which could be further developed to identify individual strengths and weaknesses for potential advancement by employees in lower-level positions into the linchpin positions. The ideal succession and leadership program will be a systematic approach to building an employee pipeline dedicated to identifying lower-level employees accurately. Due to the advancement in technology, and more focus on leadership development, advances in software related to succession planning is an efficient means of tracking employee progress (Rothwell, 2010).

Linchpin positions are those identified by human resources and executive leadership as positions classified as mission-critical and essential to the long-term health of the organization (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Although succession planning can tend to be focused strictly on top senior-level management, organizations can focus on leadership development at the middle-management level (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Specifically, at TPWD, these positions include Managers, Superintendents, Program Supervisors, and Team Leads. Typically, these positions are essential to future organizational growth, well-established in the hierarchy, and rely on team-oriented contributions. Organizations would be wise to include lower-level employees and installing programs designed to develop potential employees to grow into reliable managers one day (Conger & Fulmer, 2003).

Professional Development Opportunities

Most successful organizations have professional development programs aimed at achieving a high level of productivity and improving retention rates. Creating opportunities for employees to gain experience, knowledge, and useful skills are essential in establishing productive work environments. Most professional development opportunities have clear, measurable, and realistic intentions. As a result, organizations who place a high priority on professional development will expect a return on investment (Cavanaugh, 2017). Organizations will trust individuals who have participated in professional development rather than relying on those with seniority (Cavanaugh, 2017).

Traditionally, employee loyalty connected organizations personally to their occupation thus creating stability. Career paths formed, which limited employee promotion based on biased traits and intangibles producing a progression structured on a point to point sequence of targeted achievements (Gaffney, 2008). Creating opportunities based on accomplishment and goal attainment, in some circles is known as “career pathing” (Croteau & Wolk, 2010, p. 61). Highly complicated "career pathing" models can be effective means of establishing employee engagement, satisfaction, and development, while career ladder strategies can detail sequences in jobs and provide a clear path to professional advancement. However, career paths are focused not on promotion or upward mobility, but instead, an emphasis is placed on expanding one's responsibilities on a horizontal level and still achieve the same results of engagement, satisfaction, and development (Croteau & Wolk, 2010).

Mentoring programs benefit succession and leadership development programs by establishing cultures of learning and employee investment. From personal experience, TPWD's professional development program is extensive and has many opportunities to expand their

management skills. However, there are no mentoring programs to assist employees with any personal growth. Mentoring is a well-established practice of linking senior and experienced managers and supervisors with junior and less experienced employees to establish relationships and learning and develop individual skills to achieve their professional goals (Kim, 2003). Mentoring programs provide benefits not only to the mentee but to the mentor as well. Recent literature begins to focus on the importance of implementing a mentoring opportunity in succession and leadership programs. (Phillips, Evans, Tooley, & Shirley, 2018; Gordon & Overbey, 2018).

Focused Individual Goals

Organizations must create the culture and structure necessary to embrace succession planning and leadership development. Needs assessments, professional development, and mentoring programs are essential steps for meeting employee goals. Organizations that implement needs assessments will be able to identify the goals and skills necessary for upward mobility. By identifying employee goals, development plans can be introduced to foster growth and advance their goals. Ultimately, employees must be accountable to their needs, and organizations must put in place the proper tools for employee success (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Kurec 2012).

For instance, TPWD has implemented a Task Book for Future Managers. Essentially this is a guidebook to follow to increase chances for advancement. The intent is to have a tool available but places the obligation on the employee to advance their career. Ultimately, TPWD employees have the opportunity to pick and choose their paths and decide on potential training opportunities to advance their careers.

Employees feel connected to their job or career based on compensation, loyalty, production, and the ability to develop their skills and knowledge base (Aamodt, 2013). An engaged employee will have a positive attitude and concentrate their state of mind to their work functionality (Aamodt, 2013; Davis, 2010). Thus, employee engagement leads to increased individual value resulting in a more effective organization. Organizations measure employee engagement in many ways.

Every two years TPWD conducts its Survey of Employee Engagement (SEE) designed to gauge employee feedback on a variety of issues related to job satisfaction, pay and benefits, employee development, supervisory relationships, and internal communication levels. From a management perspective, a high response rate in SEEs is a clear indication that employees are motivated to seek improvement and foster and support the overall mission and goals of the agency (TPWD SEE, 2018). The latest TPWD SEE had a more than 70 percent response rate. Additionally, not only is the objective of utilizing an extensive survey to measure the functional aspects of an organization but the goal is to focus on areas where there is less than a satisfying feeling the state of current affairs. From past SEE's, two glaring concerns among employees are compensation and frustration with Information Technology infrastructure (TPWD SEE, 2018). Both of which can be detrimental to agency growth and progress.

A vital component of any program will be employee evaluation. The evaluation process is the opportunity for managers to outline employee progress and potential improvements (Conger & Fulmer 2003, Kurec 2012). In most state agencies, evaluations are given annually and are the justification for salary increases or bonuses. However, if constructively applied, the evaluation process can provide employees with individual attention and the opportunity to

communicate with supervisors and management their overall career goals annually (Rothwell, 2010).

Extends to All Organizational Levels

Government organizations who focus on leadership development within their agencies will have a better chance to achieve their mission. Finding leaders and future managers from within their organizations is beneficial because employees will know agency policies and procedures, computer systems, and organizational structure and culture. Identifying employees early and establishing an organizational culture of succession and leadership development will allow employees the ability to articulate strengths and weaknesses when having to make critical decisions. The process begins with the executive-level staff, "one rung below with potential to advance, and the process will cycle down the chain of command" (Ley, 2002, p. 22). By focusing on a culture of promotion from within, an agency builds on developing employees at all levels of the organization.

Any efforts to implement succession planning and leadership development must have open communication to be successful and productive. Without open dialogue, there is potential for negative feelings to develop among employees who feel neglected or left out of potential growth and promotion opportunities. Senior-level management must be able to communicate to the entire organization that the implementation of succession planning is from the entry-level to the highest levels of the organizational chart (Atwood, 2007)

Although succession planning and leadership development are positive measures taken for organizations. If communication breaks down between senior-level management and the entire organization, a lack of understanding might breed contempt, alienation, or isolation because they perceive themselves as not being one of the handpicked favorites (Atwood, 2007).

To combat these feelings of possible dejection, managers and supervisors can focus on the individual and discuss their career trajectory within the agency, which will strengthen their feelings and not view succession planning as a possible ceiling instead of an opportunity.

Succession planning should not be just a human resources endeavor, but the entire agency must have buy-in and include a diverse segment of employees. All employees must have the opportunity to be involved and cannot be limited to current management or any other group. The result could turn into cliques forming, thus creating a rift between the “winners” and “losers.” Negative feelings build and will damage and stain any succession or leadership development program (Atwood, 2007).

Successful organizations and agencies begin and end with excellent communication, and managers must be engaged in succession planning and leadership development programs (Rothwell 2010). Open dialogue and discussion between employees, managers, and executives will lead to opportunities to identify potential on an on-going basis and make it part of the culture. Ideally, the employee career path and the succession plan will match when the opportunities come available.

Part of the Strategic Plan

All state agencies are required to have a strategic plan outlining their long-range planning and forecasts efficiently utilizing state resources to accomplish the agency mission and goals. Effective strategic plans pay specific attention to succession planning and leadership development. Without language in the strategic plan, management will miss an opportunity to emphasize the importance of providing personal and professional development for their employees. The inclusion of the program in the strategic plan also allows management the opportunity to share their vision with employees, state officials, and the legislature. The most

important thing to remember is that the succession and leadership development program correspond with one another and do not contradict the goals and mission of the agency (Rothwell 2010).

Most strategic plans will have a focus on employee or workforce planning, which allows management to determine mission-critical positions. Moreover, human resource departments can analyze personal data to make sure agency goals meet with the current number of employees.

Unique Public Sector Issues

Whitmore (2006) expanded on Ley's (2002) research by including issues affecting state agencies, such as compensation and a focus on a career path. Although Whitmore identifies Open Records as a potential "obstacle" facing state agencies, she does not prioritize it as one of the elements. Recent research indicates that transparency in government has escalated in importance as technological advances have made it easier for the public to access information.

Compensation and retention are the two most debilitating human resource issues facing state governments today. In recent years, turnover rates in state government have hovered around 15-18 percent mostly attributed to compensation. Perhaps with a robust succession and leadership development program in place, employees will be more likely to stay if they have growth and promotion opportunities. State hiring practices pose a significant obstacle to succession planning. When an agency can focus on the career path, rather than hiring for a specific position, agencies can better prepare employees through a long-term development process, which will positively meet both of their needs. Rather than focusing on one area, agencies can focus on the overall development process due to the strict hiring practices mandated by the legislature.

Table 2.1: Conceptual Framework Model

<p>Title: Case Study: Succession Planning and Leadership Development at Texas Parks and Wildlife</p> <p>Research Purpose: The purpose of this research is threefold. First, this research identifies the best practices and key elements of the ideal succession management and leadership development plan through a thorough review of the literature. Second, this research utilizes the practical ideal type characteristics to assess and gauge existing strategies for succession planning at Texas Parks and Wildlife. Finally, this research provides valuable recommendations to improve and implement a more defined succession plan at Texas Parks and Wildlife.</p>	
Practical Ideal Type Category	Sources
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Top Management Participation and Support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Commission, Executive Director, and Division Directors are responsible for determining succession plan standards and criteria 1.2 Once implemented senior management and staff are responsible for the implementation 	Collins, McKinnies, & Matthews, 2013; Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Harrell (2016); Phillips, Evans, Tooley, & Shirey (2018); Weisblat (2018)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Dedicated Responsibility <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Identify the Succession Plan and Leadership Development Coordinator 2.2 Utilize Systematic Approach 2.3 Implement Tracking System of Future Needs 	Conger & Fulmer (2003); Endres & Alexander, 2006; Harrell (2018); Kesler; Rothwell, 2010; Weisblat (2018)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Needs-Driven Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Identify external benchmarking related to other state agencies 3.2 Provide assessment of core competencies to determine gaps and needed skills 3.3 Identify Linchpin and Essential Positions 	Conger & Fulmer (2003); Holton, 2000; Kurec (2012); Rothwell (2010); Whitmore (2006)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Professional Development Opportunities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Summarize different types of Opportunities 4.2 Identify Career Paths 4.3 Develop and Implement Mentoring Programs 	Cavanaugh, 2017; Croteau & Wolk, 2010; Gaffney, 2008; Gordon & Overbey (2018); Kim, 2003; Phillips, Evans, Tooley, & Shirley (2018)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Focused Individual Attention <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Listen to Employee Goals 5.2 Individuals make training choices 5.3 Include Performance Evaluations 	Aamodt, 2013; Conger & Fulmer (2003); Davis, 2010; Kurec (2012), Rothwell, 2010; Texas Parks and Wildlife Survey Employment Engagement, 2018
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Extends to all Organizational Levels <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Identify talent all levels 6.2 Facilitate open communications and knowledge of the plan 	Atwood, 2007; Ley (2002); Rothwell (2010)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Part of Strategic Plan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1 The strategic plan identifies positions included in succession and leadership development plan 	Rothwell (2010); Conger & Fulmer (2003)

7.2 Written purpose statement and measurable goals	
8. Unique Public Sector Issues 8.1 Compensation of Public Employees 8.2 Focus on Career Path 8.3 Install Transparency Measures	Ley (2002); Whitmore (2006)

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to present and describe the methodology used to gather and evaluate the data collected relating to succession planning and leadership development at TPWD. A case study is the ideal research method for analyzing and examining the successes and failures of a particular policy or program. Agency meeting minutes, policies, strategic plans, and other documents were analyzed to investigate succession planning and leadership development at TPWD. Included in this chapter is information about the research setting, participants, document analysis and focused-interviews, research method strengths and weaknesses, procedure, and human subject protections. Also included in this chapter is the operationalization table of the conceptual framework.

Research Setting

In 1907, the legislature established the Game, Fish, and Oyster Commission to regulate recreational hunting and fishing and commercial fishing in Texas. Following the establishment of the National Park Service, the Texas legislature authorized the creation of the State Parks Board in 1923 to begin accepting land donations for eventual park development. Due to financial considerations, the Texas Game and Fish Commission merged with the State Parks Board in 1963 to establish the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

TPWD's mission and goal are to provide Texans with outdoor recreational opportunities, manage and protect fish and wildlife habitat, and is a steward of state parks and historic sites. As one of the larger state agencies, TPWD's appropriation for the 2018-2019 biennium was approximately \$740 million for all agency operations, deferred maintenance, capital expenditures, and law enforcement related items. Additionally, there are more than 3,200 full

and part-time employees who manage more than 1.4 million acres of land, including state parks, wildlife management areas, and fish hatcheries all around the state.

A nine-member, governor-appointed commission governs TPWD, responsible for adopting policies and rules in line with the core mission statement of all organizational programs and priorities. The executive director oversees the day-to-day operations. The operations consist of 13 divisions including Executive Office, Coastal Fisheries, Communications, Financial Resources, Human Resources, Information Technology, Infrastructure, Inland Fisheries, Law Enforcement, Legal, State Parks, Support Resources, and Wildlife. All divisions have a director responsible for servicing all geographical areas of the state and maintaining a direct and indirect customer service relationship with a diverse population of constituents.

Like many public organizations around Texas, TPWD is working to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. In 2018, TPWD had a workforce comprised of 35% Female, 65% Male, 21% Ethnic Minority, and 79% White. Turnover at state agencies continues to be one of the significant challenges faced by Texas governmental entities. TPWD's latest turnover rate was approximately 12% compared to 19% statewide. Retaining employees is a challenge for all state agencies as employees seek better pay and benefits, career advancement, better working conditions, and retirement all of which can be addressed by a robust succession planning and leadership development program.

Currently, TPWD focuses mainly on professional development opportunities such as training and classes in management, supervision, conflict resolution, and various other self-improvement programs. Additionally, each division in TPWD is treated separately and thus can choose to focus on building leaders or place emphasis elsewhere, which leads to inconsistencies within the agency. For instance, State Parks Division has developed a task book designed to be a

road map to prepare State Park Employees for the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for management positions.

Research Participants

The five research participants are executive and senior-level employees of TPWD. In particular, all are decision-makers who can influence the direction and implementation of succession planning and leadership development.

Operationalizing the Conceptual Framework

The operationalization table 3.1 includes the practical ideal type categories of the conceptual framework in the first column. The second column identifies the research method used to collect data on each practical ideal type category. The fourth column presents the evidence gathered from interviews and document analysis. The evidence will ascertain whether TPWD followed best practices (i.e., the practical ideal type) concerning succession planning initiatives.

Table 3.1 Operationalization of Conceptual Framework

Title: Case Study: Succession Planning and Leadership Development at Texas Parks and Wildlife			
Research Purpose: The purpose of this research is threefold. First, this research identifies the best practices and key elements of the ideal succession management and leadership development plan through a thorough review of the literature. Second, this research utilizes the practical ideal type characteristics to assess and gauge existing strategies for succession planning at Texas Parks and Wildlife. Finally, this research provides valuable recommendations to improve and implement a more defined succession plan at Texas Parks and Wildlife.			
Practical Ideal Type Categories	Research Method	Interview Questions/Document Source	Evidence
1. Top Management Participation and Support 1.1 Commission, Executive	Method: Document Analysis and Focused Interviews	Executive and Senior Level Management 1. Currently, what approach is TPWD taking	Evidence in archived documents of participation and support from Commission, Executive Director and

<p>Director, and Division Directors are responsible for determining succession plan standards and criteria</p> <p>1.2 Once implemented senior management and staff are responsible for the implementation</p>		<p>towards succession planning and leadership development?</p> <p>2. At what level is top management engaged in the process?</p> <p>3. What steps can management take toward implementing a program promoting leadership development and succession planning?</p> <p>Source: Commission meeting minutes dating back to 2014</p> <p>Source: TPWD Strategic Plan submitted to Governor’s Office</p>	<p>Division Directors; Evidence in interviews of policy implementation; Evidence in interviews and archived materials that TPWD has established programs promoting leadership development and succession planning.</p>
<p>2. Dedicated Responsibility</p> <p>2.1 Identify the Succession Plan and Leadership Development Coordinator</p> <p>2.2 Utilize Systematic Approach</p> <p>2.3 Implement Tracking System of Future Needs</p>	<p>Method: Focused Interviews</p>	<p>Executive and Senior Level Management</p> <p>1. Currently, who is the coordinator of leadership development at TPWD?</p> <p>2. Who would be the most appropriate to coordinate such a program?</p>	<p>Evidence in interviews of succession plan coordinator; Evidence in conversations of a systematic and cohesive approach to leadership development and succession planning; Evidence in interviews of implementation of a tracking system.</p>
<p>3. Needs Driven Assessment</p> <p>3.1 Identify external benchmarking related to other state agencies</p> <p>3.2 Provide assessment of core competencies to determine gaps and skills required</p>	<p>Method: Focused Interviews and Document Analysis</p>	<p>1. What positions would be considered “linchpin” positions?</p> <p>2. How have other state agencies addressed succession planning?</p> <p>3. What skills are the most important for a</p>	<p>Evidence in interviews of identification of "linchpin" positions; Evidence in interviews of the utilization of external benchmarking related to other state agencies; Evidence in interviews and document analysis of skills assessments and knowledge, skills, and abilities.</p>

<p>3.3 Identify Linchpin and Essential Positions</p>		<p>Superintendent to possess?</p> <p>4. How do you go about identifying future leaders and their potential?</p> <p>Source: Job Descriptions of critical positions</p>	
<p>4. Professional Development Opportunities</p> <p>4.1 Summarize different types of Opportunities</p> <p>4.2 Identify Career Paths</p> <p>4.3 Develop and Implement Mentoring Programs</p>	<p>Method: Focused Interviews and Document Analysis</p>	<p>Executive and Senior Level Management</p> <p>1. How does HR evaluate current professional development opportunities?</p> <p>Source: Survey of Employee Engagement</p> <p>Source: TPWD Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Evidence in interviews on evaluating current professional development opportunities; Evidence in utilizing the TPWD Survey of Employee Engagement (Survey already conducted by TPWD on an annual basis); Evidence in interviews and document analysis to determine the feasibility and establishment of mentoring programs</p>
<p>5. Focused Individual Attention</p> <p>5.1 Listen to Employee Goals</p> <p>5.2 Individuals make training choices</p> <p>5.3 Include Performance Evaluations</p>	<p>Method: Focused Interviews and Document Analysis</p>	<p>Executive and Senior Level Management</p> <p>1. How successful has the Survey of Employee Engagement been to implementing suggestions?</p> <p>2. What criteria are identified in performance evaluations?</p> <p>3. How much autonomy do employees have in determining the training opportunities they can attend?</p> <p>Source: Survey of Employee Engagement</p> <p>Source: Employee Evaluations</p>	<p>Evidence in interviews and document analysis of implementing employee suggestions; Evidence in interviews and document analysis of performance evaluations and the criteria used to assess employee performance; Evidence and document analysis of choices in training autonomy.</p>

<p>6. Extends to all Organizational Levels</p> <p>6.1 Identify talent at all levels</p> <p>6.2 Facilitate open communications and knowledge of the plan</p>	<p>Method: Focused Interviews and Document Analysis</p>	<p>Executive and Senior Level Management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you explain the level of participation in succession planning at all levels? 2. How are succession planning and leadership development communicated to employees? <p>Source: Survey of Employee Engagement</p>	<p>Evidence in interviews and document analysis of participations of leadership development and succession planning at all levels; Evidence in interviews and document analysis of how well leadership development and succession planning is communicated to employees. Evidence in interviews and document analysis of participations of leadership development and succession planning at all levels; Evidence in interviews and document analysis of how well leadership development and succession planning is communicated to employees.</p>
<p>7. Part of Strategic Plan</p> <p>7.1 The strategic plan identifies positions to be included in succession and leadership development plan</p> <p>7.2 Written purpose statement and measurable goals</p>	<p>Method: Document Analysis</p>	<p>Source: TPWD Strategic Planning</p> <p>Source: TPWD Policy</p>	<p>Evidence in document analysis of policy and strategic plan identifying positions to be included in the leadership development plan; Evidence in document analysis of a written purpose statement and identifying measurable goals</p>
<p>8. Unique Public Sector Issues</p> <p>8.1 Compensation of Public Employees</p> <p>8.2 Focus on Career Path</p> <p>8.3 Install Transparency Measures</p>	<p>Method: Focused Interviews</p>	<p>Executive and Senior Level Management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the challenges associated with implementing a succession and leadership development plan? 2. Can you outline how open records might 	<p>Evidence in interviews of challenges associated with the implementation of leadership development and succession plan; Evidence in discussions of the implications of open records requests can affect the leadership development and succession plan positively and</p>

		<p>affect a succession and leadership program? Negatively or Positively?</p> <p>3. How do you believe retention problems can be solved?</p>	<p>negatively; Evidence in interviews of transparency creating a culture of accountability.</p>
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Case Study

Following a thorough examination of the literature, document analysis, and conducting interviews, case study research is the most appropriate method to offer recommendations on improvement and implementation of a succession planning and leadership development plan. Case study research is advantageous because of the flexibility of using several different research methodologies such as focus groups, interviews, archival and document analysis, observation, and surveys (Shield and Rangarajan, 2013). Multiple methods provide the researcher with in-depth content and data, allowing for a more complete and accurate analysis of the overall subject matter. Additionally, case studies are performed in natural settings or within real-life day-to-day applications of complex policies and issues without any manipulation of variables attempting to control the outcome (Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011).

Despite the case study method being ideal for this particular style of research, this method has specific weaknesses. Many argue that single case studies do not provide for a broader, more generalized or macro conclusions to be formed (Yin, 2009). Besides, researchers are critical due to the notion of bias in the research from premature and preconceived notions contaminating the research. Case study research depends on qualitative rather than quantitative analysis posing problems with the quantity of data collected and less established practices associated with non-experimental research (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998). No matter how

valid the criticisms of case study research, this particular study will examine and make recommendations as part of the overall process.

Document Analysis

Analyzing and interpreting documents related to the assessment topic is a valuable form of qualitative research (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis is efficient, manageable, accessible, reliable, and timely.

Before document analysis occurs, the researcher should consider two issues – bias and latent content of the document. The subjectivity of the author may lead to biased interpretation of information from records. Therefore, the researcher must evaluate the intent and purpose of the document (Bowen, 2009). Next in determining bias is latent content, which is style, tone, agenda, and facts, which exist in the document. All forms of document analysis include asking pertinent questions of the material related to the subject matter. Most importantly, the researcher can analyze the text. Potential limitations or concerns related to document analysis include misleading or inaccurate information, small amounts of useful data, limited document accessibility, and reliability (O'Leary, 2014).

Following a cursory examination of the relevant documents at TPWD, the available materials were sufficient to perform a thorough analysis and case study. Documents reviewed are agency strategic plans, commission meeting minutes, division program plans, human resource documentation, State Parks Manager Task Book, and various background documents.

Focused Interviews

Focused interviews will explain conflicting information from document analysis and gain more data. The interviewees included five executive and senior-level staff members. All interviewees provided insight into the agency's level of priority for succession planning and

leadership development. Interviews are often the primary data collected in case studies. In this particular case study, interviews with high-level management are of high importance. Also, the focused interviews will allow the interviewees to expand on any issues or provide clarification for roadblocks. Their insights can be invaluable, but at the same time, they can have weaknesses as well. The subject matter could be sensitive, answers guarded or imprecise, and possibly inaccurate information provided. Overall, the operationalization table and the practical ideal type determined the questions.

Research Procedure

TPWD granted preliminary approval in November 2018 through email. Formal permission was made official on June 2019. Document analysis and interviews were the primary sources of research performed. Interviews were conducted in person and at TPWD Headquarters located in Austin, Texas. All interviewees signed consent documents.

Human Subjects Protection

Case Study: Succession Planning and Leadership Development at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department approved by the Texas State Institutional Review Board (6602) on June 2019. Focused interviews were the primary data source used in this case study. There were no reasonable risks or discomforts to the subjects, as all the interviewees volunteered to participate in the study. Furthermore, the interviews did not pertain to sensitive information. However, the interviewees are anonymous and identified throughout the study, not by name or title, but as an executive or senior-level manager. Participation in this study was strictly voluntary. Any questions or concerns about the focused interviews should be directed to Jason Walker, Assistant Superintendent, Garner State Park, State Parks Division, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by email at jason.walker@tpwd.texas.gov.

Chapter Summary

The case study methodology consists of the collection, analysis, and evaluation of policies, regulations, or programs. Document analysis and focused interviews were the most appropriate because they provided accurate and pertinent information related to the agency and high-level access to decision maker's interpretation, thoughts, and assessments of policies on succession planning and leadership development. The next chapter will summarize the analysis of the data sources into a coherent approach to providing suggestions and improvement to the existing process for building a more robust developmental program at TPWD.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to assess and to report the data collected relating to succession planning and leadership development at TPWD. Each section of this chapter presented an analysis of the practical ideal categories through document analysis and focused interviews. A summary table at the end of each category discussion describes the findings.

Top Management Participation and Support

Top management participation and support of any public or private organization is key to successfully implementing a succession planning and leadership development program. Without their help, any effort to establish a robust plan will inevitably fail. Evidence shows support and acknowledgment of the importance of recognizing the need and the establishment of a succession planning and leadership development program. However, TPWD has no formal plan. Although, specific elements have been established and are currently in the planning process such as the mentorship program.

Document Analysis. TPWD Commission meeting minutes and the 2017 – 2021 and 2019 – 2023 agency strategic plans, indicated agency support, program establishment, and adoption. Prominently featured in the last two strategic plans, succession planning and leadership development took on greater importance, due to turnover, retention, an aging workforce, and attrition. The need to focus on succession planning is key to sustaining a vibrant and engaged workforce. Recruitment is a crucial element, but leadership development is critical at all levels due to key executives and management eligible to retire. To further develop leaders, TPWD established programs designed to assist with leadership development.

Successful First-Line Management (SFLM) is a program designed to introduce new mid-level supervisors and managers to an educational opportunity to help align agency goals with the

day-to-day operations of TPWD. Additionally, SFLM provides first-time supervisors and managers with the tools necessary to face many of the challenges of managing a diverse workforce in unique geographical settings. Senior Leadership Development Program (SLDP) is a formal program designed to develop leadership qualities in senior-level and executive-level employees. TPWD participates in the Governor's Executive Development Program and Governor's Center for Management Development at the University of Texas LBJ School for Public Affairs.

Focused Interviews. Five interviews were conducted to elicit information about top management participation and support. Interviews with senior-level executives show support from the executive director to the chief operating officer to division and regional directors. All interviewees pointed to several programs being established from SFLM to SLDP to the initiatives set up through the governor's leadership programs. Interestingly, many interviewees mentioned their efforts to develop leaders through leadership programs with specific professional advocacy associations and organizations such as the National Association of State Parks Directors and the National Conservation Leadership Institute.

The results of the document analysis and focused interviews are outlined and summarized in Table 4.1. Results show there is high-level support from the TPWD Commission and executive and senior-level staff. However, TPWD has not yet implemented. Although there are many challenges to implementation, TPWD is proactive in providing leadership programs to potential and current leaders through professional development offered through their agency efforts to state and national educational opportunities. Finally, TPWD intends to be transformative in its approach to succession and leadership development by becoming a model for public organizations around the state and the nation.

Table 4.1: Top Management Participation and Support - Results

Practical Ideal Type Category	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
<p>Top Management Participation and Support</p> <p>1.1 Commission, Executive Director, and Division Directors are responsible for determining succession plan standards and criteria</p> <p>1.2 Once implemented senior management and staff are responsible for the implementation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence in archived documents of participation and support from Commission, Executive Director and Division Directors 2. Evidence in interviews of policy implementation 3. Evidence in interviews and archived documents that TPWD has established programs promoting leadership development and succession planning. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence shows support and acknowledgment of the importance 2. Evidence shows implementation has been limited 3. Evidence shows program establishment.

Dedicated Responsibility

Successful succession planning and leadership development programs in the private and public sectors tend to have a dedicated coordinator responsible for overseeing and oversight of the implementation, budget, tracking benchmarks and metrics and meeting overall goals as they align with the organizational mission. Focused interviews show there is a TPWD designated coordinator with responsibilities related to leadership development within Human Resources (HR); however, there is no one specific dedicated employee to succession planning. Additionally, evidence shows a limited approach and no evidence of a formalized tracking system.

Focused Interviews. Fiver interviews were conducted to obtain information about dedicated responsibility. All interviewees believed there should be a specialized position. However, many believed there needs to be a culture developed that articulates the necessities of the program, which starts with organizational leadership with a long-term sustained emphasis on succession planning. Available resources are scarce throughout TPWD, which is a lean organization where employees have many different roles within their functional job descriptions.

Within HR, there are three people assigned to training and leadership development for an agency with more than 3,200 employees. As a result, leveraging resources between divisions is key to many successful programs within TPWD.

Some senior-level staff commented on the need for division-specific succession planning and leadership development models. TPWD has a widespread and diverse mission with many specialized positions, and it would be challenging to have a generic one-size-fits-all agency program. Instead, division directors collaborate with HR to tailor a specific plan geared to their specialization. Although in their estimation, HR would play a vital role in the messaging and branding of a program due to their credibility, status, and function within the agency.

The results of the focused interviews are outlined and summarized in Table 4.2. The evidence shows a designated coordinator for leadership development; however, there is no evidence to support an employee assigned to succession planning. Due to the limited amount of resources, any cohesive and systematic approach to succession planning is non-existent. TPWD does track its leadership development program by utilizing surveys and questionnaires.

Table 4.2: Dedicated Responsibility - Results

Practical Ideal Type Category	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
Dedicated Responsibility 2.4 Identify the Succession Plan and Leadership Development Coordinator 2.5 Utilize Systematic Approach 2.6 Implement Tracking System of Future Needs	1. Evidence in interviews of succession plan coordinator 2. Evidence in interviews of a systematic and cohesive approach to leadership development and succession planning 3. Evidence in interviews of implementation of a tracking system.	1. Evidence shows there is a leadership development coordinator, but no succession planning coordinator. 2. Evidence shows no systematic approach to succession planning 3. Evidence shows no tracking system.

Needs Driven Assessment

The ideal succession planning and leadership development program will be a systematic approach to building a "pipeline" so talented employees can be identified from within the organization to compete for mission-critical positions or "linchpin" as defined previously in the literature review. Focused interviews reveal team leads, program specialists, supervisors, and managers provide stability, support, and dedication to day-to-day operations. Specifically, positions such as park superintendent, hatchery supervisor, district biologist, and lieutenants are just a few examples of jobs accomplishing TPWD's mission in the field. Focused interviews show there has been no effort to reach out to other state agencies to gather relevant information on efforts to address retention or employee retirement issues.

Focused Interviews. Five interviews were conducted to elicit information about needs driven assessment. Interviewees spoke of the importance of "linchpin" positions as those that impact all levels of day-to-day operations at the division level. For example, the park superintendent is a "linchpin" position according to the interviewees. However, one interviewee brought up the evolution the parks division has undergone in park management from a law enforcement emphasis to an interpretive focus. For example, twenty years ago, to advance into park management positions, an individual had to be a park police officer. Thus, many jobs were vital positions (Office Manager, Lead Ranger, or Park Interpreter) were not given proper consideration for advancement opportunities. Currently, the law enforcement component is no longer a requirement for advancement in State Parks. Rather, State Parks has expanded the field to include park interpreters who have a foundation in the conservation and stewardship of our natural and cultural resources. As one interviewee called park interpreters, "the best farm team we have."

External benchmarking of other state agency practices is an essential part of implementing a succession planning and leadership development program. All interviewees knew of no effort by TPWD to reach out to other organizations to facilitate a dialogue on best practices as related to succession planning and leadership development. Several interviewees commented on the unpredictability and volatile nature of government and political elections intertwining. The result can lead to a change in executive leadership, altering the direction and mission of government agencies at all levels of government every election cycle. TPWD has been fortunate to have guidance at the executive and commission level who have provided needed stability over ten to twelve years with no significant changes. Several interviewees believed the reason for stability at TPWD is the mission and goals of the agency, which embodies the passion toward stewardship of the state's natural and cultural resources.

TPWD's core value of stewardship links employee satisfaction in creating a work environment based on stability. All the interviewees, when asked what they look for in future leaders – all said alignment with the mission and goals of stewardship and conservation. Leaders are the model for the agency goals; without it, there can be no credibility, and as one interview said, "without credibility, you will not be able to influence."

Document Analysis. Document analysis included studying job descriptions of "linchpin" positions. Many of the "linchpin" positions required specific expertise, but most require the ability to lead or supervise employees. The job descriptions all featured the goal of resource stewardship.

The results of the focused interviews and document analysis are outlined and summarized in Table 4.3. The evidence shows that supervisory and mid-management positions within TPWD are considered "linchpin" positions. No effort by TPWD has been made to provide

external benchmarking and collaboration with other state agencies or similar organizations. Job descriptions are a good starting point to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform many of the critical positions essential to advance at TPWD.

Table 4.3: Needs Driven Assessment – Results

Practical Ideal Type Category	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
Needs Driven Assessment 3.4 Identify external benchmarking related to other state agencies 3.5 Provide assessment of core competencies to determine gaps and skills required 3.6 Identify Linchpin and Essential Positions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence in interviews of identification of “linchpin” positions 2. Evidence in discussions of the utilization of external benchmarking related to other state agencies 3. Evidence in interviews and document analysis of skills assessments and knowledge, skills, and abilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence shows supervisory and middle management to be considered “linchpin” positions within TPWD. 2. Evidence shows no knowledge of other state agencies utilizing succession planning. Also, TPWD has not reached out to other state agencies. 3. Evidence shows position descriptions reflect the complexities, knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform a job.

Professional Development Opportunities

The professional development program at TPWD is extensive and provides employees with opportunities to learn new skills and enhance and improve their current knowledge and abilities. Focused interviews and document analysis reveal a concerted effort by senior-level staff to encourage all staff at all levels to engage and take advantage of the vast opportunities available to them for growth. Mentoring programs can be the most valuable asset an organization can utilize when developing talented employees into influential leaders. TPWD is in the development stages of formalizing a more robust mentoring program.

Focused Interviews. Five interviews were conducted to elicit information about professional development opportunities. TPWD lays out criteria for each professional development program, which utilizes participant feedback to help determine ways to improve.

Participant feedback has been the most productive format to evaluate program success. However, a tracking system should be implemented to track the career success of program participants. For example, employees who have participated in SFLM, as one interviewee mentioned, their careers need to be monitored and revisited every so often to evaluate the success or failure of their progression. Of course, there is always a caveat; success is relative and distinct to the individual employee. Improved technologies bring about the opportunity to evolve and not just evaluate based on numbers, but to use non-traditional metrics to measure the success of a particular professional development program.

All interviewees believed mentoring to be one of the most important aspects of any succession planning and leadership development program. Private companies are leaders in providing mentoring programs. TPWD is currently in the process of implementing a mentoring program.

Document Analysis. TPWD Strategic Plan, 2019-2023 outlines explicitly the establishment of a mentoring program beginning with new managers partnering with "established" managers in a pilot program. The pilot program will be the bridge to the creation of a more robust mentoring initiative. The goal is to encompass a wide range of agency employees to build a foundation for professional growth.

The results of the focused interviews and document analysis are outlined and summarized in Table 4.4. Evidence shows that TPWD is currently utilizing a feedback process to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development opportunities, although a more robust tracking system could be used to determine the overall efficiency of the professional development opportunities. A formalized mentoring program is in the process of being established and implemented on an agency-wide scale. The availability of supervisors and new managers to

participate in a mentoring program will be a monumental shift in developing future leaders in a positive direction. By creating a dedicated individual to assist with the development of a future leader will help the individual grow into an effective leader but will enhance the overall agency mission.

Table 4.4: Professional Development Opportunities – Results

Practical Ideal Type Category	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
Professional Development Opportunities 4.4 Summarize different types of Opportunities 4.5 Identify Career Paths 4.6 Develop and Implement Mentoring Programs	1. Evidence in interviews on evaluating current professional development opportunities 2. Evidence in interviews and document analysis to determine the feasibility and establishment of mentoring programs	1. Evidence supports a feedback process is currently utilized to evaluate professional development opportunities. 2. Evidence shows the implementation of an agency-wide task force designed to establish and launch a mentoring program.

Focused Individual Attention

Successful succession planning and leadership development programs depend on open dialogue and communication between employees and supervisors and managers. Employee ambitions and goals should be discussed freely with a well-defined execution plan developed to reach and attain those aspirations. Plans must include the flexibility for the employee to develop their skills in a manner, which will take them beyond their current position. Every effort must be made by the current supervisor and management to meet those individual needs for personal and professional growth.

Focused Interviews. Five interviews were conducted to acquire information about focused-individual attention. Due to a lack of experienced individuals ready to step into park superintendent roles, State Parks created the Managers Task Book or a roadmap to assist employees in meeting specific criteria required in performing the role of a park superintendent.

Additionally, the park's operation trainee was created to help facilitate a formal developmental program. Both the task book and the park ops trainee program rely on individual initiative, and employees are empowered to take control over their destiny and allow employees to grow and reach beyond their regular duties and grow professionally.

Document Analysis. The Survey of Employee Engagement (SEE) is a fundamental tool for senior-level staff to engage employees with their impression of how well the agency is performing in several categories. Executive-level staff place a high priority on the implementation of suggestions. For example, in the recent Legislative Appropriation Request (86th Legislative Session), TPWD had an exceptional item request related to employee salary increases. The salary increases were directly related to suggestions from the SEE. Following the evaluation of the SEE, each division director develops a plan of how to implement recommendations. A direct result of the SEE is the creation of the Workplace Culture Committee. The goal is to operationalize diversity and inclusion into all aspects of the agency and divisions. One of the essential elements of the SEE is the utilization of focus groups throughout various regions of the state. As a result of the SEE, division action plans were developed and are published to the TPWD intranet for employees to understand the direction of the agency.

The results of focused interviews and document analysis related to Focus Individual Attention are outlined and summarized in Table 4.5. Evidence strongly supports an agency-wide effort to implement suggestions from the SEE. Transparency is a crucial component of employee trust, so division action plans have been placed on the agency intranet for all employees to access. Evidence supports the ability for an employee to choose their destiny in determining their path to success within TPWD.

Table 4.5: Focused Individual Attention – Results

Practical Ideal Type Category	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
Focused Individual Attention 5.4 Listen to Employee Goals 5.5 Individuals make training choices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence in interviews and document analysis in utilizing the TPWD Survey of Employee Engagement, including implementing employee suggestions in the SEE. 2. Evidence and document analysis of choices in training autonomy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence supports an agency-wide effort to implement suggestions beginning with the executive director's influence on prioritizing and implementing recommendations. 2. Evidence shows the support of employees choosing their training path.

Extends to all Organizational Levels

Open, transparent, and accessible defines any succession planning and leadership development program. Credible programs are eligible to all employees and publicized openly and vociferously. Policies to promote from within provide employees with incentive and motivation to pursue their career goals without feeling held back. Communication to all employees regarding training and opportunities to promote is vital to a sustaining employee buy-in at all levels of the organization.

Focused Interviews. Five interviews were conducted to attain information about extends to all organizational levels. Several interviewees mentioned how they can do better communicating the idea of promotion and that leadership development is available to all employees. One interviewee believed many employees do not have the feeling that they can promote and they are stuck in their current situation, which can be challenging if they are in a case where there is a well-established individual in a position for a long time and jobs are not readily available. Frustration can set in and moving to another location impedes promotion.

Document Analysis. The SEE is a good indicator of employee feelings toward larger items such as communication. According to the SEE, employee and supervisor engagement is fair. However, internal communications are lacking and can be improved.

The results of the document analysis and the focused interviews are in Table 4.6. Evidence shows that efforts can be improved by senior-level management to better communicate with all TPWD employees that promotion is available and is encouraged to pursue. Evidence in the SEE shows that supervisors can better relate to employees all of their promotion opportunities, including internal communications as well.

Table 4.6: Extends to all Organizational Levels – Results

Practical Ideal Type Category	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
Extends to all Organizational Levels 6.3 Identify talent at all levels 6.4 Facilitate open communications and knowledge of the plan	1. Evidence in interviews and document analysis shows participation at all levels. 2. Evidence in interviews and document analysis of how well succession planning and leadership development communicated to employees.	1. Evidence shows a limited effort to include all employees in the process 2. Evidence shows communication between employees and supervisors, and the manager is fair. However, internal communication can be improved. Thus, it extends to senior-level management for not prioritizing.

Part of Strategic Plan

Successful succession planning and leadership development programs usually appear in an agency strategic plan. The inclusion of succession planning allows management the opportunity to share their vision with employees, but also with state-appointed and elected officials, including the legislature. Most importantly, the program and agency mission align.

Document Analysis. The 2019-2023 TPWD Strategic Plan is a comprehensive document designed to outline the goals and the action plans of the agency. Every biennium each

state agency will assess and reassess their agency goals and action plans and submit their strategic plan to the Office of the Governor and the Legislative Budget Board as part of the budgeting process. The last two TPWD strategic plans mention leadership development; however, they do not go into great detail regarding specific positions marked as critical to performing the day-to-day operations of the agency.

The results of the document analysis related to the agency's strategic plan are located below in Table 4.7. The study shows there is a guide to the development of an agency/division effort to establish a formal program, but there are no specific positions to be included in the effort. Evidence shows no official policy or written goals regarding succession planning and leadership development.

Table 4.7: Part of Strategic Plan – Results

Practical Ideal Type Category	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
Part of Strategic Plan 7.3 The strategic plan identifies positions to be included in succession and leadership development plan 7.4 Written purpose statement and measurable goals	1. Evidence in document analysis of policy and strategic plan identifying positions to be included in the leadership development plan 2. Evidence in document analysis of a written purpose statement and identifying measurable goals	1. Evidence shows a roadmap to the development of an agency/division-wide effort, but no identifiable positions are included. 2. Evidence shows no formal policy with written goals.

Unique Public Sector Issues

Public organizations such as state agencies are unique and face their own set of challenges. Compensation, recruitment, retention, public scrutiny, and diversity and inclusion are challenges faced by governmental entities. Succession planning and leadership development programs need to be clearly defined, well documented, and transparent. Career paths can be

essential tools focusing on institutional knowledge and skill development rather than calling attention to individuals.

Focused Interviews. Five interviews were conducted to collect information about unique public sector issues. Several interviewees focused on recruitment and retention in their comments regarding challenges faced by TPWD. TPWD's goal is to build a body of opportunities to include work experiences for employees to grow and excel in their careers. TPWD faces a geographical challenge related to the dispersed nature of the organization in small rural markets, which makes it challenging to recruit and retain valuable employees.

All interviewees mentioned compensation as the biggest challenge and barrier to retaining valuable talent for the future, which is not unique to TPWD. The problem then is how to distinguish oneself from all the other organizations competing for the same talent. TPWD has a distinct mission of improving lifestyle through outdoor recreation.

The results of the focused interviews related to unique public sector issues are in Table 4.8. Evidence shows the many challenges associated with the implementation of succession planning and leadership development. Analysis of interviews reveals that accountability and transparency of programs will bring credibility and integrity, which will sustain the program over time.

Table 4.8: Unique Public Sector Issues – Results

Practical Ideal Type Categories	Evidence Sought	Evidence Observed
Unique Public Sector Issues 8.4 Compensation of Public Employees 8.5 Focus on Career Path 8.6 Install Transparency Measures	1. Evidence in interviews of challenges associated with the implementation of leadership development and succession plan 2. Evidence in interviews of transparency, creating a culture of accountability.	1. Evidence shows the numerous challenges associated with the implementation 2. Evidence shows support and necessity of accountability in a successful program

Chapter Summary

TPWD's succession planning and leadership development program is assessed on the practical ideal type framework developed through literature review. Focused interviews and document analysis confirm the evidence supporting the evaluation process. The results suggest that TPWD recognizes the importance of establishing a robust succession planning program; however, they lack the resources necessary to implement a robust program fully. TPWD's leadership development efforts continue to expand opportunities for employees to enhance their supervisory and management skills. Therefore, TPWD can improve its efforts to develop talent by combining their leadership development program with succession planning. Thus, creating a more focused and robust system. The next chapter will provide recommendations and suggestions aimed at improving TPWD's effort based on this case study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results and make recommendations intended to improve and prioritize TPWD's succession planning and leadership development program. Additionally, this chapter will include research contributions and limitations and possible suggestions on any potential research.

Findings and Recommendations

Following an in-depth analysis of all data collected, TPWD Commissioners and executive and senior-level staff support efforts to create a succession planning program. Whereas, currently, a well-established leadership development program exists. Elements are in place to combine the efforts into a comprehensive and cohesive system designed to develop a pipeline of future leaders ready to step into supervisory and managerial roles without disruption of day-to-day operations.

The current trend of limited resources among most governmental agencies at the municipal, county, and state levels requires staff and management to overextend their current capabilities. Through no fault of staff or management, many operational endeavors become neglected because financial resources and discretionary energy lag behind the normal agency functions such as developing a "deep bench" of prepared supervisors and managers. TPWD offers numerous opportunities to employees for career growth through extensive professional development possibilities. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. Initiate a formal agency-wide plan by integrating succession planning into the leadership development program supported and prioritized by TPWD Commission and Executive Director;
2. Create a dedicated position to coordinate and monitor succession planning;

3. Integrate succession planning into the leadership development program by establishing a more cohesive and systematic system approach;
4. Implement a tracking system designed to monitor internal and external benchmarking and metrics related to other state agencies and TPWD employee growth;
5. Mentoring program needs to be prioritized as essential to leadership growth and launched as soon as possible;
6. Expand efforts to make employees feel engaged and included in the promotion and career advancement process through developing a transparent system open to all employees;
7. Improve communication related to available promotion opportunities between employee and supervisor and manager; and
8. Identify specific positions to be included in the program and outlined in the agency's strategic plan.

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Research

This research was specific to succession planning and leadership development at TPWD; however, the literature review updated past research with relevant and current data from industry-wide journals and secondary sources. The specificity to one single agency does have limitations, but the practical ideal framework model provides application possibilities to future case studies of any public or private organization.

The most useful information from this case study came from the focused interviews with executive and senior-level staff because they provided valuable, candid, and truthful insights into the decision-making process about succession planning. Despite the honest feedback provided by the interviewees, one limitation to an analysis of governmental organizations will always be

biased responses from the research participants. Although there were different levels of bias demonstrated by the participants and the tendency to take a positive viewpoint, the participants invariably took ownership and responsibility for any failings or shortcomings in their processes. The totality of the research and contributions of the participants contributed to a better understanding of TPWD's approach to succession planning and leadership development.

Conclusion

Overall, TPWD has taken the necessary steps to implement a full-scale approach to succession planning. Prioritizing and setting goals toward execution will help push the focus toward creating a more systematic, formal, and legitimate system. By including succession planning into the leadership development program, TPWD would create an innovative approach addressing many of the relevant issues plaguing public organizations such as an aging workforce, retention, attrition, compensation, inclusion, and other relevant issues. Resulting in the creation of a vibrant, diverse, and dynamic workforce ready to lead TPWD over the next generations.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



In future correspondence please refer to 6602

June 25, 2019

Jason Walters
Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666

Dear Jason:

Your IRB application titled "Succession Planning and Leadership Development at Texas Parks and Wildlife" was reviewed and approved by the Texas State University IRB. It has been determined that risks to subjects are: (1) minimized and reasonable; and that (2) research procedures are consistent with a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. Reviewers determined that: (1) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (2) selection of subjects is equitable; and (3) the purposes of the research and the research setting is amenable to subjects' welfare and producing desired outcomes; that indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and that participation is clearly voluntary.

1. In addition, the IRB found that you need to orient participants as follows: (1) informed consent is required; (2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data; (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects. (4) Compensation is not provided for participation.

**This project is therefore approved at the Exempt Review Level
Category 2 Surveys, Interviews, or Public observation**

2. Please note that the institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval. If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments, please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subjects review, your application, and this approval, are maintained in the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance.

Report any changes to this approved protocol to this office. All unanticipated events and adverse events are to be reported to the IRB within 3 days.

Sincerely,

Monica Gonzales
IRB Specialist
Office of Research Integrity and Compliance

CC: Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan

OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
601 University Drive | JCK #489 | San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616
Phone: 512.245.2314 | fax: 512.245.3847 | WWW.TXSTATE.EDU

This letter is an electronic communication from Texas State University-San Marcos, a member of The Texas State University System.

Appendix B: IRB Consent Form



INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Case Study: Succession Planning and Leadership Development at Texas Parks and Wildlife

Principal Investigator: Jason Walker

Co-Investigator/Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nandhini Rangarajan

Email: jw1236@txstate.edu

Email: nr11@txstate.edu

Phone: (512) 626-4443

Phone: (512) 245-3285

Sponsor: N/A

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this research study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate as well as any known risks, inconveniences or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to ask questions at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and it will be a record of your agreement to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn more about succession planning and leadership development at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). The information gathered will be used to examine, analyze, and make recommendations on the current and future practices of TPWD's approach to succession planning and leadership development. You are being asked to participate because you are a senior-level manager and director within the organization and have influence over policy decisions.

PROCEDURES

1. Sample language

If you agree to be in this study, you will participate in the following:

- 45 minute interview about current and future practices related to succession planning and leadership development

We will set up a time for you to meet one of the investigators at your office for convenience.

2. Sample language for interview:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in one interview: TBA. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes. During the interviews, you will be asked several questions related to TPWD practices related to succession planning and leadership development. The interview will be audio-recorded and the researcher may take notes as well.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

In the event that some of the survey or interview questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are always free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at any time.

BENEFITS/ALTERNATIVES

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you

Appendix C: Texas Parks and Wildlife Approval Letter



Life's better outside.®

Commissioners

Ralph H. Duggins
Chairman
Fort Worth

S. Reed Norton
Vice-Chairman
Houston

and "Beaver" Akin, III
Lake Jackson

Olyar J. Bell
Cleveland

Anna B. Gatu
Laredo

John W. Lattimer
San Antonio

James P. Lee
Houston

Dick Scott
Wimberley

Kelcy L. Warren
Dallas

Lee W. Bass
Chairman-Emeritus
Fort Worth

T. Dan Friedkin
Chairman-Emeritus
Houston

Carter P. Smith
Executive Director

June 3, 2019

Mr. Jason Walker
202 E. 7th
Taylor, Texas 76574

Dear Jason:

Thank you for your recent request for approval of your thesis/case study on Succession Planning and Leadership Development at Texas Parks and Wildlife. Succession planning and leadership development are critically important for any organization to grow and to stay relevant in today's competitive marketplace. TPWD offers many opportunities for advancement, career growth, and upward mobility within our agency.

We as an organization recognize the benefits and value of succession planning and leadership development within our most recent strategic plan. Please accept this letter as approval for your request.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd McClanahan".

Todd McClanahan
Region 3, Director
State Parks Division

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To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.