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Succession Planning: Developing Future Fire Service Leaders

Paul E. Ricci

Sandusky Fire Department

Sandusky, Ohio

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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

Signed: _____

Abstract

The Sandusky Fire Department does not have a succession plan to develop fire service leadership creating the absence of continuity in incident management and safety philosophy thus increasing the risk of firefighter injury and property loss. The purpose of this research is to identify the elements of succession planning, review the Sandusky Fire Departments' approach to developing leadership and to create an improvement guide for succession planning. Descriptive methodology was used to identify elements of succession planning and historical aspects of candidate selection. An action methodology was used to create an improvement guide for developing a fire department succession plan. Research was conducted to (1) identify elements of a succession plan and how they relate to firefighter injury and property loss (2) identify what elements of succession planning were promoted by the Sandusky Fire Department and do they support the mission of the department (3) determine how and when to implement a succession plan within the Sandusky Fire Department. A literature review of public and private sector journals was conducted to answer the research questions. A questionnaire was distributed to identify historical data of candidate selection. The results identified five major elements of succession planning. Each element correlated to the reduction of firefighter injury and property loss. The research revealed very few departments had succession plans. The results also indicated many departments do not find succession planning to be a high priority in the organizational planning process. Recommendations include: developing a succession planning process that identifies competencies, provides mentoring and educational opportunities and assesses the candidates' commitment to the organizational. A committee approach should be used to assist in the development of a succession planning process that provides for the successful transition of leadership within the Sandusky Fire Department.

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Introduction

The concept of succession planning in the Sandusky Fire Department is a new one. The elements of succession planning, however, have been around for many years within the private business sector. The business community learned long ago that their success and survival in the corporate world depended on a systematic approach for developing the future leaders of the organization. Those organizations that chose successors, based solely on nepotism or favoritism, experienced failure and collapse. The business community developed models for succession planning that identified characteristics and competencies necessary for success. They realized the value of developing internal candidate pools through education and mentoring programs. They also realized the need to utilize external candidate pools when the organization needed outside solutions.

The Sandusky Fire Department, too, realized failures in the traditional test-only means of selecting future leaders. Because history perpetuates the failures of today and tomorrow, the fire department adopted non-traditional assessment selection processes that not only assessed general fire service knowledge, strategies and tactics but also assessed problem solving skills and abilities. Mentoring, although not formal in many organizations, was a part of the experiential learning within the fire service. Elements of succession planning, although rudimentary, were being practiced within the fire service. Improvements in candidate pool selection, providing educational opportunities and mentoring programs were being realized.

The fire service, more importantly, the Sandusky Fire Departments, needed to look beyond the conventional, traditional means of leadership development. The department needed to look beyond test only candidate selection and address the need to develop leadership with

continuity and purpose. The problem was that the Sandusky Fire Department did not have a succession plan to develop future fire service leaders. The absence of such a plan threatens continuity in incident command, purpose of mission and safety of philosophy thus increasing the risk of firefighter injury and property loss.

The purpose of the research is to identify the elements of succession planning, review the Sandusky Fire Departments approach to leadership development and to create an improvement guide for future leadership development. A descriptive methodology, with the use of a questionnaire, was used to identify the elements of succession planning and current methods of leadership development within the Sandusky Fire Department. An action methodology was also used to develop an improvement guide for succession planning. The following questions were answered:

1. What are the elements of a fire department succession plan and how do they relate to firefighter injury and property loss?
2. What elements of succession planning has the Sandusky Fire Department promoted and do they support the mission of the department?
3. How and when should succession planning be implemented within the Sandusky Fire Department?

Background and Significance

The Sandusky Fire Department is typical of many small fire departments with respect to choosing the future leaders of the organization. The process of selecting leaders was limited to the traditional test only selection process. The department identified the roles and responsibilities of the rank structure i.e. job description, but never correlated this job description to the strategic plan or mission statement. Since 1996, the department introduced written exams

and assessment centers that focus on job specific traits i.e. strategy, tactics and human relations. Despite modifications in the selection process, Sandusky Fire Department had been unable to develop a process that identifies candidates with the necessary competencies and supports the mission of the fire department. Ultimately, the Sandusky Fire Department produced very smart officers that didn't share a uniform safety philosophy, incident management practice or mission. "There is a fundamental difference between training and developing personnel in task-related competencies and developing leadership and management skills to effectively direct an organization into the future." (Johnson, 2004) This failure contributes to the lack of continuity in incident command, inability to identify and foster a healthy work place and support a unified safety philosophy. The departments' inability to foster continuity in leadership development will increase the risk of injury and property loss. The culture and tradition of the Sandusky Fire Department breeds an atmosphere of apathy that increases risk when firefighters don't wear seat belts, personal protective clothing or practice safe incident management. Unsafe behavior is passed on to new generations of firefighters because that is the way we have always done things. The future of leadership development in the Sandusky Fire Department, through a definitive succession planning process, will help break this cycle and achieve the United States Fire Administrations operational goal for the next five years, by "reducing injuries and deaths to firefighters and civilians by 25%" as outlined in the USFA Operational Guidelines. (NFPA, 2003).

Succession planning, although deeply rooted in the private sector, finds great promise for those fire service organizations that refuse to succumb to traditional lines of thinking as outlined in the Executive Fire Officer Program course, Executive Leadership. "Succession planning is an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable,

competent and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization." (NFA, 2005). The future of firefighter safety and survival depends on the organizations ability to adapt to changing management philosophy and create a working environment that supports safe practices to reduce firefighter injury and property loss.

Literature Review

The literature review consisted of library searches at the National Fire Academy Learning Resource Center, Bowling Green State University Firelands College Library, internet searches and reviews of fire department guidelines, contracts and rules. The literature review produced limited information on fire department succession planning, but ultimately directed this researcher to the human resource, business and nursing administrative communities. These entities have been using succession planning for many years. Much of this information was based on the realization that the organization was managed by a board of directors that had exclusive management rights in determining the role of succession planning and its application to the organization. Unlike the private sector, public safety organizations, like fire departments, are often managed by councils, trustees and/ or mayors. They may not have exclusive management rights or powers. These forms of government are often guided by state laws, rules, union contracts, civil service provisions and state employee relations boards. The same basic concepts were discovered, however, in organizations that took basic succession theory and applied it to the public sector. "Succession planning takes hard work, open communication and commitment from the entire organization." (Johnson, 2004)

The available information on succession planning for specifically fire departments was very limited, attesting to the novelty of the concept. Sources identified the fire department elements of experience, mentoring, education and testing as the basis for their succession planning. The fire service, it appears, adopted these elements from the business, nursing and human resources fields. Most succession planning efforts were discovered in larger metropolitan departments that were afforded the benefit of staffing, funding and resources. Although smaller departments have attempted to use aspects of succession planning, their efforts were largely unreported. It was no surprise to discover that they literature often identified constraints on the part of management in developing the succession planning process. Limited flexibility, multi-year contract stipulated testing procedures and tradition often played a part in its lack of success.

In addition to public and private sector specific literature, nursing publications were useful in identifying the elements of succession planning. Although funded and managed privately, the nursing community offers public service aspects similar to the fire service. A great deal of literature was found that speaks to succession planning in the nursing profession. "Philosophies of care, cultures of professional development, and familiar communication modalities are all at risk when nobody's prepared to continue the maturation of a nursing community." (Bonezek, Wooderd, 2006).

Lastly, information for the questionnaire, produced with the aid of literature reviewed, provided the necessary information for answering the questions identified in the problem and purpose. The questionnaire provided a historical perspective of the Sandusky Fire Department promotional process and assisted in identifying elements of succession planning and the impact on the organization. It also provided incite for an improvement guide by identifying the degree of understanding and support for succession planning.

Procedures

A literature review was conducted to identify the elements of succession planning and its historical transition from the private sector to the public sector fire service. Literature on fire service succession planning directed the research effort to the business and nursing professions. It was very difficult, even limiting to discover very few departments and firefighters in general, were knowledgeable about succession planning. The researcher used the information gathered from the literature review to establish a baseline for a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to gauge firefighter understanding of succession planning, identify current conditions, gauge the impact on firefighter injuries and property loss and make recommendations for future succession planning efforts.

The questionnaire was also developed to identify the historical aspects of leadership development in the Sandusky Fire Department. Sandusky fire officers and fire fighters were asked to participate. Thirty of fifty-one personnel participated in the questionnaire. The researcher also provided the questionnaire to Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) 4th year students for completion. This was done to gain a more global assessment of succession planning in the fire service. Although, much of this information was not new, it provided the seed information for developing the action steps of this research. This researcher gained considerable incite into the history of promotions and developing candidate pools, use of knowledge, skills and ability as a testing focus and the importance of competencies. What was not expected was the pervasive lack of knowledge of succession planning. The limited available resources for public safety succession planning prompted this researcher to expand the questionnaire to help identify why the concept of succession planning had not taken hold in the Sandusky Fire

Department or the fire service in general. The questionnaire also provided information for creating an improvement guide for leadership development as it relates to succession planning.

In addition to providing opportunity of a historical and action nature, the questionnaire also asked respondents to provide demographic information. Respondents were asked to report department size, population, rank, years of service, age, gender and educational background. This information was used to identify trends in fire department selection processes.

Results

The elements of succession planning for the fire service are somewhat different than those of the private business world. The elements of succession planning in the fire service place great value on the fairness of process and the development of the candidate absent the inter-relatedness of the organization and the purpose of mission. "The fire service is neither a marathon nor a sprint: it is a long distance relay race. Each generation of fire chiefs and officers passes on the baton to the next." (Sager, 2005) The focus was on developing the candidate for promotion. The literature review of major fire service periodicals identified the standard K,S,A's, as the benchmark for competency achievement. In addition, experience, higher education, mentorship and ride-a-long programs were also identified as elements of succession planning. These same periodicals offered very little discussion regarding candidate pool development, understanding community service needs and organizational goals and purpose of mission. Failure to support any of these elements can be catastrophic. "A mistake in budget or being late for a council meeting may seem important at the time, but correction or an apology can usually fix it. You can't say the same for a mistake in fireground command; it's impossible

to undo the loss of a business or house or the death or injury of a firefighter or civilian." (Sager, 2005) Private business, on the other hand, offered much discussion on these necessary components of succession planning. Five major elements were identified in the literature review. "The first step is to understand your community and your organization." (Boneczek, Woodard, 2006). The research indicated that very few questionnaire respondents had an appreciable understanding of their community's service needs or the strategic planning process in their organization. Understanding the mission of the department can be vital to successful candidate selection. "Understanding the community's needs is vital to the success of the organization and to the employees of that organization."(Bonaczek, Woodard, 2005) It was noted that candidate pool development requires well defined competencies based on experience, knowledge, skill and ability (K,S,A's). These competencies must also coincide and enhance the organizational objectives. A component of candidate pool development is a fair and impartial process to successfully and fairly evaluate the candidates for promotion. Mentorship was also identified as a necessary element of succession planning. Educational programs that will provide candidates with the latest information and skill sets is also an element.

The fire service literature identified four of the five private sector elements. However, very little correlation was made between candidate competencies and the mission of the organization. Questionnaire results mirrored these differences. The mission of the Sandusky Fire Department:

The purpose of the Sandusky Fire Department is to protect lives, property and the environment against all hazards, natural and manmade. We achieve this by identifying and preparing for the needs of the community, cost-effective allocation of resources and promoting cooperative relationships. Excellence in training and education is utilized to create a dedicated professional workforce through prudent fiscal management. (Meinzer, 2006)

The elements of succession planning are intertwined in the mission of the Sandusky Fire Department. Unfortunately, many respondents believed the mission of the organization had little to do with the department's selection of future leadership. Many admitted they knew about the strategic planning process and the mission of the organization but believed there was little relevance to selection of future leadership. Although many of the elements have correlative reference to firefighter safety and reduced property loss, understanding organizational goals requires candidates to promote safe working conditions and fire ground efficiency that ultimately reduces property loss. They also believed that adherence to safety and incident management safe practice philosophies could reduce firefighter injuries and deaths and property loss. Respondents believed a change in culture needs to take place to break the cycle of unacceptable behavior.

The Sandusky Fire Department has not promoted succession planning as a concept for future leadership selection. Respondents reported that although the mechanisms for selecting future leadership have improved, they do not go far enough in assuring that future leadership will promote the mission of the department. The department has used a traditional selection process; a combination of seniority points (indicator of experience), written test scores (indicator of knowledge) and assessment centers (problem solving, strategy and tactics, personnel problems) to help identify the optimum candidates for succession. The department, however, doesn't evaluate whether the candidate knows, understands and is willing to promote and support the department mission. Respondents identified the necessity of a bonifide mentoring program and educational program that allows candidates to formally learn from peers and develop the necessary knowledge and skill sets to reduce injuries and property loss and move on to the next level. Financial constraints were identified as the leading causal factor for the absence of these two programs.

The majority of questionnaire respondents identified the need to immediately begin the development of a succession planning process. They believed that a committee, made up of senior fire officers, firefighters, human resource professionals, business professionals and educators should be empowered to develop a succession plan. Many of the questionnaire respondents believed, however, that candidates should only be made aware of the process when they become eligible to promote. This was very surprising considering the questionnaire respondents desire to promote uniformity in incident management and safety philosophy at the recruit level. The respondents identified the need and importance to learn basic K,S,A's first before promoting to a higher level within the organization. Age and years of experience correlated closely to trends in past and current promotion processes. These processes were/are used exclusively to select leadership throughout the fire department and the fire service. Although the Sandusky Fire Department demographical information was markedly different to outside respondents, answers were similar despite the differences in demographics. It appears the fire service, in general, is slow to adopt succession planning for the same reasons identified by the Sandusky Firefighter. Although the questionnaire instrument could be construed as limited, it did provide universal results.

Discussion

The fire service is promoting today what the business world and the nursing profession has known for many years – the art of succession planning. In review of many fire service periodicals, the notion of succession planning takes on an air of novelty shrouded in mystery and predicated on fear. The mystery is in the understanding, or absence of, what succession planning

is and what it can do for your organization. The fear surfaces because the fire service is separating itself from traditional promotional processes for a novel approach called succession planning. The abridged explanation is that succession planning is not just the promotional process, but a series of processes that encompass experience, education, mentorship, evaluation, testing, understanding community risk and actively promoting the department mission.

"Succession planning is a journey, not a destination and is a continuous annual process."(Sager, 2006) Succession planning is a process that begins at the hiring phase. The leaders of tomorrow are our new recruits today. We must foster positive role modeling and create an environment that encourages understanding of the community and the organization. We must create that environment right from the beginning. Many respondents of the questionnaire believed succession planning should only take place after a candidate has achieved time in grade to take a promotional examination but this is too late and places the organization and the candidate behind the learning curve. 'We often talk of succession planning when it comes to officers, but we all must be aware of succession planning when it come to filling all our ranks with dedicated, enthusiastic, community-oriented firefighters."(Sager, 2006) The fire service is facing baby-boomer retirement challenge. Many experienced officers and firefighters are retiring without adequate replacement strategies in place. "The demand for effective managers continues to grow; the retirement of baby boomers is producing a sharp decline in the ranks of available personnel." (Fulmer, 2006)

The mistaken perception of the fire service community and many of the questionnaire respondents was the goal of succession planning is to manufacture clones of the fire chief when in fact it is not. The limited understanding of what succession planning is, undoubtedly had an effect on its use in the fire service and may have been the reason fear was identified by many of

the respondents. The goal of succession planning is to develop independent thinking future leaders of the organization that possess the necessary competencies, experience and purpose of mission to provide for "seamless transition within the organization".(Wolf, 2006).

This researcher's interpretation of the study results was somewhat troubling. It appears that the concept of succession planning was not well understood. It was often misinterpreted as a promotional process when in fact it is much more. Questionnaire respondents from the Sandusky Fire Department had very little understanding of the concepts of succession planning. The department was more concerned with the candidate's knowledge, skill and ability of the rank rather than it was with how the candidate supports the organizational plan. They identified fear, funding and apathy as the leading reasons for the lack of knowledge. These same respondents also did not have a high understanding of the goals of the department and the community nor did they believe it was necessary to have this knowledge. Even more troubling, was the information gained from the Executive Fire Officer 4th Year students. These questionnaire respondents provided very similar information. I expected a better understanding of succession planning and the role they play in the community and the organization. They also believed knowledge of the community and the organizational goals and objectives had limited value was not necessary for advancement. Perhaps we have failed in our efforts to educate all fire service personnel about the need for succession planning, at the very least, we have failed to define what succession planning is or is not. "The goal of succession planning is to identify employees capable of assuming leadership levels and to provide and encourage education and training to develop these employees' competencies, scope of operation and leadership skills." (Wolf, 2006) The problem with succession planning in the fire service is that it does not go far enough. The business world and the nursing profession use professional succession planning services that cost a great deal of

money to develop and implement succession plans. Most fire service organizations do not have that financial capability so they make half-hearted attempts to use components of succession planning and can't understand when their efforts fail. Nearly all questionnaire respondents identified costs as the leading deterrent to succession planning. The questionnaire respondents as a whole agreed that, future firefighter injuries and property damage will be adversely affected by the absence of a succession planning effort that focuses on incident management and promotes a unified safety philosophy; encourages safe driving, seat belt use safe scene management and abolition of free lancing.

The organizational implications of this study clearly indicate that the Sandusky Fire Department does not have a comprehensive succession plan. Efforts to develop future fire department leadership are being made but on a small scale. The department, as identified by the questionnaire respondents, has made progress in the promotional testing process. Seniority points and a test only format were changed several years ago to an assessment based testing process that evaluates written, reading & comprehension, experience, oral interview and personnel management skills. The organization has not been able to fairly and effectively assess a candidates understanding of the community and the mission of the organization nor has it provided formal mentorship and educational programs for candidate pool development. The value of mentorship programs cannot be under estimates. "The spirit and enthusiasm of mentorship must be preserved so that the fire service will continue to be a community oriented service and survive". (Chiramonte, 2005) Financial resources for mentorship and education programs are limited and contribute to these short-comings. The Sandusky Fire Department does not have a formal plan. "One of the leading causes of succession planning failure is the lack of a solid plan based upon the true needs of the organization." (Wolf, 2006)

It is clear that department respondents understand and agree that the absence of a succession plan, whatever that means, will contribute to firefighter injuries and property damage because of the lack of continuity in incident management and a failure to promote a uniform safety philosophy. The respondents also agreed that apathy, tradition and funding were the critical factors preventing the department from developing a succession plan.

Recommendations

The research findings garnered from the questionnaires and the literature review spotlight several recommendations for the Sandusky Fire Department. They include developing a succession planning process that identifies competencies for all levels of the organization, provides mentoring and educational opportunities, fairly assess a candidate's growth potential and accurately assesses the candidate's commitment to the organizational strategies. The data obtained clearly recognizes the need to inform and educate personnel about the concept of succession planning and its benefit to the department. This educational component will help allay fears of the unknown and perhaps reinvigorate those that have stagnated in their professional development.

The best way to foster uniformity and a cooperative work ethic is to empower a working committee, with representation from the department, human resources, civil service and the city managers' office. The committee should also have legal advisory available to navigate through the various labor-management and civil service legal concerns. This committee will use the improvement guide, developed as a result of this research, to assist in the development of a succession plan that provides for the positive and successful transition of leadership within the

Sandusky Fire Department. The success of this process can be measured by reducing firefighter injuries and property loss as a result of consistent safety philosophies and uniform incident management. Through effective succession planning, the Sandusky Fire Department can change the apathy towards safety that several hundred years of tradition has allowed.

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Appendix A

Paul E. Ricci
Executive Office Program
Executive Leadership - July 2006

Succession Planning Questionnaire

This questionnaire as developed to obtain information from fire service professionals regarding succession planning. Specifically, I am interested in what elements need to be considered when developing a succession plan, what is the role of promotional process and does the strategic plan, business plan and mission of the fire department have relevance. Please answer the following demographic questions by blackening the appropriate answer with a #2 pencil.

Gender

Female Male

Age

18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56 - older

Type of Service

Paid Combination Part Time Volunteer

Type of Community Served

City Township Village Borough Town Other

Population of Community Served

<10,000 10,001 - 50,000 50,001 - 100,000 >100,000

Rank

Senior Officer Company Officer Firefighter Other

Year of Service

0 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 - 20 > 20

Type of Service

Paid Combination Part Time Volunteer

Please answer the remaining questions by choosing the most correct answer. Select multiple answers when appropriate. Blacken the answer(s) with a #2 pencil. Please read the following excerpt before answering the questions.

Succession planning is the development of future leadership from within an organization. This leadership is cultivated by fairly developing talent pools of candidates that demonstrate the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience necessary to perform identifiable competencies. These competencies should coincident and complement the strategic plan, business plan and mission of the organization.

1. How familiar are you with your community's strategic plan?
 very familiar
 somewhat familiar
 not familiar
2. How familiar are you with your organizations business plan?
 very familiar
 somewhat familiar
 not familiar
3. How familiar are you with your organizations mission statement?
 very familiar
 somewhat familiar
 not familiar
4. The process of succession planning relies on the successful development of five elements. Rate your organizations success in the development of these elements. on a scale of 1 to 5. (1 very successful, 5 not successful)

_____ Define the strategic, business and mission goals of the organization

_____ Identified leadership competencies of knowledge, skill and ability (K,S,A's) that are required to meet the needs of the position.

_____ Assess those personnel in the organization that can develop the necessary skills to lead the organization (Candidate Pool Testing)

_____ Developed a sustainable education and growth plan that provides opportunities for these candidates

_____ Developed a mentoring and ride-a-long program to assist aspiring leaders

5. Has your department developed a strategic plan to assist leaders in long term planning?

_____yes

_____no

6. Which of the following elements does your department utilize to develop candidate pools?
(choose all that apply)

_____Written examination

_____Oral interview process

_____Physical and Mental Fitness

_____Employment History

_____Mentoring & Counseling Participation

_____Formal Education

_____Support & Conformity with Strategic and Mission Objectives

7. Has your department identified the leadership competencies – knowledge, skills and abilities (K,S,A's) for each rank classification?

_____yes

_____no

8. Has your department developed a sustainable education and growth plan to provide educational opportunities for eligible candidates?

_____yes

_____no

9. Has your department developed a mentoring and coaching program to assist aspiring candidates in leadership development?

_____yes

_____no

10. What value does understanding the strategic goals of your organization have on the development of future leadership?

_____great value

_____limited value

_____no value

11. What value does understanding the job description of each level of your organization have on the development of future leadership?

_____great value

_____limited value

_____no value

12. What value does having a fair candidate pool selection process have on the development of future leadership?

- great value
- limited value
- no value

13. What value does having the knowledge, skill and ability to perform all level competencies have on the development of future leadership?

- great value
- limited value
- no value

14. What value does a mentoring program have on the development of future leadership?

- great value
- limited value
- no value

15. What value does physical and mental wellness have on the development of future leadership?

- great value
- limited value
- no value

16. Is understanding your organizations service area demographics necessary to succession planning?

- yes no

17. What effect does the absence of succession planning have on the continuity of incident command and safety philosophy?

- great effect
- limited effect
- no effect

18. What effect does the absence of succession planning have on the risk of civilian injury and property loss?

- great effect
- limited effect
- no effect

19. What effect does the absence of succession planning have on the risk of firefighter injury and/or death?

- great effect
- limited effect
- no effect

20. What factors prevent / prohibit fire service organizations from developing succession planning programs? (choose the three most important choices)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> apathy | <input type="checkbox"/> fear of litigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tradition | <input type="checkbox"/> fear of failure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of administrative support | <input type="checkbox"/> uncertainty/confusion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other important fire service issues | <input type="checkbox"/> funding commitment |

21. At what point in the career development process should personnel be introduced to the succession planning process?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> recruit level | <input type="checkbox"/> top grade firefighter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> company officer | <input type="checkbox"/> battalion chief |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district chief | <input type="checkbox"/> assistant chief |

Appendix B

Succession Planning - Improvement Guide

Purpose The purpose of the succession planning improvement guide is to provide direction for the development of a fire department succession plan. The plan will provide for the seamless transition of leadership in the Sandusky Fire Department by developing candidate pools, education and mentoring programs, fair and impartial promotional testing and support for community needs and organizational strategies and mission..

Responsibility

It shall be the duty and responsibility of the Succession Planning Committee to develop the framework for the succession plan. This committee shall be empowered by the Chief of the Sandusky Fire Department and consist of a representative from the fire division, legal department, human resource department, labor unit, civil service and the city managers office.

Objectives

- Develop competencies for all positions that emphasize personnel management, strategy, tactics, safety, community needs and the mission of the fire department.
- Develop mentoring program and ride-a-long programs that promote the positive attributes of public safety and encourages independent thinking and commitment to duty.
- Develop an education program that encourages higher education and provides incentive for acquiring education in personnel management, public safety administration and executive development.
- Develop community outreach programs that encourage community involvement i.e. membership in civic groups, forums and boards, to better understand community needs.
- Develop organizational programs that educate personnel about succession planning, the organization, strategic plans, mission statement and the operation of the city government.

Timeline

6 months	Empower a working committee from the human resources, fire department, city managers office, legal department and the labor unit. Review the improvement guide and make recommendations for development.
12 months	Provide the information component to educate all Sandusky Fire Department personnel on succession planning and obtain additional feedback realized in the original questionnaire.
18 months	Develop the element programs and forward to personnel for review, comment and/or refinement. Complete the necessary work with the labor unit to introduce a memorandum of understanding into the current labor agreement.
24 months	Formally adopt and initiate the final succession plan. Conduct training sessions for personnel on improvement strategies.

Evaluations

- Monthly evaluations of committee work shall be performed and reported to the Chief of the Department.
- Feedback and analysis performed periodically to gauge the response of firefighters and officers
- Semi-annual evaluations of the program immediately following the initiation phase
- Periodic personnel evaluations to provide guidance and future educational opportunities