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Solidifying the Workforce: Implementing  
a Succession Plan at the Caldwell,  
Comal, and Hays Counties Community  
Supervision and Corrections Department

Julissa Marie Vela

Texas State University-San Marcos, Dept. of Political Science,  
Public Administration Program, [julissa\\_marie@yahoo.com](mailto:julissa_marie@yahoo.com)

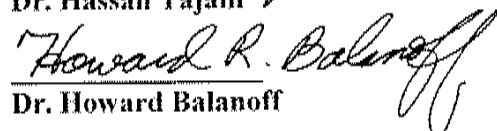
**Solidifying the Workforce:**  
**Implementing a Succession Plan at the Caldwell, Comal, and**  
**Hays Counties Community Supervision and Corrections**  
**Department**

**Julissa Vela**

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Faculty Approval:

  
Dr. Hassan Tajalli

  
Dr. Howard Balanoff

  
Melissa Whitmore

### **Abstract**

Retaining a valuable workforce should be a priority for both private and public-sector agencies. Succession planning is the process of preparing an agency's current workforce to assume leadership positions as vacancies arise. Top management should be concerned with both expected and unexpected vacancies; positions may become available due to an untimely death, resignation, or termination. Implementing a succession plan can prevent periods of inactivity when vacancies do arise. This study assessed the proximity between an ideal succession planning model and the informal plan that is currently utilized at the Caldwell, Comal, and Hays Counties Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD). Sixteen employees were interviewed, and questions were based on the categories of an ideal succession plan. Eight categories of an ideal succession plan were identified through this research. This study provided recommendations to the CSCD concerning an effective method for implementing a succession plan at all levels within the agency.

### **About the Author**

Julissa Marie Vela was born and raised in New Braunfels, TX. She graduated from New Braunfels High School in 2001 and earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in both psychology and political science from Texas A&M University-Kingsville in May 2005. Julissa will graduate from Texas State University-San Marcos in May 2008 with a master of public administration degree. Julissa has been employed as a Community Supervision Officer with Comal County Adult Probation since June 2005.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction.....	1
Purpose.....	2
<b>Chapter 2. Literature Review.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Categories of an Ideal Succession Planning model.....	3
Research Setting.....	3
Conceptual Framework.....	4
Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan	6
The succession plan should be based on the agency's strategic and workforce plan	8
The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency's needs	9
The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees	11
The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees	12
A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation	15
The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency	16
The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues	18
Conceptual Framework Table.....	21
<b>Chapter 3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework.....	23
Operationalization Table.....	24
Interviews.....	25
Human Subjects.....	25

<b>Chapter 4. Results.....</b>	<b>26</b>
Top management should participate in development and.....	27
support implementation of the agency’s succession plan	
The succession plan should be based on the agency’s.....	31
strategic and workforce plan	
The succession plan should be based on assessment of the.....	32
agency’s needs	
The succession plan should provide formal professional.....	35
development opportunities for employees	
The focus of the succession plan should be the.....	37
agency’s employees	
A succession plan should include a designated staff and.....	41
adequate funds for its implementation	
The scope of the succession plan should cover all.....	44
levels of the agency	
The succession plan should consider unique.....	47
public-sector issues	
<b>Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>50</b>
Ensure that management has a thorough understanding of.....	51
what a succession planning model entails	
Assess core competencies to determine the gaps and future.....	51
needs of skills and positions	
Devise an action plan to determine proper implementation.....	52
of the succession plan	
Devise an action plan to determine the CSCD’s future.....	52
work requirements	
Establish formal mentoring at every level within the CSCD.....	53
Improve communication regarding opportunities/career paths.....	53
between top management and lower-level employees	
Top management should exhibit interest in each employee’s.....	54
career goals/desires.	
Designate a fund for implementing a succession plan.....	54
Identify talent at all levels.....	54
Top management should keep an inventory of talents and.....	55
skills that are available within the agency	
Utilize career path planning.....	55
<b>References.....</b>	<b>56</b>

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Succession planning is the process of preparing an organization, whether public or private, for changes to the structure of its leadership. “The ability of an institution to survive turbulent times is based on the organization’s capacity to produce sustained and high-quality leadership over time.” (Lynn 2001, 115) A succession planning model allows an organization’s leaders to put a system into place that will ensure a smooth transition in management should the need arise. Whether due to retirement, resignation, or the death of a top administrator of any organization, a succession plan can assist in ensuring that an agency’s mission is carried out accurately and efficiently with minimal disruption. The positions that may be included in a succession planning model vary, and are determined by the strategic plan of an organization. “Succession planning is important to the corporate, professional, and personal levels of an organization.” (Bonczek 2006, 32) Although nearly every organization can survive without a succession planning model in place, few organizations can thrive without the structure and guidance that can be attained through the implementation of a succession planning model.

“Workforce succession planning refers to the implementation of human resource activities, policies, and practices to make the necessary ongoing changes to support or improve the agency’s operational and strategic objectives.” (Pynes 2004, 389) “An organization’s succession plan identifies individuals who either possess or are in the process of acquiring the requisite key skills and experience for effective performance in a particular position.” (Spoor 1993, 4) Most often, the positions included in a succession

plan are those that carry the most weight within the organization; examples range from top management to mid-level management posts. “Effective workforce planning requires the evaluation of the functions of the organization, the competencies required for completing that work and the gap between the number of employees who possess these competencies and those without them.” (Kiyonaga 2004, 359) Organizations that adopt a succession planning strategy need a method to evaluate it in order to ensure its continued effectiveness. Sharon Ley (2002) and Melissa Whitmore (2006) developed succession planning models to assess succession planning within their own organizations, the State Bar of Texas and the Department of Insurance, respectively.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is threefold. First, based on the applied research projects (ARPs) of Sharon Ley (2002) and Melissa Whitmore (2006) as well as literature pertaining to the subject, it describes the critical components of an ideal succession plan. Second, it assesses the current state of succession planning at the Caldwell, Comal, and Hays Counties Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD) in comparison to the practical ideal type model. Finally, based on the assessment, recommendations were made to CSCD on the most effective method for implementing a succession planning model.

## **Chapter 2. Categories of an Ideal Succession Planning Model**

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to succession planning programs that are currently utilized by private and public-sector agencies. This chapter includes a conceptual framework for effective program implementation that is based on Sharon Ley's (2002) "An Assessment of Succession Planning at the State Bar of Texas" and Melissa Whitmore's (2006) "Success through Succession: Implementing Succession Planning at the Texas Department of Insurance". Ley's research focused on succession planning in a quasi-public sector, privately funded state agency, the State Bar of Texas. Whitmore's research focused on succession planning in a state-funded public agency, the Texas Department of Insurance.

### **Research Setting**

This research focused on the Caldwell, Comal, and Hays Counties Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD), a public entity in Texas that receives both state and county funding. Although the CSCD does not currently have a formal succession plan, numerous practices that are generally associated with implementation of a succession plan exist within this agency.

The Tri-County Judicial District Community Supervision and Corrections Department serves Caldwell, Comal, and Hays Counties. The purpose of this agency is to serve the criminal courts, protect the community to the extent that legal authority and resources will allow, provide rehabilitative opportunities for offenders, and sanction offenders placed under community supervision.

The CSCD employs approximately ninety-five full-time staff and supervises approximately 3,815 misdemeanor and felony offenders. The structure of this agency's leadership is hierarchical, with a chief probation officer serving as the executive director of the district. A county director heads each of the three departments under this district along with one county supervisor in each office. Senior community supervision officers (CSOs) are employed by each county and serve as mid-level managers and mentors to line officers. Other duties of a Senior CSO include reviewing and auditing the work of CSO I and CSO II employees while also maintaining their designated specialized caseloads. A majority of the employees in this department are line officers who manage direct and indirect caseloads. Officers automatically enter this department at the CSO I level and may be promoted to CSO II upon achieving three years of employment and satisfactorily completing a competency examination.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Sharon Ley (2002) completed her ARP in an attempt to assess the State Bar of Texas Fellows Program Pilot Project and to develop strategies for improving its effectiveness. Ley's research methods included focused interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Through the aforementioned research methods, Ley was able to conclude that there were many areas that needed improvement in order for the succession plan to be successful. A few of these problem areas included: a lack of communication among staff, a lack of mentoring and professional development opportunities for employees, and a lack of a designated human resource official to oversee the progress of the program. Ley made a number of recommendations to the

State Bar of Texas Fellows Program in order to encourage its initiators to take these issues into consideration and through the restructuring of the model, promote the utilization of the succession program within the organization for years to come.

Melissa Whitmore's (2006) ARP assessed strategies for implementing succession planning at the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI). Whitmore's research methods included focused interviews and document analysis. Whitmore had minimal recommendations for improvement at the TDI as most of the categories of a succession planning model are currently being utilized within the agency. However, Whitmore did recognize the need for a cohesive plan within the agency. Whitmore's (2006, 49) research concluded that "overall, the TDI already has many elements of an ideal type succession plan in place."

The model that was developed by Ley and Whitmore features eight categories that an agency should include when implementing a succession plan for its workforce. The categories of an ideal succession planning model are as follow.

1. Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan
2. The succession plan should be based on the agency's strategic and workforce plan
3. The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency's needs
4. The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees
5. The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees

6. A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation
7. The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency
8. The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues

Categories 1-7 are discussed in Ley's ARP, which focused on implementing a succession planning model at a quasi-public agency. Whitmore added the final category to the list, which focused on implementing a succession planning model within publicly funded agencies. Each category and its elements are thoroughly described within this research paper, and rationale given for the inclusion of each category within the succession planning model.

**Category 1: Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan**

Top management should analyze agency mission, goals, and initiatives and offer their full support to the succession planning model. "Without this support, the plan will never take flight within the culture of the agency even if a succession plan is identified." (Whitmore 2006, 10) "It is not just about finding replacements; it is also about developing talent and building sufficient bench strength, and preserving the organization's institutional memory as embodied in the heads of veteran performers at all levels who possess specialized knowledge about the way the organization works." (Rothwell and Poduch 2004, 405) Top administrators can make executive decisions regarding issues, such as the implementation of a succession plan, that have a direct

impact on the entire organization. “Leaders are increasingly judged by their ability to motivate and bring out the best in staff, by how well they communicate the vision and mission of the organization, and by their effectiveness in building partnerships and collaborating with other organizations.” (Bertucci 2006, 178) By exerting influence over their subordinates, top administrators can be certain that their initiatives will be carried out by all staff members. “The truth is that operating without an up-to-date and basic succession plan no longer is an acceptable risk for organizations committed to survival in today’s environment.” (Spoor 1993, 4)

Management should understand the succession plan and be responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the model. “Management includes the tasks of goal setting, strategic and operational planning, providing structure, organizing and directing the activities of others, motivating others to pursue organizational goals, manipulating, and controlling outcomes and organizational systems.” (Barker 1997, 348-349) “A good succession program allows existing senior executives to observe people over time, promote them step by step, and train them to be of the most use to the company’s needs and culture.” (Diamond 2006, 36) By utilizing their leadership skills, managers have the ability to continually shape their agency’s succession plan to their specifications. Schall (1997, 5) asserts that “the public sector leader must learn to consider not only what can be but what will be, and how what is achieved can be sustained.” “Succession planning, done well, involves preparing the agency for a change in leadership, but it also includes assessing what has been valuable and how that can be preserved to the subsequent regime.” (Schall 1997, 5) The goal of an administrator should be to guide the

organization in a positive direction for the future and to implement a succession planning model that will serve as a surefire way to leave a lasting impression on the organization.

Through her research on the State Bar of Texas Fellows Program, Ley discovered that a deterrent to the success of the succession plan was an overall lack of communication between program initiators and other staff members who were not involved in the process of implementing the program within the agency. Ley (2002) attributed this lack of communication to misconceptions about the program's purpose, claiming that "the projects were perceived as 'turf issues' rather than an educational experience for the individual Fellow to learn more about the entire organization" (45). Whitmore (2006), on the other hand, found that the participation and support of top management is affluent within the TDI, stating that "the Commissioner has set some initial criteria for the plan by recommending methods of training employees to ensure that they have the needed knowledge and skills to fulfill requirements of critical positions within the agency" (32).

### **Category 2: The succession plan should be based on the agency's strategic and workforce plan**

The strategic plan should determine which positions will be in the succession plan, as it "provides a description and analysis of where the agency is, and where it will be in the future" (Whitmore 2006, 19). Succession planning can be successfully utilized by an organization to prepare for any future staffing or knowledge gaps that may occur within the agency. "Strategic planning is defined as a systematic process for managing

the organization and its future direction in relation to its environment and the demands of external stakeholders, including strategy formulation, analysis of agency strengths and weaknesses, identification of agency stakeholders, implementation of strategic actions, and issue management.” (Berry 1995, 159) The strategic plan should serve as a link between the agency’s current practices and its goals for the future. Having a succession planning process that links to the organization’s vision and career development process is the best approach for ensuring that the right talent is ready when needed.

Ley (2002) found the State Bar of Texas to be striving toward improving their strategic plan and including a succession planning model in the future, but also found that the Fellows Program did not seem to be included in the agency’s future; and therefore, “the Fellows Program must make changes to its goals for the future, and market itself for inclusion in the strategic plan” (60). Whitmore (2006) found TDI to be prepared to include a succession planning model in its strategic plan for the future, and noted that, “the agency stated a commitment to implementing a succession planning process by the next biennial workforce planning reporting cycle” (43).

**Category 3: The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency’s needs**

The literature pertaining to succession planning indicates a need for an assessment of core competencies to determine gaps, needed skills, and recognition of the positions in need of succession planning to be a critical component of the succession planning process. Whitmore (2006, 33) claims that a needs-driven assessment “helps to identify

which positions in the agency are mission critical and therefore, need to be included in the succession planning procedures.” The unexpected vacancy of an essential position within an agency can have a huge impact on the entire organization. It is crucial for administrators to realize this, and to take the necessary step of deciding which positions are critical to the agency’s continued functioning. Lynn (2001, 118) notes that “once these positions are identified, a skill analysis identifies the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for each critical position.” It is important for top management to become familiar with the basic functions of those positions that have the potential to negatively impact the organization if vacated. Rothwell and Poduch (2004, 409-410) add that administrators should “clarify who possesses specialized knowledge about those work processes gained from experience, clarify how those work processes are performed by those possessing specialized knowledge, and capture and distill the specialized knowledge about those work processes.”

Determining future work requirements should be conducted through an action plan. “An action plan should establish accountability for implementing the plan, identify the resources needed to complete the plan, and should provide solutions to close any competency gaps that have been identified.” (Pynes 2004, 390-391) “Beyond current skill sets, determining the extent of an organization’s potential shortage requires the identification of needed competencies based on future values, strategies, and institutional needs.” (Lynn 2001, 118) Agencies need to be prepared to handle projected issues stemming from increased workloads, employee shortages, and overall changes in the structure of the organization five and even ten years down the line. Helton and Soubik

(2004, 462) encourage “planning for controlled and uncontrolled events that may affect the organization’s workforce.”

Ley did not discover that the State Bar of Texas Fellows Program was utilizing a needs-driven assessment, but she did find that the organization had taken the necessary step of external benchmarking by conducting some limited research on studies of other organization’s succession planning programs prior to implementation. Whitmore’s research found that the TDI utilizes a needs-driven assessment through the implementation of external benchmarking and through the assessment of core competencies required for the agency’s most instrumental positions.

**Category 4: The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees**

“Formal mentoring is a confidential, one-to-one relationship in which an individual uses a more experienced, usually more senior, person as a sounding board and for guidance.” (Bard and Moore 2000, 256) Mentoring serves as a professional development opportunity by increasing the amount of communication between top members of management and lower-level staff. Employees are paired into groups with fellow co-workers who are, most often, employed at different levels within the organization. “For organizations, mentoring is said to ease the transfer of usable knowledge and experience of the work, condition organizational participation, develop employee-centered leadership, meet needs for well-trained and educated personnel, and increase productivity and effectiveness.” (Hale 1995, 332) Hale (1996, 426) asserts that

“we know through intuition and experience that mentoring helps develop the workforce by transferring skills, knowledge, and expertise between individuals.”

“Beyond identifying what skill sets and knowledge bases are required for key positions, it is crucial that a succession plan provide a method or plan for providing employees the opportunity for professional development.” (Whitmore 2006, 13-14) Holinsworth (2004, 485) notes that “providing learning opportunities for ‘all’ employees in a structured, creative manner while planning for its upper management succession is quite an achievement for any organization. Providing these same opportunities in a way that is fair to individual employees, yet meets the needs of the greater organization, is exceptional and unique.” The literature on succession planning acknowledges that today’s employees are more apt to be interested in employment opportunities that will serve their personal and professional needs in the future. Employers that offer professional development opportunities to their employees are sure to see increases in the commitment that they get from employees in return for such initiatives.

“Career paths provide employees a map from their current position to the position they aspire to reach.” (Whitmore 2006, 14) Most employees are interested in furthering their careers; if they feel certain that their present employer is interested in assisting them in attaining their personal career goals, their loyalties will most likely be toward their present employer. Whitmore (2006, 14) notes that “career paths should provide information on what skill sets and knowledge bases an employee will need for positions in the future, and offer suggestions on what training and development opportunities will provide those skills.”

In regard to providing formal professional development opportunities, Ley's (2002, 53) research found this area to be weak within the State Bar of Texas Fellows Program, concluding that "the career goals, if any, mentioned on the application were set aside and never shared with supervisors." Whitmore's (2006, 37) research findings seemed to be very positive in this area as evidenced in the conclusion that "TDI offers both formalized training opportunities, as well as mentoring programs."

**Category 5: The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees**

Top members of management need to listen to their employees career goals and desires as a way of designating individual attention to the employees within their agencies. Haworth (2005, 14) encourages leaders to "become great at hearing and seeing hidden skills, foster great relationships with subordinates, maintain an open door for conversation, and ask questions to find out how people think and what drives their behaviors." Employers can learn much about their employees by simply keeping the communication lines open as employees are usually willing to enlighten their employer about their personal needs if given the opportunity to do so.

Ley (2002, 19) observes that organizations should allow individuals to make training choices that can "improve the succession planning program through focused training attention" that can likely encourage individual commitment to the organization. "Training can be targeted to help employees learn new job-specific skills, improve their performance, or change their attitudes." (Pynes 2004, 396) "The availability of training-whether through seminars, conferences, tuition reimbursements, or computer-delivered

training modules- is a critical element in becoming an employer of choice.” (Green 2000, 437) Spoor (1993, 2) explains that it is crucial to keep employees challenged and motivated through implementation of “Roop’s Theory” which states that “talented and motivated people pass their point of maximum contribution in a position sometime between 18 and 30 months.” In order to avoid a decrease in productivity, employers need to recognize this problem and take the necessary steps to keep their employees motivated, whether through enforcing a change in positions or by significantly changing the scope of the job. To obtain success through the utilization of training programs, “the organization can enlist the internal training department, corporate universities, or external consultants and learning institutions- or a combination.” (McDermott 2001, 45)

Organizations should utilize performance evaluations as a means for employee advancement. Upon a vacancy within the agency, management can use performance evaluations to assess which employees in their present workforce can best fulfill the requirements of the position. “Evaluations ought to be based on objective and observable criteria, involve mutual goal-setting, avoid the tendency to assess irrelevant worker traits, and be tailored to each individual job.” (Hays 2004, 262) When management openly utilizes performance evaluations, employees can be certain that their hard work and efforts are taken into consideration when an opportunity for advancement arises.

“A successful performance management system should not take a hindsight approach to performance, relating exclusively to the performance of an employee over the past year; it should also focus on future goal-setting.” (Glendinning 2002) One way to focus on goal-setting is to allow employees to be included in their own annual

performance evaluation. “Too often, employees and their supervisors are not on the same page concerning mutual expectations of one another, or the performance standards that are being enforced; the disconnect between evaluation and actual performance as measured by some objective link to job outcomes reduces motivation and impedes mission accomplishment.” (Hays 2004, 262) Employees who are committed to their present employer will strongly consider the input that they are given during their evaluation and this, in turn, will assist them in strengthening their job skills. The annual evaluation is tied to an employee’s increase in compensation and therefore, should specifically observe employee characteristics on a personal level rather than through the utilization of a general evaluation that is used on every employer for every position within the agency.

Ley (2002, 53) stated this area of the succession planning model was “one of the weakest components of the project” noting “it was learned that the Fellows were not learning positive lessons on the organization...the Fellows were dissatisfied with projects and the attention they received from Division Heads.” Whitmore (2006, 38) found the TDI to be progressing in the area of focusing on individual attention, by noting that “the Financial division encourages their employees to seek certifications that will allow the employees to advance in their respective career ladders.” One setback that Whitmore discovered within the TDI’s evaluation process was that “TDI is not authorized to rate an employee’s performance based on criteria other than those requirements set forth in the employee’s specific current job description” (Whitmore 2006, 38).

**Category 6: A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation**

There should be a designated coordinator who keeps the plan current. “Having a single staff member in place to monitor succession planning fosters a systematic approach in which the agency can implement the process.” (Whitmore 2006, 17) “The program coordinator or planner is responsible for updating the succession planning process in order to ensure that the plan is current, tracking future needs of the program, maintaining a systematic approach to the program, and monitoring participation in the program.” (Whitmore 2006, 39) Professionals “in these roles help construct candidate slates, maintain up-to-date talent inventories, and provide counsel to executives on how to develop and choose subordinates... In many ways they are like internal executive recruiting consultants, differing from their external counterparts in that they have a stake in long-term people development as much as in reaching short-run selection dilemmas” (Friedman 1990, 301).

Organizations should also have dedicated funds/budget for the sole purpose of implementing the succession planning model. Prior to the onset of a succession planning model, it is essential for administrators to understand what is expected of the agency, namely, that “there are financial costs associated with workforce and succession planning” (Pynes 2004, 399). By deciding the exact amount of the budget that will be dedicated to the succession planning model, administrators can be certain that the program will be able to meet basic functions such as providing income for the designated person to head the implementation of the succession planning model, and ensuring

availability of funds to cover costs of training, seminars, or conferences that employees will be encouraged to attend as part of the succession planning model.

“Succession planning is an ongoing activity that must be monitored once in place and therefore, organizations should keep track of future needs.” (Whitmore 2006, 16)

Aside from performance evaluations and training monitoring, the coordinator can maintain a timeline of likely retirements in order to anticipate future replacement needs.

“Once the timeline is established, the coordinator can better prepare executive management for upcoming vacancies and track the developmental needs of potential replacements to guarantee candidates reach the necessary skill level.” (Rothwell 2001, 54)

**Category 7: The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency**

“Most often, when creating a succession plan, agencies focus on upper-level management positions; in actuality, there are many positions throughout an agency that are critical to its success.” (Whitmore 2006, 17) Organizations should identify talent at all levels by ensuring that “every facet is eligible for participation in the program and it is publicized to all employees” (Ley 2002, 56). Green (2000, 441) notes that “talent management consists of six key elements, all of which are essential if the organization expects positive results for the effort, which include: alignment of the organizational strategy with the core values, top management leadership, line management ownership, substantial and frequent talent reviews, a focus on development from within, and incentives for investment in development.” By following the elements of talent

management, administrators can successfully send a clear message to subordinates that their career goals are important to the organization, and that they are an important aspect of the agency's mission, goals, and future.

Open communication and knowledge of the succession plan should be implemented throughout an agency to give all staff members a clear picture of what administrators hope to accomplish through the implementation of the plan. Rothwell and Poduch (2004, 409-410) state that top management should "examine the workforce assigned to each work process to identify individuals who possess, through experience and performance, the most valuable knowledge about the work." Rothwell and Poduch (2004, 415) also assert that one major mistake that administrators often make is taking their experienced workers for granted as "they have the know-how to get the work done...without them, the agency faces a slow-down as less-experienced workers struggle to figure out what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who has necessary information to make decisions and take action."

Ley (2002, 58) found the results regarding this component of the succession planning model to be favorable for the State Bar of Texas Fellows Program, and concluded that the "program seeks talent from every level, the program is publicized to agency employees." However, the interviews that were conducted with members of this organization revealed "that the program would perhaps benefit by limiting participation to non-management positions" (Ley 2002, 58). Whitmore (2006, 41-42) found weaknesses within this category, stating that "the survey showed that while some of these positions did have possible successors, for the most part, succession planning was not

documented, and there was no formalized method for ensuring that current employees were trained to fill critical positions.”

### **Category 8: The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues**

The literature supports the notion that compensation should create incentives for employees to stay. Hays (2004, 261) asserts that “traditional pay systems reward longevity rather than performance; pay is tied to the job classification, and pay increases are often automatic as one progresses up a “step” system; supervisors are rarely able to reward exceptional performance without engineering an upward reclassification; salary growth is therefore arbitrarily restricted for good workers and seen as too lucrative for the less deserving; pay scales are generally too low.” Recommendations for improving these traditional problems concerning compensation include gainsharing, bonuses, and skill-based pay. Adequate pay is a key component in improving and sustaining the motivation, performance, and integrity of public servants. “The goal should be to pay public servants enough to attract and retain competent people while providing sufficient incentives for staff to maintain a high level of performance over a sustained period.” (Bertucci 2006, 177)

Organizations must focus on the career path, rather than on a specific position. Whitmore (2006, 20) notes that “one obstacle facing public agency succession planning programs in Texas is the Texas Open Records Act... All communication with employees is subject to the Texas Public Information Act, meaning that the public can view the information.” “This policy could prove problematic if a job was posted publicly, but was

already promised in writing to an internal employee; through an open records request, an applicant for that position could obtain this information and file a suit against the agency citing a violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, under the rationale that they never had an opportunity to be hired for the job.” (Whitmore 2006, 20) One way for organizations to ensure that they are in compliance with state hiring regulations is to avoid one-on-one mapping of candidates to specific positions. Rather, it is better to develop a substantial number of qualified leaders and to see that those leaders gain experience in a variety of functional assignments. When openings do occur, it is then easier to choose a replacement and to backfill.

Regarding the category of unique public-sector issues in a succession planning model, Whitmore (2006, 45) found that TDI “is not able to compensate employees with salaries that match those offered in the private sector.” Although TDI does “recognize the need to focus succession planning on specific positions rather than specific individuals, no plan has been implemented at this time” (Whitmore 2006, 45). Whitmore’s recommendations to TDI pertaining to this category include adding disclaimers “to all succession planning documentation stating that the plan is not a guarantee of promotion, but simply a framework. . .employees names should not be listed on succession planning documentation, only position titles should be used” (Whitmore 2006, 49).

Table 2.1 lists categories of an ideal succession plan and related literature pertaining to each category.



**Table 2.1. Conceptual Framework of an Ideal Succession Planning Model**

Practical Ideal Type Categories	Source
<p><b>Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Top management analyzes agency mission, goals, and initiatives and offers their full support to the succession planning model.</li> <li>2. Management understands the succession plan and is responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the model.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bertucci 2006, Ley 2002, Pernick 2001, Pickett 1998, Schall 1997, Spoor 1993, Whitmore 2006</li> <li>2. Barker 1997, Brady 1982, Diamond 2006, Kim 2007, Pernick 2001, Rothwell 2004, Schall 1997, Spoor 1993, Whitmore 2006</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should be based on the agency's strategic and workforce plan</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategic plan should determine which positions will be in succession plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anonymous 2005, Berry 1995, Eadie 1983, Green 2000, Ley 2002, Lynn 2001, Spoor 1993, Whitmore 2006</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency's needs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessment of core competencies to determine gaps, needed skills, and recognition of the positions that should be included in the succession plan.</li> <li>2. Determine future work requirements through an action plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grigoryev 2006, Kim 2007, Kiyonaga 2004, Ley 2002, Lynn 2001, Pickett 1998, Pynes 2004, Rothwell 2004, Whitmore 2006</li> <li>2. Anonymous 2005, Helton 2004, Lynn 2001, McCauley 2006, Patton 2002, Pynes 2004, Rothwell 2004</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formal mentoring.</li> <li>2. Opportunity/Career paths.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bard 2000, Friedman 1990, Hale 1995, Hale 1996, Ley 2002</li> <li>2. Bonczek 2006, Foster 2000, Friedman 1990, Hale 1996, Holinsworth 2004, McDermott 2001, Pernick 2001, Whitmore 2006</li> </ol>
<p><b>The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Management listens to employees' career goals/desires.</li> <li>2. Availability of career training choices for employees.</li> <li>3. Performance evaluation should be used for employee advancement.</li> <li>4. Employees should be involved in their own performance evaluation.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Friedman 1990, Haworth 2005, Ley 2002, Whitmore 2006</li> <li>2. Green 2000, Hays 2004, Ley 2002, McDermott 2001, Patton 2002, Pernick 2001, Pynes 2004, Whitmore 2006</li> <li>3. Glendinning 2002, Hays 2004</li> <li>4. Glendinning 2002, Hays 2004, Pynes 2004, Whitmore 2006</li> </ol>
<p><b>A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinator should keep succession plan current.</li> <li>2. Availability of dedicated funds/budget for employees career advancement.</li> <li>3. Coordinator should keep track of future workforce needs.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bertucci 2006, Friedman 1990, Ley 2002, Whitmore 2006</li> <li>2. Ley 2002, Pynes 2004</li> <li>3. Ley 2002, Whitmore 2006</li> </ol>
<p><b>The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify talent at all levels.</li> <li>2. Open communication and knowledge of plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bard 2000, Friedman 1990, Green 2000, Green 2002, Holinsworth 2004, Kiyonaga 2004, Ley 2002, Pynes 2004, Rothwell 2004, Whitmore 2006</li> <li>2. Bard 2000, Green 2002, Holinsworth 2004, Ley 2002, Lynn 2001, Pynes 2004, Whitmore 2006</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Succession plan should be used as an incentive to retain employees within public agencies.</li> <li>2. Succession plan must focus on career path rather than on specific positions.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bertucci 2006, Green 2002, Hays 2004, Whitmore 2006</li> <li>2. Anonymous 2005, Green 2002, Pynes 2004, Whitmore 2006</li> </ol>

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to address the subject research purpose. This research utilized the single case study design to assess succession planning at the CSCD. Babbie (2001, 298) notes “that the limitation of attention to a particular instance of something is a case study.” The CSCD currently utilizes some aspects of a succession planning model informally, but its leadership has not conceded the need for a succession planning model at all levels within the agency. “The single case study design is appropriate when the rationale is based on an extreme or unique case.” (Yin 1994, 39) The CSCD is a unique case because this agency is comprised of three distinct departments from three separate counties that operate under the same leadership structure. “The case study method of research has an inherent strength that pertains directly to the purpose of this research in that it provides a means for not just examining a process, but providing a way of improving the existing process.” (Babbie 2004, 293)

Although the case study method has been in existence for many years, there are at least three inherent weaknesses that have been identified with this model. “Perhaps the greatest concern has been the lack of rigor of case study research.” (Yin 2003, 10) As noted in Yin (2003, 10), the claim has been made that “equivocal evidence of biased views have served to influence the direction of findings and conclusions.” Yin (2003, 10-11) also notes that a “common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalization,” and that “they take too long and result in massive, unreadable documents.”

## **Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework**

An operationalization table was created in order to serve as a tool in comparing the present state of succession planning at the CSCD and the practical ideal type model that was constructed through Ley's and Whitmore's reviews of the literature pertaining to succession planning. Table 3.1 serves as a summary of the methodology that was utilized in this research and clearly defines the connections to the conceptual framework.

**Table 3.1. Operationalization of the conceptual framework table**

Practical Ideal Type Categories	Interview Questions
<p><b>Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Top management analyzes agency mission, goals, and initiatives and offers their full support to the succession planning model.</li> <li>2. Management understands the succession plan and is responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the model.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does this agency currently implement a succession planning model? If not, is there an informal succession plan in place?</li> <li>2. In the informal succession plan in line with the mission and goals of the agency?</li> <li>3. Are all members of management supportive of the informal succession plan?</li> <li>4. Does management fully understand what a succession planning model entails?</li> <li>5. Does top management ensure proper implementation of the informal succession plan?</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should be based on the agency's strategic and workforce plan</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategic plan should determine which positions will be in succession plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is the informal succession plan in line with the strategic and workforce plans of the agency?</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency's needs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessment of core competencies to determine gaps, needed skills, and the positions that should be included in the succession plan.</li> <li>2. Determine future work requirements through an action plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does this agency assess core competencies to determine the gaps and future needs of skills and positions?</li> <li>2. Is there an action plan in existence to determine proper implementation of the agency's informal succession plan?</li> <li>3. Is there an action plan to determine this agency's future work requirements?</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formal mentoring.</li> <li>2. Opportunity/career paths.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is formal mentoring currently available to each employee of this agency?</li> <li>2. Is there open communication regarding opportunity/career paths between top members of management and lower-level employees?</li> </ol>
<p><b>The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Management listens to employees' career goals/desires.</li> <li>2. Availability of career training choices for employees.</li> <li>3. Performance evaluation should be used for employee advancement.</li> <li>4. Employees should be involved in their own performance evaluation.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is top management interested in each employee's career goals/desires?</li> <li>2. Are employees given choices regarding training opportunities?</li> <li>3. Are performance evaluations used for an employees career advancement?</li> <li>4. Do employees participate in their own performance evaluations?</li> </ol>
<p><b>A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinator should keep succession plan current.</li> <li>2. Availability of dedicated funds/budget for employees career advancement.</li> <li>3. Coordinator should keep track of future workforce needs.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who is responsible for implementing this agency's informal succession plan?</li> <li>2. Is there a fund specifically designated for implementing a succession plan?</li> <li>3. Who is responsible for monitoring possible future changes in the workforce?</li> </ol>
<p><b>The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify talent at all levels.</li> <li>2. Open communication and knowledge of plan.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is talent identified at all levels within this agency?</li> <li>2. Are this agency's career advancement plans communicated to all employees?</li> <li>3. Does top management keep inventory of talents/skills that are available within the agency and that may be utilized when a vacancy arises?</li> </ol>
<p><b>The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Succession plan should be used as an incentive to retain employees within public agencies.</li> <li>2. Succession plan must focus on career path rather than on specific positions.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does this agency currently utilize career path planning as an incentive to retain its employees?</li> <li>2. Does this agency focus on career paths and encourage employees to aspire to higher positions within the agency?</li> </ol>

## **Interviews**

This research project solely utilized interviews as a method for gathering data. Specifically, interviews were conducted with two members of top management, four members of middle management, and ten line staff members in an attempt to assess this agency's current informal succession plan in comparison to the practical ideal type model identified in the literature review. The interviews consisted of questions based on the eight categories of an ideal succession plan as outlined in the operationalization table (table 3.1). "Case study interviews operate on two levels at the same time: satisfying the needs of inquiry while simultaneously putting forth friendly and non-threatening questions in open-ended interviews." (Yin 2003, 90) It is important to structure interview questions in an unbiased manner in order to ensure accuracy when gathering results from research participants.

## **Human Subjects**

This research was exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State University Institutional Review Board. Participation in this research was on a volunteer basis. Subjects who were interviewed for this research were not identified by name or position within the agency. The information provided through participation in these interviews was not of a confidential nature, and did not pose any reasonably foreseeable risk or discomfort to the subjects involved.

The following chapters assess the information gathered through the focused interviews and provide recommendations on implementing a succession plan at the CSCD.

## **Chapter 4. Results**

A case study design was used to assess the informal succession plan at the CSCD based on the practical ideal type developed from a review of the literature and the work of Sharon Ley (2002) and Melissa Whitmore (2006). Through interviews, this assessment identified which categories of the ideal succession planning model were being utilized by the CSCD's informal succession plan and which categories need to be implemented or improved in order for this agency to fully meet the ideals of a succession planning model.

A total of sixteen staff members were interviewed for this research project. At the time of the interviews, two were employed in top management position, four were employed in middle management position, and the remaining ten staff were employed as line staff within this agency. The members of management who were interviewed were the executive director of this agency and one county director. One of the middle managers was a county supervisor, and the remaining three middle managers were senior community supervision officers (CSOs). The ten line staff members were one clerical support staff member, one counseling staff member, and eight line officers. Of the eight line officers interviewed, five also managed a specialized caseload. The remaining three officers were employed at the CSO II level. Each research participant was asked the same questions about the CSCD's informal succession plan.

## **Category 1: Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan**

The literature pertaining to succession planning suggests that top management should analyze agency mission, goals, and initiatives and offer their full support to the succession planning model. A succession plan cannot be successfully implemented into the structure of any agency, public or private, without the full support of the members of top management. It is the duty of management to fully comprehend the agency's succession plan and to ensure its proper implementation at all levels within the agency. A succession plan will undoubtedly be more favorably received by the workforce if top management visibly embraces it.

As shown in table 4.1, thirteen of the sixteen research participants credited this agency with having an informal succession plan in place. This agency currently practices many aspects of an ideal succession plan, but has not taken the necessary step of formally including a succession planning model into its policies and procedures. Decisions are made by consensus of members of top management as vacancies become available, and an application and interview process is followed before an offer of advancement is made to an employee. Currently, plans are informally discussed and decided by members of top management; there is no actual process in place for preparing certain employees to assume leadership positions within this agency.

**Table 4.1. Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency’s succession plan- Results**

**Table 4.1**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Top management analyzes agency mission, goals, and initiatives and offers their full support to the succession planning model	This agency does not currently have a succession planning model implemented but, is there an informal succession plan in place?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n</i> =2	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n</i> =4	<b>Yes=4</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n</i> =10	<b>Yes=7</b> <b>No=2</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>

As shown in table 4.2, thirteen of the sixteen research participants agreed that the informal succession plan is in line with the agency’s mission and goals. Top management executes changes to this agency’s workforce structure and is responsible for designing and implementing the agency’s mission and goals. Top management decides who has the capability to take over vacant positions, and they ensure that the duties of those positions are met satisfactorily. Keeping the informal succession plan in line with this agency’s mission and goals best serves the needs of management and of the agency.

**Table 4.2. Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency’s succession plan- Results**

**Table 4.2**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Top management analyzes agency mission, goals, and initiatives and offers their full support to the succession planning model	Is the informal succession plan in line with the mission and goals of the agency?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n</i> =2	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n</i> =4	<b>Yes=4</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n</i> =10	<b>Yes=7</b> <b>No=3</b>

As shown in table 4.3, 75% of respondents agreed that all members of management are supportive of the informal succession plan. Top management needs to share similar views in regards to staffing and development of the workforce in order to ensure this agency's future success. Although an overall majority of respondents agreed that all members of management are supportive of this agency's plan, only 60% of the line staff interviewed concurred with this statement.

**Table 4.3. Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan- Results**

**Table 4.3**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Top management analyzes agency mission, goals, and initiatives and offers their full support to the succession planning model	Are all members of management supportive of the informal succession plan?	<b>Top: n=2</b>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid: n=4</b>	<b>Yes=4</b>
		<b>Line: n=10</b>	<b>Yes=6 No=3 Unsure=1</b>

As evidenced in table 4.4, twelve of the sixteen interviewees stated that management does not fully understand what a succession planning model entails. This perceived lack of understanding is most likely due to the fact that this agency has not implemented a succession plan. Upon implementing a succession planning model, members of top management would be required to undergo administrative training specifically geared toward acquiring the necessary skills and abilities to successfully accomplish the goals of the succession plan.

**Table 4.4. Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency's succession plan- Results**

**Table 4.4**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Management understands the succession plan and is responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the model	Does management fully understand what a succession planning model entails?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>No=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=2</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=3</b> <b>Unsure=5</b>

Table 4.5 shows that ten of the sixteen interviewees said that top management ensures proper implementation of this agency's informal succession plan. Members of top management are responsible for this agency's daily operations, and it is their duty to recognize the changes that are needed in order for this agency to proceed in the right direction. Whereas top management has input on every decision that is made within this agency, they undoubtedly guide the transformation of this agency's leadership structure when the need arises.

**Table 4.5. Top management should participate in development and support implementation of the agency’s succession plan- Results**

**Table 4.5**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Management understands the succession plan and is responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the model	Does top management ensure proper implementation of the informal succession plan?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=3</b> <b>No=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=5</b> <b>No=2</b> <b>Unsure=3</b>

**Category 2: The succession plan should be based on the agency’s strategic and workforce plan**

A strategic plan should serve as an agency’s guide in preparing for its future workforce needs. Such a plan openly communicates the agency’s current standing as well as the direction that its leaders have chosen for its future. Strategic plans are specifically written for the purpose of ensuring that agencies continue to thrive for years to come, and are also a way to ensure that the agency is meeting the needs of the public as well. A review of the literature notes that the strategic plan should determine which positions should be included in a succession planning model. By taking the necessary steps to ensure that these positions are properly maintained, the leadership of an agency can rest assured that their agency mission will prosper even in their absence.

As shown in table 4.6, 63% of the interviewees believed that the CSCD’s informal succession plan is in line with its strategic and workforce plans. The future of the CSCD is guided by those strategic and workforce plans. Top management is credited

with ensuring that positions are filled by a competent staff that understands the significance of this agency's plans. Employees of this agency are confident that tenured staff members are available and could assume a leadership role, if necessary, and adequately complete the tasks that are required of that position.

**Table 4.6: The succession plan should be based on the agency's strategic and workforce plan- Results**

**Table 4.6**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Strategic plan should determine which positions will be in succession plan	Is the informal succession plan in line with the strategic and workforce plans of the agency?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n</i> =2	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n</i> =4	<b>Yes=3</b> <b>No=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n</i> =10	<b>Yes=6</b> <b>No=1</b> <b>Unsure=3</b>

**Category 3: The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency's needs**

Agencies should be prepared to competently fill positions as they become vacant, particularly those positions that could have the most impact on the agency's continued functioning. Many agencies recognize the need to assess the core competencies of their most important positions, and they also recognize the needed skills and gaps that are present in their current workforce. Upon identifying the core competencies of valuable positions within the agency, the literature notes that an action plan should be executed in order to ensure that the proper steps are taken to secure the availability of a competent future workforce.

Table 4.7 shows that 75% of the interviewees did not feel confident that this agency assesses core competencies to determine gaps and future needs of skills and positions. Many interviewees disclosed that employees traditionally advance within this agency merely based on seniority and not on their possession of skills or knowledge that would genuinely enable them to competently assume responsibility of a higher status position. Employees who feel that their efforts will not be appreciated within their first few years of service may actually get discouraged and not put forth their best effort. It is important for top management to take the time to know their workforce and become acquainted with each individual employee's strengths and abilities.

**Table 4.7. The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency's needs-  
Results**

**Table 4.7**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Assessment of core competencies to determine gaps, needed skills, and the positions that should be included in the succession plan	Does this agency assess core competencies to determine the gaps and future needs of skills and positions?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>No=1</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>No=2</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=6</b> <b>Unsure=2</b>

As noted in table 4.8, ten of the sixteen interviewees did not feel that this agency has an action plan in place to determine proper implementation of the informal succession plan. The decisions that are made within this agency are based on what management feels will best serve the needs of this agency as vacancies arise, and are not

based on a written plan that has been prepared in advance. A succession plan would establish a plan that can be utilized by management for years to come and it would clearly communicate which measures should be taken when opportunities become available.

**Table 4.8. The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency’s needs-  
Results**

**Table 4.8**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Determine future work requirements through an action plan	Is there an action plan in existence to determine proper implementation of the agency’s informal succession plan?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>No=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=2</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=4</b> <b>No=3</b> <b>Unsure=3</b>

Table 4.9 notes that in regards to having an action plan to determine this agency’s future work requirements, top management asserted that one does not exist. All middle management respondents confidently stated that this agency must follow an action plan, either written or verbal, that is exclusively shared among top members of management. The ten line staff interviewees were evenly split in deciding whether this agency has an action plan in place. The future work requirements of an agency are an important measure of what needs be done and of what skills or knowledge are lacking among the current workforce. A written action plan is not currently in existence within this agency but, if a succession plan were implemented, an action plan could clearly direct its future work requirements and allow all staff members to be knowledgeable about the process.

**Table 4.9. The succession plan should be based on assessment of the agency's needs-  
Results**

**Table 4.9**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Determine future work requirements through an action plan	Is there an action plan to determine this agency's future work requirements?	<b>Top: n=2</b>	<b>No=2</b>
		<b>Mid: n=4</b>	<b>Yes=4</b>
		<b>Line: n=10</b>	<b>Yes=5 No=4 Unsure=1</b>

**Category 4: The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees**

Employees need to be assured that their employer is interested in them beyond their ability to fulfill their assigned role within the agency on a daily basis. Agencies should offer professional development opportunities as a means of demonstrating their regard for their employees' personal needs. Formal mentoring should be made available to staff at all levels within the agency. This option will undoubtedly allow lower-level employees to have access to higher-ranking staff who may serve as role models and encourage loyalty toward the agency. The literature review also notes the importance of communication regarding opportunities or career paths being accessible to all employees. Employers that make the effort and invest in providing professional development opportunities for their staff will enjoy much appreciation and increased loyalty from their workforce.

As evidenced in table 4.10, 56% of the interviewees expressed that the CSCD does provide formal mentoring to each employee. Top and middle management interviewees consider formal mentoring to be available to line staff through access to those in higher level positions, namely supervisors and senior CSOs who serve as mid-level managers. Line staff and middle management should have opportunities to communicate openly regarding every aspect of their employment and work duties. There was not a consensus among the ten line staff, however, as they could not confidently state that they are afforded formal mentoring opportunities through this agency. Line staff expressed the desire that this agency prioritize the availability of formal mentoring by allowing them to be assigned to a Senior CSO based on their similarities, specifically personalities and shared interests.

**Table 4.10. The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees- Results**

**Table 4.10**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Formal mentoring	Is formal mentoring currently available to each employee of this agency?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=3</b> <b>No=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=4</b> <b>No=6</b>

As shown in table 4.11, nine of the sixteen respondents stated that there is open communication between top members of management and lower level employees regarding opportunity/career paths. Many interviewees said that upon a vacancy within this agency, the executive director sends e-mail to all staff members to inform them of the

position's availability and qualifications. All employees are informed of the deadline to apply for the available position and they are given the opportunity to submit their resume for consideration. Upon applying for an available position, employees are required to complete the interview process and may be required to take a competency examination for certain positions. Available positions may also be announced by county directors at weekly staff meetings, and employees are encouraged to apply.

**Table 4.11. The succession plan should provide formal professional development opportunities for employees- Results**

**Table 4.11**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Opportunity/Career paths	Is there open communication regarding opportunity/career paths between top members of management and lower-level employees?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=3</b> <b>No=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=5</b> <b>No=3</b> <b>Unsure=2</b>

**Category 5: The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees**

Top management should provide individual attention to all employees by exhibiting an interest in their personal career goals or desires. Employees should be given the option to choose training opportunities that they are interested in and that will allow them to advance within the agency. Since annual performance evaluations are generally tied to increases in salary, employees should be allowed to participate in the process as much as possible. The feedback that an employee receives as part of the

performance evaluation should clearly inform that individual of their strengths and weaknesses and provide recommendations for personal improvement.

As shown in table 4.12, interviewees were evenly split over top managers' interest in each employee's career goals/desires. Top management did claim to have an interest in each employees' career goals/desires, and to feel certain that promoting from within will ensure that this agency's mission and goals are preserved. Middle managers and line staff interviewees stressed that traditionally, top management gains interest in an individual employee based strictly upon their years of service. Employees feel as though they do not have adequate opportunity for advancement in their first few years of employment and therefore, they do not feel committed to the CSCD. Middle managers reported that they did not feel valued as employees because they are not guaranteed tenure upon reaching a certain position or a certain length of employment within this agency.

**Table 4.12. The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees-**

**Results**

**Table 4.12**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Management listens to employees' career goals/desires	Is top management interested in each employee's career goals/desires?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>No=2</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=5</b> <b>No=5</b>

As noted in table 4.13, 63% of interviewees conceded that employees are given choices regarding training opportunities. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice requires that all CSOs complete a specific number of training hours within their first year of employment in order to become a certified CSO. Upon becoming a certified CSO, officers are required to maintain their certification by completion of 40 hours of additional training per year. Respondents stated that employees are allowed to choose additional training opportunities as their years of service accrue. Top management asserted that employees are notified when training opportunities become available and are allowed to attend on a first-come, first-served basis. Employees also have the option to request that the CSCD sponsor their participation in outside training that they personally feel they would benefit from.

**Table 4.13. The focus of the succession plan should be the agency’s employees-  
Results**

**Table 4.13**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Availability of career training choices for employees	Are employees given choices regarding training opportunities?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=1</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=6</b> <b>No=2</b> <b>Unsure=2</b>

Table 4.14 shows that fourteen of the sixteen interviewees agreed that performance evaluations are used for an employees’ career advancement within this

agency. Performance evaluations are conducted annually and are maintained in an employees personnel file throughout their term of employment. Performance evaluations are considered along with an employee’s resume upon applying for advancement. Performance evaluations are completed for every employee by either a county director or a county supervisor. Upon completion of the evaluation, findings are presented to employees through a one-on-one meeting with either the director or supervisor. Evaluations are directly tied into an employee’s salary, and the amount of increase in salary is disclosed to employees while discussing their annual evaluation findings.

**Table 4.14. The focus of the succession plan should be the agency’s employees-  
Results**

**Table 4.14**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Performance evaluation should be used for employee advancement	Are performance evaluations used for an employees’ career advancement?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=4</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=8</b> <b>No=2</b>

As shown in Table 4.15, ten of the sixteen respondents do perceive that employees participate in their own performance evaluation. The annual performance evaluation allows Directors and Supervisors to categorically rate employees based on their findings from the casework audits they conduct. If employees do not agree with the scores that they are given they have the option to dispute the findings by presenting written feedback to their County Director that will be retained in their personnel file.

Many employees expressed the concern that the ability to provide written feedback is not sufficient participation in the evaluation process. The annual audit is taken very seriously, as the scores that are generated directly impact the increases in an employee's salary.

**Table 4.15. The focus of the succession plan should be the agency's employees-  
Results**

**Table 4.15**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Employees should be involved in their own performance evaluation	Do employees participate in their own performance evaluation?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=4</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=5</b> <b>No=5</b>

**Category 6: A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation**

In order for a succession plan to be successful, staff should be designated to serve as program coordinator. The coordinator should be assigned to manage any impending changes in the workforce. Adequate funds should be allocated for full implementation of the agency's succession plan as well as any training opportunities that would be beneficial to staff members interested in advancing within the agency.

Table 4.16 shows that nine of the sixteen respondents indicated that the executive director is solely responsible for implementing this agency's informal succession plan. The remaining respondents stated that all members of top management equally

implement this agency’s informal succession plan. Top management includes the executive director and the county directors of the three counties of this district. Within the CSCD, the executive director approves the changes that are made in the workforce and the county directors are responsible for ensuring that the changes are successfully implemented at the local level.

**Table 4.16. A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation- Results**

**Table 4.16**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Coordinator should keep succession plan current	Who is responsible for implementing this agency’s informal succession plan?	<b>Top: n=2</b>	<b>Executive Director=2</b>
		<b>Mid: n=4</b>	<b>Executive Director=2 Top Management=2</b>
		<b>Line: n=10</b>	<b>Executive Director=5 Top Management=5</b>

As shown in table 4.17, there was unanimity among the sixteen staff members that there is currently not a fund specifically designated for implementing a succession planning model within this agency. A fund should only be dedicated to the implementation once this agency formally adopts a succession plan as part of its policies and procedures. Upon adopting a succession plan, the fund should be allotted to cover costs for employee training and the other expenses that would assist the succession plan in gaining strength and support.

**Table 4.17. A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation- Results**

**Table 4.17**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Availability of dedicated funds/budget for employees career advancement	Is there a fund specifically designated for implementing a succession plan?	<b>Top: n=2</b>	<b>No=1 Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Mid: n=4</b>	<b>No=4</b>
		<b>Line: n=10</b>	<b>No=4 Unsure=6</b>

As shown in table 4.18, 50% of the research participants felt that the entire top management staff is responsible for monitoring possible future changes in the workforce, while 44% of respondents said that this agency's executive director is solely responsible for monitoring changes to this agency's workforce. One participant expressed that the fiscal officer was the only position capable of monitoring these changes properly, as this agency's budget is what determines the changes this agency can and cannot make.

**Table 4.18. A succession plan should include a designated staff and adequate funds for its implementation- Results**

**Table 4.18**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Coordinator should keep track of future workforce needs	Who is responsible for monitoring possible future changes in the workforce?	<b>Top: n=2</b>	<b>Executive Director=1 Top Management=1</b>
		<b>Mid: n=4</b>	<b>Executive Director=1 Fiscal Officer=1 Top Management=2</b>
		<b>Line: n=10</b>	<b>Executive Director=5 Top Management=5</b>

**Category 7: The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency**

Talent should be identified at all levels within an agency's structure. Too often, lower level employees are taken for granted and their skills and experience are not fully recognized by members of top management. Although the top management positions seem to be the most prominent for the survival of the agency, the fact is that there are many other positions that are also critical to the agency's continued success. The literature notes that the logistics of the succession plan should be openly communicated to all staff members in order to encourage acceptance of the program by every staff member who will be affected by its implementation.

Table 4.19 shows that 53% of research participants agreed that talent is identified at all levels within this agency. The opportunity to be promoted to CSO II level after three years of employment, the opportunity to be considered for a specialized caseload officer position, and the opportunity to be promoted to a senior CSO are all instances of identifying talent at all levels as employees are promoted to these higher level positions from within the agency. However, the remaining participants did not agree that talent is identified at all levels within this agency. Employees expressed concerns that members of the counseling staff and the clerical support staff are not recognized for their talents and do not have the opportunity for advancement within this agency as there is a limited number of positions available for these staff members.

**Table 4.19. The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency-**

**Results**

**Table 4.19**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Identify talent at all levels	Is talent identified at all levels within this agency?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>No=1</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=3</b> <b>No=1</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=5</b> <b>No=5</b>

As shown in table 4.20, eleven of the sixteen research participants agreed that this agency's career advancement plans are communicated to all employees. Management's goals for this agency's future are communicated to the entire workforce at the quarterly in-service meeting, where all employees are expected to participate. The CSCD must

also maintain compliance with the standards of the Criminal Justice Assistance Division, which also has authority in deciding this agency’s future direction. The CSCD’s strategic plan is an open record and should be accessible to every employee of the agency.

**Table 4.20. The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency-**

**Results**

**Table 4.20**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Open communication and knowledge of plan	Are this agency’s career advancement plans communicated to all employees?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=2</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=7</b> <b>No=3</b>

Table 4.21 notes that nine of the sixteen respondents agreed that top management keeps an inventory of the talents and skills that are available within this agency and that may be utilized when a vacancy arises. The maintenance of the annual performance evaluations in an employees’ personnel file is the best indication that management has access to gaining a clearer understanding of who may be eligible to best fill a position when the need arises. Employee personnel files should keep records of everything (including volunteer service and participation on agency committees) that an employee accomplishes within the agency. The remaining seven respondents stated that this agency’s management will most likely promote an individual based on the number of years of service rather than that person’s actual talent and skills.

**Table 4.21. The scope of the succession plan should cover all levels of the agency-  
Results**

**Table 4.21**

Ideal Type Element	Interview Question	Results	
Open communication and knowledge of plan	Does top management keep an inventory of talents and skills that are available within the agency and that may be utilized when a vacancy arises?	<b>Top: n=2</b>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid: n=4</b>	<b>Yes=4</b>
		<b>Line: n=10</b>	<b>Yes=3 No=4 Unsure=3</b>

**Category 8: The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues**

Although a succession plan cannot prepare an employee to assume responsibility for a specific position within an agency, it can prepare the workforce to assume leadership positions should the need arise. A succession plan should offer necessary training and opportunities for employees to gain the required skills and knowledge to easily progress into vacant positions if necessary. Agencies that place emphasis on their employees' future within their leadership structure will undoubtedly increase their employee retention and loyalty to its mission and goals.

As shown in table 4.22, 63% of the respondents did not agree that the CSCD currently utilizes career path planning as an incentive to retain its employees. Currently, there is no written instruction for employees to follow if they are interested in being promoted to a specific position within this agency. When a position becomes available, employees may qualify for promotion based on their tenure or their rank as a CSO II or

Senior CSO. Clear and concise career path planning encourages employee retention and commitment to this agency.

**Table 4.22. The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues- Results**

**Table 4.22**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Succession plan should be used as an incentive to retain employees within public agencies	Does this agency currently utilize career path planning as an incentive to retain its employees?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=1</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=2</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=3</b> <b>No=7</b>

As shown in table 4.23, 75% of the research participants agreed that this agency focuses on career paths and encourages employees to aspire to higher positions within the agency. This is evident through the correspondence that is sent to all employees regarding available positions. This is also evident in the opportunity that is afforded to all CSO I staff as they are able to complete the competency examination for promotion to a CSO II level upon completion of three years of service. As positions become available, CSO II staff members may also complete the competency examination for promotion to senior CSO. This agency implemented the various professional levels because of the scarcity of top management positions, to encourage employee loyalty, and to give employees a higher position to aspire to within the agency.

**Table 4.23. The succession plan should consider unique public-sector issues- Results**

**Table 4.23**

<b>Ideal Type Element</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Results</b>	
Succession plan must focus on career path rather than on specific positions	Does this agency focus on career paths and encourage employees to aspire to higher positions within the agency?	<b>Top:</b> <i>n=2</i>	<b>Yes=2</b>
		<b>Mid:</b> <i>n=4</i>	<b>Yes=2</b> <b>No=2</b>
		<b>Line:</b> <i>n=10</i>	<b>Yes=8</b> <b>No=1</b> <b>Unsure=1</b>

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The purpose of this chapter is to make recommendations to the CSCD on the most effective method for implementing a succession plan based on the research findings. After interviewing a total of sixteen staff members at various professional levels within this agency, it is clear that the CSCD is committed to solidifying its workforce and that its leaders strive to maintain the agency's mission and achieve its goals. While many elements of an ideal succession planning model are currently being utilized by the CSCD, this agency lacks a formal succession plan. The ensuing are recommendations for implementing a successful succession planning model that were gathered from completing this research.

1. Ensure that management has a thorough understanding of what a succession planning model entails.
2. Assess core competencies to determine the gaps and future needs of skills and positions.
3. Devise an action plan to determine proper implementation of the succession plan.
4. Devise an action plan to determine the CSCD's future work requirements.
5. Establish formal mentoring at every level within the CSCD.
6. Improve communication regarding opportunities/career paths between top management and lower-level employees.
7. Top management should exhibit interest in each employee's career goals/desires.
8. Designate a fund for implementing a succession plan.
9. Identify talent at all levels.

10. Top management should keep an inventory of talents and skills that are available within the agency.

11. Utilize career path planning.

**Ensure that management has a thorough understanding of what a succession planning model entails**

A succession plan cannot successfully be implemented at all levels of the CSCD without the unwavering support of all members of management. Top and middle managers at the CSCD would be responsible for ensuring the succession plan's victory and would, therefore, need to be highly trained on all aspects of the plan. Management would also be responsible for recommending staff members as vacancies arise, and would therefore need to be fully informed of the process of identifying employees who possess the abilities necessary to complete the tasks required of the positions. Upon adopting a succession plan into its policies and procedures, the CSCD should thoroughly educate top and middle managers on the elements of that succession plan.

**Assess core competencies to determine the gaps and future needs of skills and positions**

An assessment of core competencies should be conducted for every position within the CSCD in order to identify those positions which would pose the greatest threat to the functioning of the CSCD if left vacant. Upon determining which positions are of utmost importance to the CSCD, management will have a better grasp of the gaps and future needs of skills and positions, and may take the initiative to seek out those traits in

prospective employees or recognize those characteristics among their current workforce. The core competencies of positions should also be included into the CSCD's training manual and should be accessible to all employees. Employees who aspire to different positions within the agency can utilize the information to prepare for advancement.

### **Devise an action plan to determine proper implementation of the succession plan**

An action plan can serve to alleviate nearly all of the pressure and stress of implementing a succession plan at the CSCD. The action plan should clearly indicate the roles that various staff members will be assigned during the introduction and sustenance of the succession plan. The action plan can be used as a guide for ensuring that the plan is consistently on the right track and that the goals of the plan are being accomplished as projected.

### **Devise an action plan to determine the CSCD's future work requirements**

An action plan to determine the CSCD's future work requirements can assist this agency in continually working toward its mission and goals. The action plan should be based, in part, on the core competencies that are recognized for this agency's critical positions. Also, the need for additional positions can be recognized through the action plan. In 2007, the CSCD formed two new positions district training officer and drug court officer based on the agency's current and growing needs. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) also has input in determining the future work requirements of every CSCD in Texas, and the TDCJ's requirements can also be incorporated into this action plan.

### **Establish formal mentoring at every level within the CSCD**

Formal mentoring should be made a priority by members of top and middle management. Employees' loyalty and commitment to the CSCD depend on how they are treated as line staff. The CSCD's investment of time and effort in a formal workplace mentoring program will undoubtedly allow employees to gain confidence in completing their jobs satisfactorily. The mentorship should be based on subjective criteria such as common traits that employees share or likeness in personalities in order to initially strengthen the bond that is formed.

### **Improve communication regarding opportunities/career paths between top management and lower level employees**

Lower level employees will remain committed to the CSCD if they are assured of having a future within this agency. Opportunities and career paths should be communicated during an employees annual evaluation and at various other times as deemed appropriate. Top management should continue to inform employees of the availability of positions within the agency via e-mail or other means. Career paths should be common knowledge among all employees of the CSCD, and each employee should have a clear understanding of their suitability for an available position when the need arises.

### **Top management should exhibit interest in each employee's career goals/desires**

When management takes an interest in their subordinates career goals and desires, they have the possibility of becoming an employer of choice. Employees' aspirations should be of the utmost importance to management, as they may choose to advance within the agency if given the opportunity to do so. Advancing from within can facilitate the transition period and allow the CSCD to avoid having to use resources to prepare a new employee for the position at hand, since a current employee will already have a basic understanding of the requirements of the position.

### **Designate a fund for implementing a succession plan**

A designated fund should be included in the fiscal plan once the succession plan is designed. This fund should specifically cover any and all costs that may be incurred due to the implementation of the succession plan. Funds associated with various aspects of a succession plan may include the costs of sending employees to numerous training opportunities, supplies and equipment that may be utilized during implementation of the succession plan, and the designated coordinator's salary. The succession plan fund should be increased as the pool of potential promotion candidates increases.

### **Identify talent at all levels**

Talent should be identified at all levels within the CSCD. Although certain positions do have specific requirements (e.g., education level and number of years of service) lower level employees should not be precluded from having the opportunity to advance. Again, employees should be made aware of the requirements for each position

and should be considered as potential successors for the positions that they qualify for presently or in the future. Employees should also be encouraged to communicate their interest in different positions within the agency during the annual evaluation process and at other appropriate times.

**Top management should keep an inventory of talents and skills that are available within the agency**

As the CSCD gains efficiency in keeping an inventory of the talents and skills that are available within its workforce, vacancies will become easier to fill as there will continually be a potential candidate ready to assume those responsibilities. Employees will also be encouraged to communicate their interests to top and middle management as this may increase their chances for promotion within the agency.

**Utilize career path planning**

Career path planning can serve to solidify the workforce. The CSCD will remain attractive to current employees and to prospective job candidates if they take the necessary step of making retention of their employees a priority at all levels within the agency. Employees should be knowledgeable about what is required of them in order to advance to higher level positions, and the procedures for advancement should remain consistent. Making employee retention a priority will also serve to build agency allegiance within the workforce.

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