

Affirmative Action Plan

While some compliance requirements for federal contractors have changed, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 remains in place and creates compliance obligations for federal contractors related to individuals with disabilities (IWD). This includes a requirement to complete a non-discrimination plan for IWD, which is comprised of data analyses, comparison of the contractor's workforce against the national IWD utilization goal, and other actions like evaluation of outreach efforts and review of personnel processes.

Under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a business with a federal contract of \$15,000 or more is required to take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities. Government contractors who have 50 or more employees and a federal contract of \$50,000 or more are required to comply with the non-discrimination plan obligations found in the regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Contact HR Strategies to have your required 2026 AAP developed.

The Power of Preparedness: The Case for Succession Plans

By Thomas Carnahan

Effective leadership is more than just guiding a team toward daily goals. True leadership requires vision, adaptability, and perhaps the most overlooked, a well-designed succession plan. Without a clear roadmap for leadership continuity, even the most talented leaders can struggle to ensure long-term stability or navigate unforeseen transitions.

A succession plan serves as both a compass and an anchor for organizations. It establishes a definitive direction for leadership transition, aligns with broader organizational goals, and

provides a framework for making critical decisions when changes arise. Here are several key reasons why having a succession plan is vital:

1. **Clarity of Vision:** A well-crafted succession plan clarifies future leadership needs and communicates them openly to the organization, fostering trust and unity.
2. **Strategic Alignment:** It ensures that future leaders and initiatives are chosen in alignment with the organization's strategy, maximizing continuity and minimizing disruption.
3. **Risk Management:** Succession plans help identify potential gaps in leadership early, allowing organizations to prepare development strategies rather than react to emergencies.
4. **Measurable Progress:** With clear milestones and timelines, organizations can track their readiness for transitions, celebrate growth, and adjust as needed.
5. **Sustained Success and Continuity:** Planning for future leaders ensures that organizations can withstand transitions smoothly, maintaining momentum and culture.

Although very customized based on the goal of each organization, the common components of a succession plan are the creation of a 9-block grid (often called a "9 blocker") and asking for additional information from each potential successor.

First, the 9 blocker uses current performance management and talent management scores to place a prospective successor in 4 basic categories: Dark Green: Ready for advancement; Light Green: Leadership potential but growth needed; Yellow: Potentially core employee (the enigma being the employee in this group who scores high on talent management but has a low performance

score); Red: No current chance for advancement. The additional information that should be requested from potential successors (Dark and Light Green) is their 1) willingness and 2) ability to be promoted.

These questions take into account successors personal goals and life situations (e.g., they may not be ready for a promotion because it requires a move and they do not want to take their children away from their current schools, or they cannot currently accept a promotion because they are the primary caregiver for a parent, but this could change in the future.)

Talent Management Score	High Leadership Potential – Poor Performer in Role: The Enigma	High Leadership Potential – Core Employee	Ready for Advancement
	Underperforming	Core Employee	Next-Level Growth – Mentorship Needed
	Underperforming	Core Employee	Trusted in Role
Performance Management Score			

Creating a robust succession plan requires a holistic approach. Below are the core components leaders should address:

- 1. Vision and Mission Alignment:** Begin with a clear articulation of your organization's vision and mission. These foundational elements guide succession decisions, ensuring the plan remains rooted in the core purpose.
- 2. Identification of Critical Roles and Key Talent:** Determine which positions are crucial to the organization's success and identify potential future leaders. Assess internal and external talent pools for readiness.
- 3. Skills and Competency Assessment:** Evaluate the strengths and development needs of candidates for succession. This assessment helps in tailoring leadership

development programs and allocating resources where they are most needed.

- 4. Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve key stakeholders such as board members, current leaders, and employees in the succession planning process. Their insights help shape priorities and create buy-in.
- 5. Development and Training Plans:** Craft targeted development programs and mentorship opportunities to prepare future leaders. Ensure ongoing learning and feedback to bridge skill gaps.
- 6. Risk Analysis and Contingency Planning:** Anticipate potential obstacles and develop contingency strategies. A good succession plan considers "what if" scenarios and outlines steps to maintain organizational stability.
- 7. Communication Strategy:** Develop a clear plan for communicating succession vision, process, and progress to all stakeholders. Regular, transparent updates help build trust and engagement.
- 8. Monitoring and Evaluation:** Set up mechanisms for ongoing assessment of succession readiness. Use key performance indicators (KPIs) and feedback loops to inform necessary adjustments and ensure the plan evolves with organizational needs.

Leadership is not just about steering the ship; it is about ensuring a steady hand at the helm now and for years to come. Having a comprehensive succession plan empowers organizations to make informed decisions, inspire confidence, and achieve sustainable growth through seamless leadership transitions. By thoughtfully addressing each component outlined above, leaders can ensure their organizations are not only prepared for today's challenges but are also poised for a resilient and thriving future.

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