

--- County Clerk's Office: A Workforce Development Plan

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The Clerk's Office of ---- County, Florida serves a population of 75,305 according to the 2020 United States Census Bureau (n.d.) located in the Florida panhandle stretching from the Alabama state line to the Gulf of Mexico. The county is located approximately midway between the ----- . The county seat is -----, with ----- and ----- the other incorporated towns (-----, n.d.). The main office is located in the courthouse in ----- with a second location in -----.

Established by the Florida Constitution, the Clerk's Office provides services related the documents of the circuit court, the county funds (including the county CFO, treasurer, and auditor), the documents of the County Recorder, and the records of the Board of County Commissioners (Clerk's Office, n.d.).

### **Background**

The Clerk's office is non-union and currently employs 66 individuals across 10 departments including: Administration/HR (2), Finance (11), Civil Courts (13), Criminal Courts (12), Records Management, Recording/Official Records (6), Records Management (4), , Internal Audits (2), Information Technology (6), Tourism Development Tax Collections (3), and the Coastal Annex (4; see Figure 1; C. ---, personal communication, November 3, 2021).

Figure 1

*Organizational Chart*

***[Removed for Confidentiality]***

Clerks I, II, and III could be considered administrative while other positions are considered professional positions, specialists and senior specialists who are subject matter

experts (; C. -----, personal communication, November 27, 2021). Leadership consists of supervisors, managers, and directors. Funding comes partly from the county and partly from the state. A portion of the Clerk's Office revenue is returned to the State of Florida.

### ***Mission, Vision, and Core Values***

The Clerk's Office vision focuses on "improving the quality of services provided" as well as a "commitment to our core values" (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021). Core values include innovation, teamwork, "inspired excellence," "growth through development and opportunity," as well as responsibility and accountability. The mission is "to provide exceptional service through innovation, quality, and commitment." The mission, vision, and core values are considered to be living statements. For example, the organization created virtual desktops and compressed work schedules as part of its innovation value. A family first focus is emphasized every day as is team work. Not only is "every success celebrated" (a core value) failures are recognizes as learning opportunities (C. -----, personal communication, November 27, 2021).

One value is "growth through development and opportunity." The Clerk's Office offers a number of personal and professional growth opportunities. "In the past, learning management systems have been implemented" (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021), as have in-person training opportunities. New hires are currently assessed to ensure they meet minimum requirements and receive thorough training during the on-boarding process (the mission, vision, and core values are also part of the employee handbook).

### **Strategy**

There are no current plans for increased programs, services, or staffing levels and current training meets the needs of onboarding and ensuring job requirements are met as well as ongoing

development opportunities. During annual reviews employees identify both short-term and long-term goals and the supervisor identifies any goals or competencies that the employee needs to address (C. -----, personal communication, November 27, 2021). A number of reports are run monthly, quarterly, and yearly to ensure certain benchmarks are met.

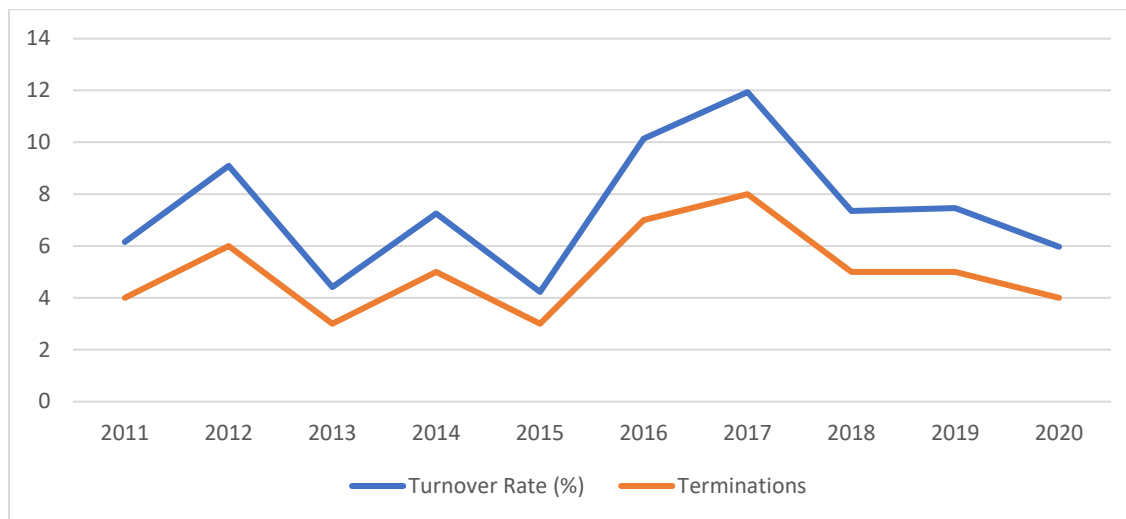
There is a desire to maintain high employee satisfaction (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021). Furthermore, while there are no goals for projected reduction, the organization has identified a need to develop a formalized succession plan, ensuring the maintenance of current staffing levels as well as key knowledge within the organization; to ensure there is a continuous pipeline of mission critical employees. This ties well to the organization's business strategy for inspired excellence, responsibility, and accountability, as well as growth through development and opportunity.

### **Current State**

The organization has a record of low turnover (See Figure 2). While this suggests that there is high employee satisfaction as this has been shown to be negatively correlated with turnover intention (Randhawa, 2007). However, high retention means that within the next couple of years, several employees will meet retirement eligibility (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021). The impact of not having a succession plan has already been experienced. In the last year, the Courts Director left, and the lack of succession planning became a critical issue. Thankfully the organization was able to fill the position quickly but not due to having a plan in place. There is not a formal plan to prepare the organization for coming retirements. Further emphasizing the need, succession planning was also identified as a need during a recent internal audit.

Figure 2

*Percent Turnover and Terminations Over Time*



The organization has a plan in place currently where leadership identifies a designee to fill in behind them and it relies heavily on the individual who is outgoing (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021). This designee position has no guarantee of being given the leadership position when it is open nor is there a clear plan to ensure this person is qualified to move into that position. While there is a formal training that leaders are expected to attend through the Florida Center for Public Management, this does not address specific workplace duties. That being said, there are current opportunities for cross-training between departments.

Succession planning has been shown to be positively correlated with employee performance and career development (Ali et al., 2019). Having the opportunity for career development and advance is tied to employee performance and productivity and succession planning is a valuable way of helping employees identify a path for and work on career development. Career development acts as a mediating variable explaining the relationship between succession planning and employee performance. Thus, succession planning benefits the employee and the organization. This highlights the interconnection between the organization's

strategies, particularly growth and development as well as accountability and the HR departments strategies of succession planning and continued employee satisfaction (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021).

***How the Current State was Examined***

The current state was developed based on discussions with Ms. ----- (personal communication, November 3, 2021) based on current practices and procedures, exit interviews and internal audit findings; as well as a review of data related to turnover. Table 1 outlines the gaps as they connect to the current state of the workforce.

Table 1

*Competency Gaps*

Current State	Gap
No formal process for identifying career development interests with employees (a designee is determined by the current leadership)	Need a means of identifying interest in career development and leadership
No formal process for measuring progress in career development and thus toward succession planning.	Need for the workforce development program to include a means of assessment toward expected
No formal identification of KPI for leadership position	Need for clear KPIs in relation to career development and succession planning
Formal leadership training available as well as opportunities to cross-train	While there is current training and development in place, there is no formal means of gaining experience in leadership roles prior to appointment (i.e., mentoring, job shadowing, etc.)

By focusing on the intersection of career development and succession planning, a workforce development plan would address both strategies of ongoing job satisfaction and succession planning.

**Recommendations**

The gap that emerged in the analysis of the current state against the organization's strategy relates to succession planning. The recommendations are developed with the idea that they also connect to both growth and reduction planning, since succession is tied to both.

### **Growth and Reduction Recommendations**

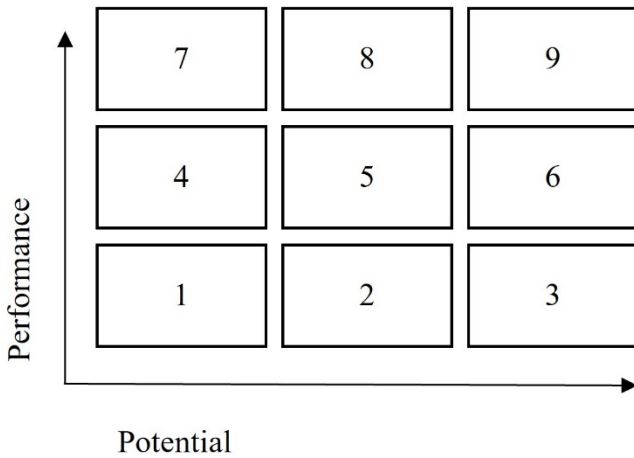
Succession planning and its tie in with employee development remains the biggest focus for the organization (C. -----, personal communication, November 24, 2021). Succession planning and employee development are critical in both in terms of organizational growth but also in organizational reduction (Noe, 2020) although there is no plan for reduction. In both cases, having a clear path for identifying and preparing key leaders is essential. Furthermore, developing the following recommendations would coincide with current organizational practices and benefit all employees. The following recommendations address both succession planning as well as the broader relationship to employee development at every level.

### **Identification of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI)**

The organization has job descriptions in place, which already provide the foundation for annual development plans (C. -----, personal communication, November 24, 2021). These can provide the foundation for identifying the KPI needed for leadership positions and a means of evaluating readiness for succession. This can also be integrated with the next recommendation for the nine-box grid since to use this grid the organization must identify what each box means (see Figure 3). Box 1 would represent a person with low performance and low potential while Box 9 would potentially represent those most suited to moving into key leadership positions (Noe, 2020). These could be developed in conjunction with competencies already part of the evaluation process (C. -----, personal communication, November 24, 2021).

Figure 3

*Nine-Box Grid*



**Nine-Box Grid**

A nine-box grid provides a valuable way to assess performance by potential (Noe, 2020). Human Resources along with leaders at every level in the organization can evaluate each employee along these two axes of performance as well as promotability/potential. This can aid in identifying candidates that may be well suited to higher level leadership positions as well as providing a useful foundation in keeping with employee development endeavors at every level. This coincides well with the current approach to development planning where employees and supervisors identify both short- and long-term goals in conjunction with expected competencies (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021).

**Formal Mentoring/Coaching**

A formalized mentoring program ensures not only that there a mentor-mentee relationship established but also that a clear set of expectations (Noe, 2020). A solid mentoring program will would address four key stages: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Watt, 2004). While the primary focus of the mentoring is toward developing leaders, a



mentoring program can be valuable for every employee, from those who may be low performing at any level of potential to those who are preparing for senior leadership positions (Watt, 2004). In some cases, coaching can be a powerful motivating tool as well (Noe, 2020).

Those interested in and selected for succession preparation would benefit from a formal mentoring program. However, a formal mentoring relationship could be established for those interested in being mentored in relation to either higher level positions or for cross-training in other areas. Such a program can also be used in a way that senior leaders can mentor others in the process of mentoring.

### **Readiness Evaluation**

When individuals are engaged in developing as part of the succession plan, it is important to have a means by which readiness is assessed (Noe, 2020). This can be integrated into performance evaluation. A 360-degree evaluation allows for input from both supervisors and leadership as well as colleagues and subordinates as applicable. The KPI provide a foundation for ongoing evaluation of readiness.

These recommendations align with the gaps identified above (See Table 2).

Table 2

#### *Gap to Recommendation*

Gap	Recommendation
Need a means of identifying interest in career development and leadership	Nine-Box Grid, Annual Evaluations
Need for the workforce development program to include a means of assessment toward expected outcomes	Existing Management Program, Mentoring/Coaching
Need for clear KPIs in relation to career development and succession planning	KPIs, with an emphasis on ability to measure, built from job descriptions and leadership input.

While there is current training and development in place, there is no formal means of gaining experience in leadership roles prior to appointment (i.e., mentoring, job shadowing, etc.)

Mentoring/Coaching in conjunction with identified KPIs with formalized evaluation of readiness.

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## **Succession Planning**

Succession planning is the core of the proposed workforce development plan. It has been identified as a gap and is in keeping with the goals and strategies of the organization (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021). The goal of succession planning is to ensure that there is a ready supply of individuals ready to assume key leadership positions.

### ***Succession Plan Evaluation***

At this time, the organization has a less formalized plan in place (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021). However, recent experiences demonstrated that when a key leader leaves, the organization may not be as prepared as it would like to fill that role. While the organization incorporates goals setting and development as part of annual reviews (C. -----, personal communication, November 24, 2021), there is not a formalized process for succession. As mentioned above, there is a more informal identification of a successor with opportunities to attend a leadership program. However, the organization has recognized through experience that a more formal plan to ensure succession is needed (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021).

### ***Succession Plan Recommendation***

The following recommendations are proposed to address the need for a succession plan, which is also the gap identified in workforce development.

1. Use the nine-box grid to assess individuals who may be good candidates for key leadership positions.

2. Determine interest in being trained among these individuals.
3. List out the KPI for assessing readiness among these individuals.
4. Integrate with goal setting/performance evaluation
5. Establish mentoring program.
6. Assess outcomes of the plan
7. Extend to next level leaders to extend the pipeline of individuals.

The steps fit into the existing performance process where individuals are assessed against needed competencies and establish training/development goals for the year. This extends that process with ongoing mentoring that permits feedback throughout the mentoring relationship.

### **Summary**

This plan focuses on proposing development that is centered around a formalized succession plan with the goal of ensuring that HR is helping to ensure not only that there is a plan to fill potential gaps in key leadership positions, it is also well situated to ensure that HR supports the organization's mission to ensure the quality of services provided to the public and its focus on inspired excellence, responsibility, and accountability, as well as growth through development and opportunity. Challenges to the implementation could include difficulty in getting consensus on the nine-box grid (perhaps defaulting to the current process of identifying a successor without more formal consideration), as well as lack of interest in training for leadership positions. While the plan is designed to help prepare employees to assume key leadership positions when the need arises, the plan does not formally identify a way to replace the people being prepared should they leave prior to assuming that key leadership position. The organization may wish to have more than one person being trained per key position who has shown promise or have a true pipeline approach where all positions have a succession process.

This is also important to consider for any potential unexpected issue such as a major illness.

Incorporating a mentoring program requires more time in existing workloads, which may also prove to be challenging.

While for the most part the above recommendations are designed to be applicable to the entire workforce (i.e., Nine-Box Grid, Coaching/Mentoring), it is important that the organization clearly identify who is part of the formal succession plan (Noe, 2020). This is the gap identified both through the analysis of the current state and organizational strategies as well as through an internal audit (C. -----, personal communication, November 3, 2021).

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