

## **ABSTRACT**

KELLY, TAMMY DENISE. Succession Planning for the 1862 Institutions in the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System. (Under the direction of Dr. Jim Flowers).

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe succession plans and components of importance as perceived by the organizational leadership within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System. Cooperative Extension Systems across the United States, continue to be faced with a reduction in force, primarily due to retirement, budget cuts and organizational restructuring. The system is faced with the loss of a tremendous wealth of leadership and knowledge as well as the overwhelming challenge of replacing the leadership and other positions as they become open for filling. These changes have reinforced the need for effective succession planning for Cooperative Extension Systems nationwide.

This study identified and described the formal or informal succession plans and critical components within the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System. Descriptive data have been collected from the responding state organizations within the Southern Region.

Based on the feedback from State Extension Directors in the Southern Region, the majority of the states do have some form of succession plan, the greater majority of the plans are informal. This indicates succession planning is valued as a tool by these state Cooperative Extension Systems.

However, State Extension Directors in the Southern Region reported that they are not prepared to fill leadership positions. Most reported they value training to develop potential

leaders. In the Southern Region there appears to be low communication of succession plans to the organization's employees. Most of the State Extension Directors are responsible for leading the organization in succession planning, and the same are responsible for approving and allocating resources for the plan. There is little consistency in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the succession plans in Cooperative Extension Systems in states in the Southern Region.

Nearly all of the State Extension Directors agreed succession planning should identify potential vacancies and personnel gaps in the organization, as well as identify gaps in employee competencies and readiness levels. Most agreed a succession plan is linked to the organization's professional development process and should be integrated in the organization's strategic planning process.

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Succession Planning for the 1862 Institutions in the Southern Region States of the  
Cooperative Extension System

by  
Tammy Denise Kelly

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my parents who made it possible for me to attend North Carolina State University and begin that long relationship in 1979. They never once made me feel like I would not be afforded an advanced education. My parents Ronnie and Pat Kelly instilled in me a work ethic that I treasure today as one of my greatest assets. They always believed that you would achieve your mission if you were willing to put in the work. Thank you for your unconditional love and support and for making it possible for me to make you proud.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Tammy Denise Kelly was born on July 18, 1961 in Morehead City, North Carolina. She is the daughter of Ronnie and Pat Kelly of Newport, North Carolina where she was raised on a tobacco farm.

She graduated from West Carteret High School (1979) and received a BS Degree (1985) from North Carolina State University majoring in Horticultural Science. She received her Masters Degree in 1997 also from North Carolina State University in Agricultural and Extension Education.

Tammy began her career as a greenhouse and nursery manager in New Bern, North Carolina, but soon returned to Raleigh and NC State University as a Staff Associate with the Department of 4-H and Youth Development under the direction of Dr. Dalton Proctor, State 4-H Leader. At that time she began researching grants suitable for use by 4-H and Youth Development agents across the state. In 1988, Tammy accepted a position as 4-H Agent in Franklin County, Louisburg, NC, in which capacity she served until 2002 when she accepted the County Extension Director position in Lenoir County, Kinston, NC. In 2008, she applied and was accepted into the doctoral program in Agricultural and Extension Education at North Carolina State University, under the direction of Dr. Jim Flowers.

In her current position Tammy has the responsibility of administration as well as Community and Resource Development in Lenoir County.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This has been quite a journey. I have been very fortunate throughout my life to be blessed with many great leaders willing to share the tools for following in their footsteps. I believe this is why I am the leader and educator I am today.

My leadership and education journey began as a young 4-Her. Many say this, but like others I believe without the skills I acquired and the support I received during my participation in the 4-H Program, I would not have had the confidence to reach so many of my milestones. My first truly inspirational leader was my 4-H Leader, “Ms. Betsy” Garner. She was the definition of a servant leader. She expected much of me with encouragement she urged achievement, and always, always was there to support me, win or lose. Today we are still great friends, and I think of her whenever I reach another goal. At that time, her sidekick, and my great friend, and co-worker to this day, Ed Emory, thanks for being supportive and a sounding board and realistic ear throughout my 4-H career, my educational journey and of course my Cooperative Extension Career. Thanks to you two for showing me the path.

Following undergraduate graduation, I was fortunate to serve under one of the greatest leaders and smartest men I know, Dr. Dalton Proctor. Working with Dr. P was like getting a lesson in something everyday, you almost felt like taking notes as he shared his words of wisdom. There will never be another Dr. P and I thank him for his shared wisdom.

Dr. Hugh Liner hired me in 1988 to be a 4-H Agent, my dream job. He was a tough boss but a real softy, he offered me the job with a yellow sticky note. I have to say Dr. Liner

never settled, things had to be the best. I learned from him not to accept mediocre, and to expect the same from others.

A real turning point in my education and career journey was when Dr. Wanda Sykes hired me to be the County Extension Director for Lenoir County. They say the Lord puts you in places where you will grow, and he certainly did that day. It was a rocky beginning, but I am so very grateful for the pleasure of working with Wanda, today a great friend. Wanda was always an inspiration, she never accepted “it can’t be done”, it just wasn’t an option. As a leader she provided us the opportunities to learn and glean knowledge from other great leaders, such as Dr. Edgar Boone and Dr. Richard Liles. Their shared expertise kept me challenged and motivated. Thanks to Wanda for being my editor, assistant, sounding board and all around expert while trying to complete this degree, but mostly for being my friend.

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Thank you to Dr. Jim Flowers, bless him for having the patience to stick with me through thick and thin (and he only made me cry once), and for serving as the chair of my graduate committee. Thanks also to my committee members, Dr. Lisa G. Jones, Dr. Marshall Stewart, Dr. Barry Croom, and Dr. Mark Kistler. I thank you all for your support your

patience and most of all your guidance. I really do appreciate the time you spent helping me to achieve this goal.

Thanks again to my family, my parents, and of course my sweet Fred. They have all been there to love me and challenge me, but Fred has been there to cook me dinner and listen to me complain, and to make sure that I save my paper in a storm and to meet my deadlines and to take care of our baby Girlie, what a blessing. I love you all.

The day of my final defense this appeared in my devotional, remember, you and God are a majority. Receive His grace and favor by thanking and praising Him. Declare that you are empowered by Him to walk in victory today and every day because He is with you! He has surely been with me, empowering me in this victory.

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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### Research Problem Description

Over the past few decades, labor in the United States has been plentiful and easily taken for granted. According to Rothwell (2005), managers were afforded the luxury of leisurely grooming employees for management over a long period of time and overstaffing to insure against turnover in key positions. Also according to Rothwell, for quite some time, this has held true for management as well as non-management positions. Over the course of time, employees have been moved into leadership roles as a result of tenure and seniority. However, workforce trends today are leaning toward a much more transient employee, no longer offering time to “groom” or prepare the new workforce for leadership and management.

Much has changed in the public and private worlds of work. Technology has driven much of the change, as has the demand of citizens for more responsive, cost effective delivery of government services. The demographics of the labor markets have shifted so that critical skills shortages are predicted. With the increase of a senior citizen population and a struggling economy, these skills shortages are predicted to continue. The demographics of the country have shifted towards a more diverse citizenry that is demanding a more diverse workforce to provide products and services of government (NAPA, 2003). As baby boomers retire the impact of prospective shortages are predicted to be more significant.

What traditionally has been the process of replacement planning or the process of identifying individuals within the workplace who could best slip into the role of another

employee, most often a higher level position, has gradually migrated into a more structured process called succession planning (Bynam, 2002). Today, succession planning no longer focuses on replacing vacancies as they arise but has become a more planned approach connected to long range and strategic planning of the organization.

According to a report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), over the 2012-2022 decade, 50.6 million total job openings are expected in the United States. These job openings due to replacement needs are expected in every occupation, and most are the result of retirement.

According to Schawbel (2013) in, “The Top 10 Workplace Trends for 2014,” number 5 on the list of workplace trends is baby boomers are retiring and changing the demographics in the workplace. The article projects that 18% of baby boomers will retire within the next five years. In addition, 68% of HR professionals say that boomers retiring will have a major impact on the workforce. In 2015, millennials will account for 36% of the American workforce. This information indicates that one of the biggest problems companies will have is succession planning. If Generation X is not trained before the boomers retire, then companies and organizations will be challenged to fill their positions with unprepared workers.

The National Academy of Public Administration or NAPA (2003) determined that the need for succession planning remains constant and is considered to be greater today than ever. The most successful public and private organizations have recognized the need and made succession planning a key organizational strategy for success according to Academy research (NAPA, 2003). Succession planning must be reinforced away from replacement

planning to include a more comprehensive set of assessment and development practices that support the entire pipeline or flow of talent, as reported by Kesler (2002).

### **The Cooperative Extension System**

In 1862 the Morrill Act established land-grant universities in each state to educate citizens in agriculture, home economics, mechanical arts and other practical professions. Even with the enactment of the Morrill Act of 1862, the Federal government was unable to gain cooperation from the Southern States in the provision of land-grant support to the African American institutions. To overcome this problem, a second Morrill Act was passed in 1890 specifically to support the African American Land-Grant institutions. Thus, the African American Land-Grant institutions are referred to today as “The 1890 Institutions.” Those Southern States that did not have African American institutions by 1890, established one later under this Act (“1890 Land Grant History”, 2015).

The Cooperative Extension System (CES) was created in 1914 when Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act authorizing land-grant college administrators to join with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to support the expansion of demonstration work. At that time, the congressional charge to Cooperative Extension through the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 was far ranging. Cooperative Extension work consists of developing practical applications of research knowledge and giving instruction and practical demonstrations of existing or improved practices or technologies in agricultural and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, youth development and community and rural development (Reed, 2014).

Currently there are Cooperative Extension Systems in all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Islands, Pacific Basin/Guam, Federal States of Micronesia, Northern Marianas and American Samoa. There are 56 of the 1862, 19 of the 1890 and 34 of the 1994 Land Grant Institutions.

Most universities commonly engage in research and teaching, but the nation's land-grant colleges include Extension in their mission. "Extension" means "reaching out," and, along with teaching and research, land grant institutions "extend" their research-based knowledge and resources, addressing public needs with college or university resources through non-formal, non-credit programs. These programs are largely administered through thousands of county and regional Extension offices, which bring land-grant expertise to the most local of levels. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the federal partner in the Cooperative Extension System (CES), supports both the universities and their local offices. NIFA plays a key role in the land-grant extension mission by distributing annual Congressionally appropriated formula grants to supplement state and county funds. NIFA affects how these formula grants are used through national program leadership to help identify timely national priorities and ways to address them (USDA, 2014).

### **Trends in Cooperative Extension Systems**

The U.S. Extension System has changed over time in terms of budget, funding, operation and Extension staff's program focus. According to Wang (2014), the number of extension Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) declined between 1980 and 2010 (Figure 1). While the Appalachian, Corn Belt, and Northeast regions have more Extension FTEs than all other regions and remained in the top three in both 1980 and 2010 (Figure 1), their total FTEs still

declined considerably along with that of all other regions. The Southeast region, including South Carolina (SC), Alabama (AL), Georgia (GA), and Florida (FL), experienced a much more significant (45%) decline in its total FTEs. The Southeast Region's ranking in FTEs has, therefore, dropped from fourth place in 1980 to seventh place in 2010, surpassed by the Southern Plains, Lake States, and Delta regions. The Pacific region, including Oregon (OR), California (CA), and Washington (WA), had the least FTEs among the 10 regions in both 1980 and 2010 (Wang, 2014).

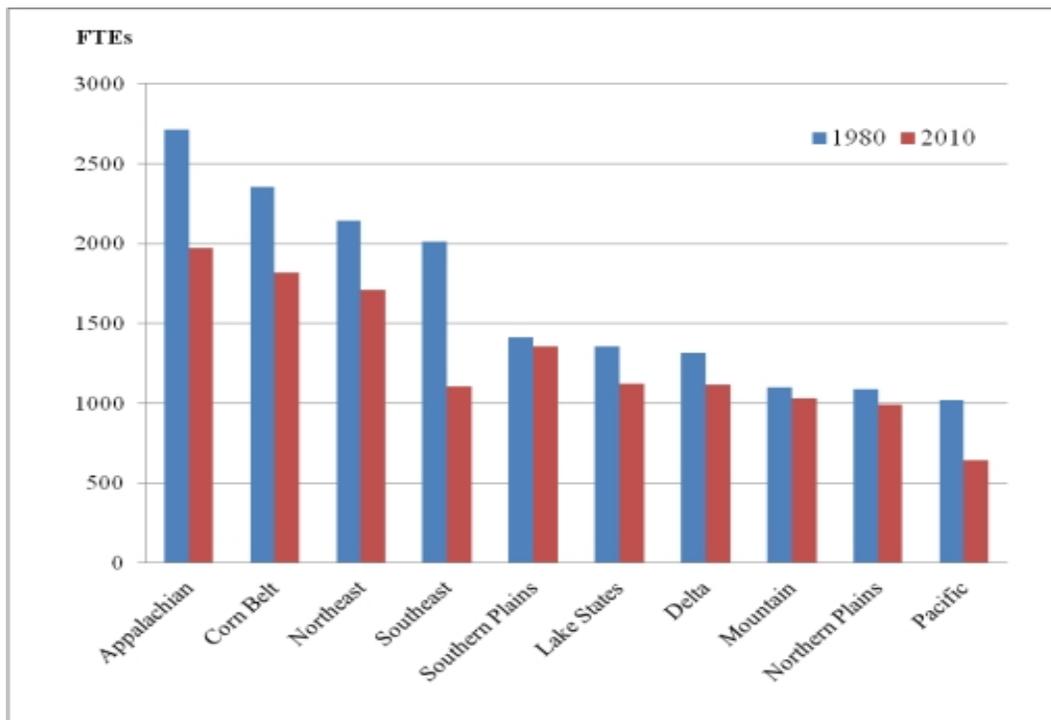


Figure 1. Cooperative Extension decline in FTEs across regions (Wang, 2014).

Cooperative Extension Systems representing different states and regions have researched the retirement and attrition trends of Extension Professionals. Research conducted in 2010 within the North Dakota Cooperative Extension System revealed that over 42% of the Extension professionals were eligible to retire over the next ten years, a figure that was twice as high as other North Dakota state employees. While the researchers found the retirement rates to be of concern, the attrition rates were alarming. The questionnaire response revealed almost three out of four, 74.23% of Extension professionals in North Dakota reported that they plan to leave their current position in the next ten years. The report indicated one implication of the high attrition rate could lead to a large number of positions going unfilled, resulting in greater employee stress due to additional workload and the potential for reduction of service to clients. Results also reported rising retirement rates along with the attrition rates should concern the Cooperative Extension System. One of the questions posed was, who will be qualified to fill the positions of those who retire or leave for other reasons (Borr & Young, 2010)?

Cochran, Ferrari, & Chen (2012) released a study determining if new trends had emerged and how best to address new and existing trends. These trends also have implications on the succession of the organization and include, changing social and economic conditions, shifting sources of support, limited resources, increased diversity and changing demographics, and the increased use of technology. Budget constraints, a changing workforce, and the increased use of technology all have been shown to contribute to a reduction in workforce.

According to the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (2013), their organization suffered an overall reduction in state funds in the 2012 fiscal year, resulting in the loss of 32 positions, an approximate 20% loss in staff. Most of the reduction was based in county offices, which also resulted in a reduction in the amount of administrative support staff to counties and office hours limiting access to the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

When categorized by tenure and position, the current situational demographic breakdown of North Carolina Cooperative Extension employees, reveals over 49% of the current population of County Extension Directors, Full Extension Agents, Associate Extension Agents, and Assistant Extension Agents combined, have tenure of 0-5 years (Norris, 2013). As a result, 10.7% of these employees meet the most minimum requirements of moving into leadership roles, and a remaining 18% possess qualifications to move into leadership roles based solely on their tenure and position. Given that only 18% of the Cooperative Extension population possesses the tenure, degree, and title promotion required to fill County Extension Directors or leadership roles in North Carolina, there is an obvious assumption that there is a shortage of eligible and qualified personnel for filling leadership positions within the North Carolina system (Norris, 2013).

### **Succession Planning Defined**

There is a fairly large body of literature on the subject of succession planning. Mahler is credited for assisting General Electric in developing a succession process known as “the gold standard of corporate practice” (Mahler & Wrightnour, 1973). According to Rothwell (2001):

Succession planning is a means of identifying critical management positions, starting at the levels of project manager and supervisor and extending up to the highest position in the organization. Succession planning also describes management positions to provide maximum flexibility in lateral management moves and to ensure that as individuals achieve greater seniority in relation to total organizational objectives rather than to purely departmental objectives. (p. 6)

Charan (2009) referred to succession planning as a process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key positions in the company. He also indicated that succession planning increases the availability of experienced and capable employees who are prepared to assume these roles as they become available. Succession planning in many cases is treated as replacement planning; however, replacement planning is primarily used only as a manner of identifying candidates for filling management positions and is generally met with poor results.

Succession planning and management is more proactive than mere replacement planning (Rothwell, 2001). According to Rothwell (2001), succession planning strives to achieve exponential growth and benefit from a team of personnel with the promise of developing and advancing one of the many well-qualified high potentials on that team. Succession planning allows for the identification and development of multiple potential candidates at each level of the organization. Succession planning and succession management describe a process that “helps ensure the stability of tenure of personnel” (Rothwell, 2001, p. 5). The aim of success planning is to match an organization’s present available talent to its future talent needs. Rothwell (2001) described the purpose of

succession planning as having “the right people at the right places at the right time to do the right things” (p. 7). He explained that succession planning is an important tool of organizational learning largely because it helps ensure that the lessons of the organizational experiences – what is sometimes called institutional memory – will be preserved and combined with reflection on that experience to achieve continuous improvement in work results. Basically, good succession planning ensures the continued cultivation of leadership and intellectual talent and manages the critical knowledge assets of the organization.

According to Charan, Drotter, and Noel (2001), “Effective succession talent-pool management concerns itself with building a series of feeder groups up and down the leadership pipeline or progression. Succession planning is perpetuating the enterprise by filling the pipeline with high-performing people to assure that every leadership level has an abundance of these performers to draw from, both now and in the future” (p. 167). The pipeline approach focuses on developing and promoting the high performers and operates as a continuous flow, as depicted in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* The leadership pipeline approach to succession planning (Charan, et al., 2001)

Karaevli and Hall (2003) defined succession planning, in the broadest sense, as the formal or informal process of preparing future leaders for executive positions. Sharma, Chrisman, and Chua (2003); however, defined the succession process as one that takes place over a long period of time and includes many activities. This definition indicates an overlap in the definition of succession planning and succession process.

According to Global Leadership Solutions (2011) successful succession management is comprised of strategic talent management. The organization ensures it has the global human capital “to perpetually adapt, respond and succeed in an evolving business environment” (p. 2).

Lamoureux, Campbell, and Smith (2009), in partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership, stated that effective succession planning management enables companies to react

quickly to change and endure difficult times. It allows a company “to seamlessly merge its employees’ capabilities and career aspirations with the company’s business strategy and talent needs” (p. 3).

### **Significance of Organizational Succession Planning**

Over the past five years, numerous vacancies have emerged from positions within the Cooperative Extension System primarily as a result of retirements and lack of employee retention. The numerous vacancies have created a variety of leadership positions and other opportunities for current employees. One way of responding to the demographic facts is concern about how organizations are going to adequately fill the magnitude of vacant positions. The challenge is especially serious because retirements typically mean the exodus of the most experienced senior staff (Dresang, 2008).

Echoing, Kesler (2002) stated “the record is there for all to see: The best baseball teams succeed on the basis of deep bench strength and skillful movement of exceptional players throughout the system” (p. 1). Cooperative Extension Systems, like other businesses could be faced with a shallow bench. “The pursuit of leadership bench strength is not a race for talent. It is a steady, ongoing labor that requires discipline, decisiveness, and responsible risk-taking” (p. 1).

The focus of succession planning should be on long term planning for leadership as opposed to being a short-term fill in solution. During the mass exodus of experienced employees and the current state of a limited budget, Cooperative Extension Systems have faced major challenges with filling positions, as evidenced by the number of vacant positions and the amount of time they remain vacant.

Cooperative Extension is facing many challenges as tenured employees retire or other employees leave the organization. In some states there is a distinct gap between those who are approaching retirement and the very small percentage of those holding the basic qualifications to move into vacated and potentially vacated positions. How Cooperative Extension bridges this gap will be significant to the future success and viability of the organization.

### **Statement of the Problem**

With the reduction in workforce in Cooperative Extension Systems across the United States, some due to retirement or employee attrition, others as a result of budget cuts, the organization is faced with the loss of a wealth of leadership and knowledge as well as the overwhelming challenge of replacing leadership and other positions as they become approved for filling. These changes have reinforced the need for effective succession planning for Cooperative Extension Systems nationwide.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe succession plans and components of importance as perceived by the organizational leadership within the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System.

### **Research Objectives**

Objective 1: To identify how many states within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System have in place a formal or informal succession plan.

Objective 2: To describe the formal or informal succession plans in place with the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System.

Objective 3: To report the State Director’s perception of the components of importance to the formal or informal succession plans of their respective states.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Cooperative Extension System** – a nationwide, non-credit educational network. Each U.S. state and territory has a state office at its land-grant university and a network of local or regional offices. These offices are staffed by one or more experts who provide useful, practical, and research-based information to agricultural producers, small business owners, youth, consumers, and others in rural and communities of all sizes (USDA, NIA, 2014).

**Cooperative Extension System, Southern Region** – this region is comprised of 15 Cooperative Extension Systems, which includes 13 states plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. This region also includes an additional 13 1890 Cooperative Extension Systems. The states considered to be in the Southern Region include; Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virgin Islands, and Virginia (USDA, NIFA, 2014).

**NAPA** – National Academy of Public Administration, established in 1967, is a non-profit, independent coalition of top public management and organizational leaders who tackle the nation’s most critical and complex challenges (NAPA, 2010).

### **Assumptions of the Study**

The following assumption applies to this study and must be considered. The State Extension Directors in respective Southern Region States and Territories will complete the questionnaire with full disclosure.

## **Summary**

The loss of a large number of employees as a result of retirement, employee retention and other factors often leaves a vacancy within key leadership roles. In turn, the organization may find that it was poorly prepared to reach into the current employee pool for replacement of lost leadership. Succession planning is a systematic approach to assess and develop the leadership talent needed across a business; a company or organization can be caught unprepared by departures, whether anticipated or not (GE Capital, 2012).

Anticipation of future talent needs and preparing for those needs in advance increases the change capacity of the organization. Increasing talent knowledge, skills and abilities includes the increasing the capabilities of existing staff and bringing new skills into the organization (Harrington & Voehl, 2014).

This study is significant in that it provides a snapshot of information about succession plans being used in the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System. The study also reveals what is perceived as important in a succession plan in this region and can, in turn, provide useful information to better prepare Cooperative Extension leadership in the Southern Region to ensure sustainability of the organization and provide continuous leadership to successful programming efforts.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Review of Related Theory and Research**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the formal succession plan types and critical components within the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System. Focal points for the literature review and conceptual framework include a) the Human Capital Theory, b) Need and value of succession planning, c) Barriers to an effective succession plan, and d) Components of a succession plan.

#### **Introduction to Theoretical Framework**

In 1961, Schultz first proposed the Human Capital Theory in response to the unexplained rise in the economic value of man (Schultz, 1961). Human capital theory suggests that education and training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, therefore raising workers' future income by increasing potential lifetime earnings (Becker, 1993). Schultz believed that human capital was similar to other types of capital in that investing in education, training, and providing benefits would improve the quality of the employees in addition to their production levels (Paradise, 2010).

Labor economics views human capital as a set of skills/characteristics that will increase the productivity in workers. According to Hit and Ireland (2002), human capital is the extent to which the members of an organization have the skills and motivation needed to do the work effectively. Human capital is valued in organizations because it increases the profits of the organization. Becker's (1993) view on human capital is directly related to the productivity level of the workers. He stated human capital increases a worker's productivity in all tasks, though possibly differentially in different tasks, organizations and situations.

Becker (1993) contended that the skill level of the workers directly relate to the increase in productivity.

The human capital theory has existed for over four decades. It is now a familiar concept used in daily public debates (Hartog & Maasen van den Brink, 2004). The human capital theory is defined as a measure of economic value of an employee's skill set. The concept of human capital denotes that not all labor is equal, and the quality of employees can be improved by investing in them. The education, experience and abilities of an employee have an economic value for employers and for the economy as a whole (Hartog & Maasen van den Brink, 2004).

According to Armstrong (2009), human capital consists of the knowledge, skills and abilities of those employed in an organization. "Human capital represents the human factor in the organization; the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that gives the organization its' distinctive character. The human elements of the organization are those that are capable of learning, changing, innovating and providing the creative thrust which if properly motivated can ensure the long-term survival of the organization" (p. 351).

The significance of human capital is the knowledge, skills and abilities of those individuals that help to create value. The focus has to be on the means of attracting, retaining, developing and maintaining the human capital they represent in each organization. Davenport (1999) commented, "People possess innate abilities, behaviors and personal energy and those elements make up the human capital they bring to work" (p. 353). The employees own the capital of their workplace, and they decide when, how and where they will contribute to it. Employee and employers both invest in human capital. The employee

expectation on human capital consists of a higher level of earnings, greater job satisfaction, better career prospects, and job security. The employer's return on investment in human capital is that employees have performance improvement, increased productivity, flexibility and the increased levels of knowledge and competence.

Human Capital Theory focuses attention on human resource development, resourcing and incentive strategies, and practices. Attention is focused on practical issues related to measuring the value of people, evaluating human resource management processes, and organizational learning and knowledge management. In theory, employees can invest in their future and can choose how they make those investments.

Armstrong's (2010) approach to people management based on the Human Capital Theory produces the following questions:

1. What are the key performance drivers that create value?
2. What skills have we got?
3. What skills do we need now and in the future to meet our strategic aims?
4. How can we develop a culture and environment in which organizational and individual learning takes place, which meets both our needs and the needs of our employees?
5. How can we provide for both the explicit and tacit knowledge created in our organization to be captured, recorded and used effectively? (p. 74)

In discussing the importance of human capital on an organization, Olaniyan and Olaniyan (2008) revealed:

The economic prosperity and functioning of a nation depends on its physical and human capital stock. Whereas the former has traditionally been the focus of economic research, factors affecting the enhancement of human skills and talent are increasingly figuring in the research of social and behavioral sciences. In general terms, human capital represents the investment people make in themselves that enhance their economic productivity. The theoretical framework most responsible for the wholesome adoption of education and development policies has come to be known as human capital theory. (p. 158)

Schultz (1971), and Sakamoto and Powers (1995) agreed the Human Capital Theory rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and even necessary to improve the production of a population.

Babalola (as cited in Almendarez, 2010), utilizes three basic arguments to provide the rationale behind investing in human capital:

- i. That the new generation must be given the appropriate parts of the knowledge which has already been accumulated by previous generations,
- ii. That new generations should be taught how existing knowledge should be used to develop new products, to introduce new processes and production methods and social services; and
- iii. That people must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches (para. 12).

Succession planning is based on the Human Capital Theory because it utilizes the talents and knowledge within an organization and builds on those talents to develop

employees with greater skills. The ability to attract, retain and engage talent is critical. Attracting and retaining high performing employees through effective succession planning management practices embraces human capital theory. Organizations of all sizes are facing a range of challenges including decimated mid-management levels, depleted resources for employee development, and an aging workforce that may create shortfalls of experienced talent (Rothwell, 2001). The apparent widespread flattening of organizational structures, significant changes in work environments, and reorganizations clearly indicate the need for a long-term perspective for developing and managing talent throughout respective organizations. Succession planning has become an important initiative to meet organizational challenges.

### **Need and Value of Succession Planning**

Statistics show that an overwhelming number of organizations do not have a meaningful succession plan (Global Leadership Solutions, 2011). Today's organizations are faced with a multitude of complex challenges. Some of these challenges include competing in a more globalized work world, leadership breaches in ethical and moral decision-making, retaining and developing talent, keeping up with technological advances and changes, leading a more diversified structure, and in some cases financial woes. As a result of these challenges, succession planning has become a popular topic. Some organizations realize that in order to address the challenges and maneuver even more unknowns, they must have a plan in place. In fact, 50% of the organizations with revenues greater than \$500 million did not have a working succession plan. (Global Leadership Solutions, 2011)

Peters and Waterman (1982) and much of succession research and literature of this era, employed a functionalist, pragmatic approach to succession planning (Charan, 2009; Huang, 2001; Karaveli & Hall, 2003; Metz, 1998). According to Kesner & Sebra (1994), successful outcomes of succession planning were promised to those who could manipulate the variables linked to antecedents, events and consequences with the process. It is evident that change must be made as the traditional succession processes are “broken,” take too long to implement, and are too expensive – all of which result in failure to meet the need of today’s organization or the future of the organization (Charan, 2009; Huang, 2001; Karaveli & Hall, 2003; Metz, 1998). These authors emphasized the importance of a plan for succession.

Karaveli and Hall (2003) reported that companies are moving away from traditional succession approaches that seek to identify and prepare leaders for specific future positions to processes that develop pools of talented individuals who can assume a variety of future positions. The more agile processes are built around a core set of leadership competencies that drive assessment, development, and selection decisions.

Lamoureux et al. (2009) found that many organizations were spending a great deal of energy creating succession plans, but few were able to integrate succession in all operations of the company and within all level of employees. The researchers found that the companies struggled most with identifying employees with high potential, development of planning, and global implementation. These authors stated that “succession management is an immature and relatively new process for most companies and that fewer than 12% of these companies have truly integrated succession management programs” (p. 9).

Lamoureux et al. (2009), in partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership, also conducted extensive research to reveal the best practices and trends in succession management processes. The study consisted of in-depth interviews conducted with more than 25 senior business leaders and succession management program managers; a qualitative survey of 220 talent managers to identify best practices; and a quantitative survey of more than 100 business leaders to provide their perceptions on the overall effectiveness of their companies' succession management strategies. From the results the researchers developed a model that identifies five levels of maturity for succession management. The first finding indicated opportunities that existed for companies to enhance their succession management strategies. Each level of the Bersin & Associates Succession Management Maturity Model was briefly summarized below (Lamoureux et al., 2009).

Level 0: Organizations have no real succession management process (21% of organizations operate at this level).

Level 1: Replacement Planning. This level focuses on senior-level positions. There may be a high potential list created but no formal process is in place (15% of organizations operate at this level).

Level 2: Traditional Succession Planning. The implementation of succession planning targets only critical senior-level positions. Talent reviews and development plans are put in place (52% of organizations operate at this level).

Level 3: Integrated Succession Management. The organization targets all critical positions at all levels. Succession aligned with business strategy and integrated with talent management (fewer than 12% operate at this level).

Level 4: Transparent Talent Mobility. This is the ‘next practice’ of succession management. The research conducted did not identify any companies/organizations that had achieved this level.

However, the Lamoureux, et al. (2009) study described best practices for companies/organizations at Level 3 – Integrated Succession Management. Level 3 is the ‘gold standard today’ for providing recommendations for how companies/organizations can achieve Level 4. According to Drucker (1995), “We have reached a point where we simply will not be able to tolerate as a country, as a society, as a government, the danger that one of our major companies will decline or collapse because it has not made adequate provisions for management succession” (p. 9).

According to Dresang (2009), “Succession planning is always needed”(p. 116), especially when there is a tremendous amount of turnover. Dresang (2009) also reported that the ‘ranks of the retired’ will grow from one in eight in 2006 to one in five in 2030. Many companies have already lost over one third of their workforce as a result of retirement. Retirement rates of this magnitude create many opportunities, not the least of which is the challenge to fill these positions. Dresang (2009), also stated “the challenge is especially serious because retirements naturally mean the exodus of the most experienced, senior staff” (p. 116).

Fegley (2006) explored the roles of Human Resource departments as they relate to talent management. According to these professionals, the top four areas of improvement for their organizations’ talent management programs were building a larger pool of successors at every level, creating a culture that made employees want to stay within the organization,

identifying gaps in current employee and candidate competency levels, and creating policies that encourage career growth and development opportunities. Significantly, those organizations with specific talent management strategies in place indicated their department worked directly with employees or managers on talent management initiatives, were more likely to prepare junior or mid-level employees to step into senior leadership, and were more likely than organizations without such initiatives to have formal budgets for recruiting individuals, developing employees and retaining employees.

The Committee on Government Reform (2003) released one of the most comprehensive reports relating to the subject of succession planning. This study was designed to provide, through the experiences of other countries, insights into broad, integrated, long-term views of succession planning and management. The efforts of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Wales, and the United Kingdom are central to identifying and developing leaders, managers and the workforce necessary to meet the challenges the United States will face in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In the report mentioned above, Dan G. Blair, Deputy Director, Office of Personnel Management, shares findings concerning the competencies needed to be successful in efforts to establish a unified plan for succession planning:

First and foremost we learned that succession planning and management in leading organizations has the support of the top management and this is evident in three ways. First, top leadership actively participates in succession planning initiatives, it is not something that they allow to happen or that they staff out to others, rather, it is something that they actively engage in. Second, they use the results of the succession

planning efforts to actually staff new positions as a basis of decision-making. And third they make sure succession-planning efforts have the resources they need to be successful.

Second, successful efforts link to strategic planning. We found that leading organizations use their succession planning and management as a strategic planning tool that focuses on current and future needs and develops pools of high potential staff in order to meet the organization's mission over the long term.

Third, leading efforts identify talent from multiple organizational levels, early in the employee's careers and those with critical skills; that is, succession planning is not just who is next in line but a way of making sure that career development and career training are in place so that we are preparing an entire generation for the leadership roles in the future.

Fourth, successful efforts emphasize development assignments, that is, these efforts have developmental or stretch assignments for high potential employees in addition to the very important formal training components of the succession planning programs.

Fifth, succession planning is understood as being instrumental to addressing other human capital challenges such as diversity, leadership capacity, and retention.

Sixth and finally, we learned from leading organizations that succession planning and management is used to facilitate broader transformation efforts; that is, effective succession planning and management initiatives provide a powerful tool for

fostering agency transformation by selecting and developing leaders and managers who support and champion change. (Committee on Government Reform, 2003, p. 4-6).

### **Barriers in Succession Planning and Management**

According to Forbes (2008), recent research shows that nearly two-thirds of large U.S. companies do not have a formalized succession plan in place. Some of the comments given in response to the barriers for the development of a succession plan referred to several reasons for the absence of a plan. Organizational CEOs may allow their ego to prevent them from accepting that there will be a time when they must give up their power in the organization; that same ego prevents them from placing individuals in a higher level position and allowing them to do the job. Many career advancements occur as a result of personal relationships and comfort level among those building the team. Organizations are often not willing to think in the long term for leadership position replacement. Most companies are personality driven as opposed to principle and process driven. A personality driven company will not build succession into the future planning process. It is common for most companies to prepare for “what-if” scenarios when it comes to financial capital, but rarely when it comes to human capital.

In Forbes (2008), when asked whose responsibility it should be to put a succession plan in place, of the choices given, approximately 70.6% chose the Board of Directors for handling this process, and approximately 4.9% thought it should fall to the hands of some other company entity or official (Forbes, 2008).

Literature suggests that the incumbent CEO is held largely responsible for the selection and outcome of the succession process (Contractor's Business Management Report, 2004; Caran & Colvin, 1999; White, Smith, & Barnett, 1997). Several authors concluded through their research that Boards of Directors, as well as the top management team, can and do play an integral role in the succession process (Bickford, 2001; Cepdes & Galford, 2004; Charan & Colvin, 2001; Conger & Nadler, 2004; Kets de Vries, 1988). These authors suggested that the process may perpetuate the need to keep it somewhat secretive in an effort to maintain authority over the process, to avoid internal conflict and avoid ethical and legal questioning. Vancil (1996) described this problem using the following metaphor:

On the broad landscape of corporate management there is one small piece of turf that has not been systematically explored. The reason is simple: it is forbidden territory for all but a few selected members of the corporate tribe. There, almost like witch doctors retreating to a secret cave to conjure up a new elixir, those few develop and act out a ritual that ultimately produces a new CEO. (p. 7)

White, Smith, & Barnett (1997) revealed that only 28% of governmental agencies had or had a plan to enlist a succession management program, and only 11% linked succession planning to leadership development plans, even though 44% had leadership development plans. "Oddly enough only 15% viewed succession planning as a priority. The same report set out to detect the barriers to growing leaders in the public sector, the identified barriers included;

- Organizational culture
- Low priority given by senior officials

- Insufficient resources
- Inadequate rewards for initiative/risk
- Limited mobility
- Lack of role models” (p. xvi).

Deegan (1986) stated that the culture of an organization can often pose barriers to the development of a succession plan. Some of the elements of organizational culture will include the business environment of the organization, the values of the organization, routines of the organization, and the communication network of the organization. The extended time frame it takes to develop an effective succession plan is “perceived as a cultural barrier to its development” (p. 20). Reasons for this include:

1. The concepts are really new to most people and it just takes time to adapt to this new way of thinking.
2. It takes a while to convince some of the skeptics that the effort is worthwhile; actual success in a selection decision in your own organization being the final convincer.
3. There are often feelings or attitudes of mistrust regarding the motives of top management in implementing the system, and these must be overcome.
4. There are interpersonal relations between or among individuals doing the performance reviews and potential assessments, which get in the way of openness and mutual respect, necessary ingredients for success.

5. Setting development objectives and monitoring progress participatively are communication skills that are not easily come by. Practice will make perfect, but that takes several times around the horn.
6. Very often bad habits must be unlearned before good habits can be acquired; for example, the habit of sizing up someone's potential in the first minute of conversation because 'I'm a good judge of people.'
7. Different individuals have different styles, some of which are more conducive to succession planning than others, meaning quicker success for some and longer time period for others.
8. Some areas of knowledge and skill lend themselves more readily to objective assessment while other positions take a much longer time to find appropriate indicators of progress or readiness.
9. And finally, some groups will have databases of information regarding individual skills, preference, qualifications and so forth, while others will not have reduced information such as to a matter of record. (p. 20)

According to Charan and Colvin (1999) and Conger and Nadler (2004) the reason many succession plans do not work is that the planning process is more important than the result. Other researchers agree that execution problems may exist as a result of the underestimate of organizational culture and the roles of members, management, incumbents and governing bodies. (Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993; Denis, Langley, & Pineault, 2000; Kets de Vries, 1988; Schein, 1990, 1992)

According to Paradise (2010), succession planning in many organizations has fallen short of its goals. Data from the article revealed that 55% of the organizations surveyed did not have a formal succession plan in operation. (Paradise, 2010) Senior leaders of those reporting having a plan also revealed that barriers inhibiting their efforts included inadequate funding, weak development plans, and difficulty tracking performance.

In late 2009, the Association of Talent Development conducted an in-depth study with 1,247 high-level learning, Human Resource, and other business professionals on their succession planning practices. The findings indicated the failure for many organizations to activate a succession planning process. Within the findings the connection between succession planning and long-term organizational health was readily apparent, but executives acknowledged limitations with their efforts. In fact the research team found large gaps between the actions companies are currently taking and the actions they believe they should be taking (Paradise, 2010).

As research suggests, there are potential barriers to succession planning and management's success. However, the evidence also suggests many highly successful companies have overcome these and other challenges for optimal identification, development, and placement of leadership talent (Conger & Fulmer, 2003).

### **Best Practices of Succession Planning and Management**

Upon Bill Gates' announcement of the new hire of Microsoft's cloud and enterprise division in February of 2014, he offered key lessons on how business owners can better choose their successor. His thoughts were published in an article written by Spors (2014) and are listed below:

1. *Avoid choosing someone just like yourself.* Mr. Gates suggests that a common mistake business owners make is thinking the next leader of their company should have the same skill set and personality as they do. Different times call for different leadership styles and new skills.
2. *Find someone who truly understands and appreciates your business and company culture.* Gates mentioned that many analysts were hoping that he would bring in somebody from outside to reenergize the company and offer fresh perspective. However, Gate's felt that his choice was intimately familiar with the business and its culture and had established strong relationships with other key Microsoft managers making the transition much less jarring.
3. *Think long-term.* Finally, Gate's feels you should plan for your successor to be around beyond the next five or ten years, be sure to consider; Is the person a visionary who can spot opportunities in the market and adapt to change? Does he or she possess the leadership skills and personality to manage the company in both good times and bad? How much is he or she willing to innovate? (p. 1)

PepsiCo is one of the world's leading food and beverage companies claiming over \$66 billion in net revenue during the year 2013. Hartley (2011) reported that David Henderson, PepsiCo's senior vice president and chief talent development officer, shared his view and the company's approach to succession planning can be boiled down to four fundamental stages:

1. *Needs Assessment:* Henderson states, "that's planning the size and scope of our talent demands and connecting it firmly back to our business strategy."

2. *Gap Analysis*: Examining the organization's talent pipeline to determine supply versus demand. Henderson explains this as "the bridge looking at the needs of the business with measures in terms of capability and where we'll need the talent, both to secure our leadership pipeline for the future, but also to secure the capabilities that we need for the organization moving forward. Gap analysis is how we look at that against the current state of the organization."
3. *Broaden, Buy, Bond*: Once the gap has been identified, PepsiCo leverages what it refers to as the three B's of talent management to close it. Henderson explains the three B's in the following manner:
  - a. *Broaden* – "How are we going to broaden the talent we have? How are we going to develop our internal talent to maximize potential?"
  - b. *Buy* – "Where do we want to hire external talent into the organization to diversify existing capabilities and plug gaps that we believe we can bridge internally?"
  - c. *Bond* – "How do talent leaders retain key talent for the long term? How do we use financial and non-financial measures to make sure we have a secure supply of talent?"
4. *Measure*: Henderson reports that PepsiCo focuses on "How do we track and monitor progress and make sure we are driving continuous improvement as we build our leadership teams around the globe? More recently we've put a lot more focus in the individual career plans, it has given our talent a sense of what the long term looks like, and it's also encouraging us to be bold and proactive in

terms of applying a future back mindset and mapping out how we make the required critical experiences happen.” (p. 1)

The article refers to the fact that the top 300 roles at PepsiCo merit special attention as the company has spent time designing them to be developmental. Henderson believes in checking to see of the correct caliber of talent is in the leadership roles and do they have the matching leadership profile. He also believes in checking to see of there is high-potential talent feeding into the leadership roles, with the right qualities for the long term. If the leadership roles are blocked then what does the company need to do to free them up and promote talent throughout the organization. The article also described PepsiCo leaders attempt to match talent with assignments that enable high potential employees to focus on forward development. Henderson says that “the company encourages employees to think not just in terms of reinforcing the experiences they’ve had, but actually putting themselves into roles that require a steep learning curve because they’re going into an environment where they don’t have all of the right skills, and they need to learn them. At PepsiCo we call this ‘assignmentology,’ building skills and capabilities on the job (Hartley, 2011).

One of the best examples of how corporate America conducts succession is in former CEO of GE, Jack Welch and his succession plan for General Electric. It can be most likened to non-profit or educational organizations. Welch conveyed that you could either control your own destiny or someone else will. One component of succession planning is to recognize how critical focusing on human capital management is in order to accomplish the mission of your company. GE reflected the importance of human capital throughout the organization: in hiring, evaluations, promotions and the way the leadership of the team

divided their time. (Chandra, 2012). The managing director of a national executive search firm, commented that in today's job market it has become harder to find good candidates and the answer to that according to Welch was to "grow your own." He was known for spending 50% of his time developing people which amounted to about 49% more than most managers. At GE, Welch was known for creating corporate leaders by early identification, intensive in-house training and movement in the company. When Welch's successor was announced, the rest of the leadership team he created went on to successfully head major companies. (Girion, 2000).

### **Guiding Principles and Succession Plan Development**

Many are credited with establishing practical approaches to the development of a formal succession plan. The key is to utilize those components which best suit the individual organizational structure and mission, making adjustments as needed to give the individual plan success. Presented in this review are a variety of succession plan components and steps needed to build an inclusive plan as described by these organizations and companies.

According to Global Leadership Solutions (2011), in establishing an effective succession plan, organizations must incorporate guiding principles in their overall management of the process. This research also concludes that the hallmarks of successful succession planning hinge on the following principles and ensure the process remains relevant, adaptable, and effective:

- 1) Succession planning must be an ongoing, integral process.
- 2) Succession planning needs to link the vision, values, and strategy of the organization.

- 3) Succession plans should support the core competencies and values of the organization.
- 4) Succession management should be reflected in the performance requirements and selection criteria for all key roles.
- 5) Valid and credible data for talent assessment is important.
- 6) There must be an investment from the organization for active and systematic talent development.
- 7) Potential and current strengths and needs must be identified.
- 8) Proactive and systematic strategies are needed to measure progress and growth.
- 9) Incentives for development must be provided. This does not imply that people identified as high potential will be guaranteed promotion or specific positions, instead it should be understood that the organization values them and they will receive support (Global Leadership Solutions, 2011, p. 3).

### **Basic Steps of Succession Planning**

In *Personnel Management in Government Agencies and Nonprofit Organizations*, Dresang (1986) states that succession planning follows these basic steps:

- Identify expected vacancies.
- Determine critical positions and functions.
- Identify current employees who might be developed, current employees with potential.
- Provide training and mentorships to develop current employees with potential.
- Develop strategy for recruiting employees with needed skills and abilities.

- Evaluate results and determine what further measures are needed. (p. 116)

### **Human Resource Planning**

Dresang (1986) provides a simplified yet orderly checklist for the development of a succession plan. There are four major phases to human resource planning (see Figure 3).

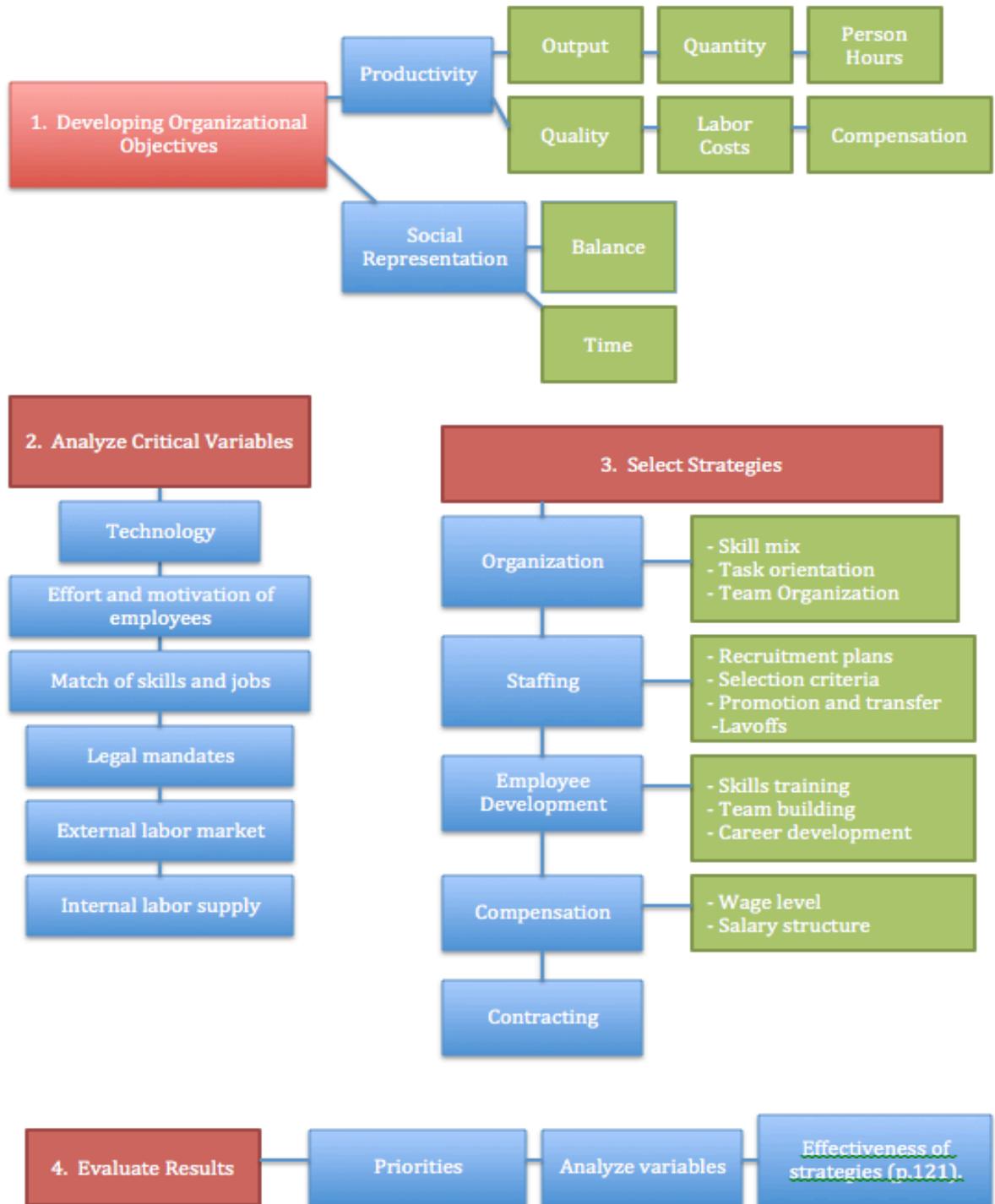


Figure 3. Human Resource Planning (Dresang, 1986). Dresang's four major phases of Human Resource Planning.

The National Academy of Public Administration's 1992 Paths to Leadership Report along with the Center for Creative Leadership, presented their suggested benchmark principles:

- a) The top leadership of the organization is personally involved and deeply committed. Succession and strategic/business plans must be integrated, flexible, and relatively simple so that the leaders are identified and developed to meet the changing needs of the organization. Plans particularly cumbersome plans, cannot become an end in themselves.
- b) Succession programs are owned by line managers and supported by human resources (HR) staff, are integrated into all HR processes, and are consistent with the organizational structure.
- c) A leadership pool approach toward identifying high-potential candidates is the preferred approach – one that recognizes future leaders as a corporate asset. The diversity needed effective future leadership is effectively incorporated in a broad and early leadership identification effort.
- d) The heart of the succession management process is to identify leadership competencies and assess and develop potential candidates using those competencies.
- e) There is a thorough review process that occurs regularly, involving all levels of the organization.
- f) Success at developing leaders depends on three critical dimensions: a variety of job assignments, education and training, and self-development. Accountability

and follow-up, using measurable outcomes, are central ensuring success. (pp. 9-12)

Kesler (2002) indicated that clear objectives are critical to establishing effective succession planning. These objectives tend to be core to many or most companies that have well-established practices. Kesler (2011) stated the following objectives as being those most critical:

1. Identify those with the potential to assume greater responsibility in the organization.
2. Provide critical development experiences to those that can move into key roles.
3. Engage the leadership in supporting the development of high-potential leaders.
4. Build a database that can be used to make better staffing decisions for key jobs (p. 1).

The Human Resource Planning Society is known as the leading professional association for succession-planning professionals. The society lists the following Process and Practices as common fundamentals for developing a formal succession plan:

- Identify employees who could potentially fill future vacancies in leadership positions
- Consider the organization's long-term objectives and goals
- Identify prospective vacancies in leadership positions
- Identify potential succession gaps
- Integrate succession planning with the organization's strategic planning process
- Emphasize diversity in the workplace

- Include a specific focus on the succession of women candidates
- Update employee steps the organization plans to use in the succession planning process (Day, 2007, p. 13).

These guiding principles coming from different companies and references are very similar in the goals and mission when developing an effective succession plan.

### **Summary**

From the review of literature it becomes evident that there is a high demand for organizations and companies to develop a comprehensive long-term succession plan, especially given this century's changing demographics and the increasing population of retired individuals. The literature reveals that a greater percentage of businesses and organizations do not have a succession plan or planning process in place, than actually do have an established or formal plan. While the consensus among top managers is that a succession plan is necessary, they share similar barriers, such as insufficient resources, financial and human, top management carries the responsibility yet lacks the time to dedicate to a long term plan, and difficulties tracking employee performance. Common guiding principles become apparent throughout the literature. Leaders and managers agree, an effective succession plan should have long term plans for sustainability of the human capital, the plan must be communicated to employees, there must be some form of measurement of progress and evaluation, the plan should identify high potential employees and develop their leadership skills, the plan should build a data base or pool of these individuals and there must be an allocation of resources to the succession plan.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe succession plans and components of importance as perceived by the organizational leadership within the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System.

#### **Research Objectives**

Objective 1: To identify how many states within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System have in place a formal or informal succession plan.

Objective 2: To describe in the formal or informal succession plan in place within the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System.

Objective 3: To report the State Director's perception of the components of importance to the formal or informal succession plans of their respective states.

#### **Research Design**

The study was conducted using a survey research design. The researcher used a web-based questionnaire distributed in survey format to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed to the entire population, a census, and therefore the findings are important for the entire population or the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System. The instrument was adapted to the desired variables from a similar study used in succession planning survey report produced and conducted by Fegley (2006) for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Essentially, the Fegley report explored the current situation with regard to different types of organizations with formal and/or informal succession plans.

The instrument consisted of three types of questions: rating, ranking, open ended and organizational information.

### **Population**

The study population was a census of the State Extension Directors of the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System. This population included fifteen 1862 State Cooperative Extension Systems, consisting of 13 states plus Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, and thirteen 1890 Cooperative Extension Systems. These states in the Southern Region include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virgin Islands, and Virginia.

### **Organizational Data**

Some organizational data were collected from the participants in order to determine information describing the respective State Extension Systems. Specifically, questions were asked that potentially could affect the development and implementation of a succession plan. Each State Director was asked the number of employees in their organization and the source of funding for their organization. Participants were also asked to describe the management of their organization; for example, was the state divided by regions, districts, counties, etc.

### **Instrumentation**

Prior to dissemination the questionnaire was reviewed by North Carolina Cooperative Extension Administration for content validity. The instrument was divided into sections and included multiple choice, rating, ranking, and open-ended questions (See Appendix A).

The first question asked State Extension Directors to rate the level of importance of different factors or components of a succession plan. Secondly, the participants were asked to evaluate the level at which their organization communicates the succession plan to employees.

The third series of questions addressed the implementation and administration of succession plans in their states, if they existed. This question also addressed funding the plan.

Participants were also asked about the reasons for a reduction in workforce, as well as some organizational information including the administrative structure of the state organization and the number of employees.

Additional content validity was built into the instrumentation by utilizing a similar study as a guide for developing the questionnaire as well as review by an expert, Dr. Joe Zublena, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Director, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

In order to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire the data were imported into SPSS to produce a Cronbach's alpha score. Subsets were created and analyzed for important components, containing 15 items (n=15) and employee knowledge, containing 6 items (n=6). Cronbach's alpha for the 15 important components was 0.770 and for the 6 employee knowledge items was 0.872. The employee knowledge subset was reliable (6 items;  $\alpha = .770$ ) and the important components subset was found to be highly reliable (15 items;  $\alpha = .872$ ) and the important components subset was found to be highly reliable.

### **Data Collection**

Upon IRB application and approval, data were collected using the Qualtrics web-based instrument (See Appendix B). Instruments were sent as an email request from the Southern Region Executive Director to each of the State Leaders of the 1862 systems. The original request was sent on April 6, 2015 to the State Extension Director of North Carolina Cooperative Extension who, in turn, sent the request on April 9, 2015 to the Regional Executive Director for dissemination. Prior to the dissemination of the instrument, the study was discussed at a Southern Regional Directors Conference where succession planning was seen and listed as a priority. The questionnaire was sent twice approximately two weeks apart to ensure the greatest number of respondents, the reminder was sent on April 29, 2015 (See Appendices C, D, & E). There are 15 1862 Institutions in the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System; 14 of these responded, providing a 93.3% response rate.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistical procedures for each of the questionnaire sections. The web-based Qualtrics program was used to determine the mean and frequency scores as they relate to the separate sections of the questionnaire.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe succession plans and components of importance as perceived by the organizational leadership within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System. Descriptive data were gathered from the State Extension Directors as it relates to the important components of a plan and their current plan for succession.

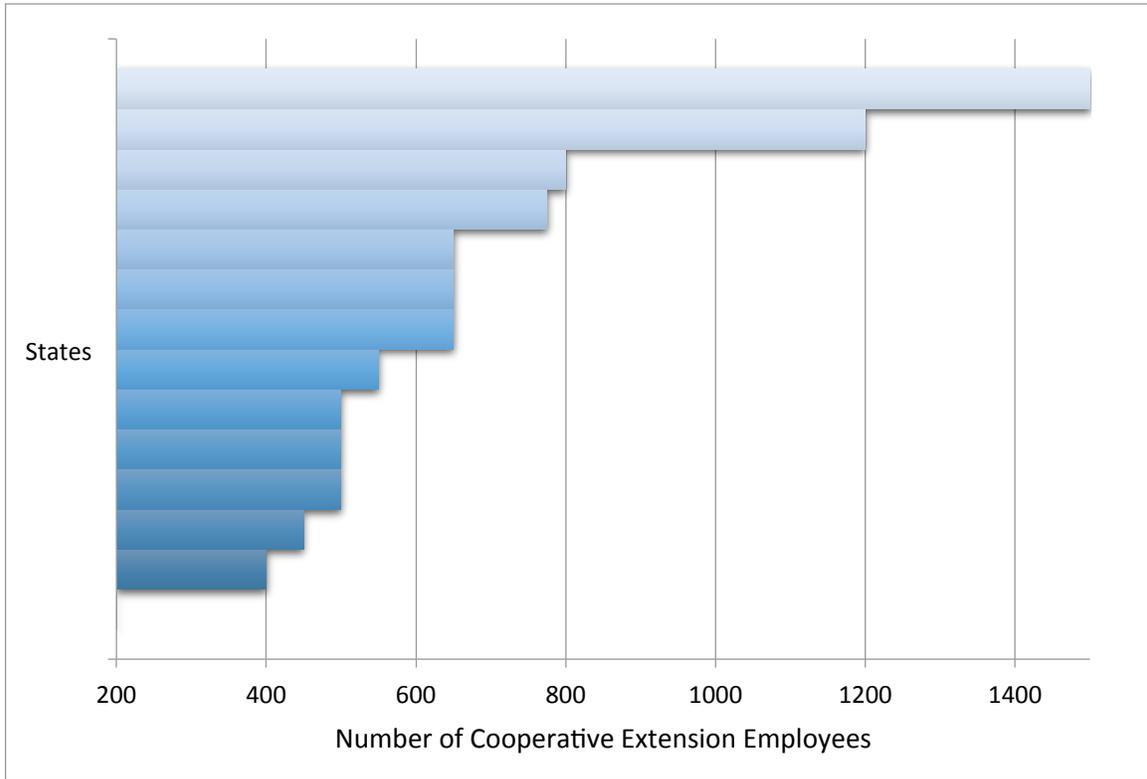
## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe succession plans and components of importance as perceived by the organizational leadership within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System. Descriptive data were gathered from the State Extension Directors or their designee as it relates to the important components of a plan and the state's current plan for succession. The objectives of this research was to determine the components that currently exist and those that are important to a Cooperative Extension succession plan as perceived by State Extension Directors in the Southern Region. The research also sought to determine how well each respective succession plans are communicated to employees, how the plan is funded, and who administers the plan. State Extension Directors were asked to evaluate the preparedness of their plan or to explain the reasons for not having a succession plan in place. Directors were also asked about the reasons for any reduction in workforce, as well as some organizational information including the administrative structure of the state organization and the number of employees. The questionnaire was administered using Qualtrics, a web-based application.

#### **Organizational Data Collected**

Fourteen of the fifteen university systems contacted, responded, from these institutions, employee numbers ranged from 201 employees to 1500 employees. Figure 4 depicts the responses from State Extension Directors to this question.



*Figure 4.* Number of Cooperative Extension employees in the responding Southern Region states.

Twenty-one percent of Extension positions were funded by other resources, such as state, federal, and local governments, as well as through grants and private funding. One state reported having funding from only state resources.

State Extension Directors were asked to describe the management of their respective organizations and the number of employees at each level. Of the 14 State Extension Directors responding, eight were divided into Districts and four into regions. Five State Extension

Directors indicated they have a district or regional director. The size of the districts or regions ranged from having 13-40 counties in each. One State Extension Director reported having county breakdown only.

**Reduction in Workforce**

State Extension Directors were asked to rank the reasons for a reduction in workforce over the past 5 and 10 years. The primary reasons, for both the 5 and 10-year periods, were the same: budget entrenchment and retirements. Table 1 shows the ranking of reasons for employee reductions over the past five years, 1 being the greatest loss of employees. In Table 1 the mean for retirement was 1.69 and for budget entrenchment was 2.00. Table 2 shows the ranking of reasons for employee reductions over the past 10 years, 1 being the greatest loss of employees. In Table 2 the mean for budget entrenchment was 1.60 and for retirement is 2.00. Refer to Table 1 and Table 2.

*Table 1*

*Rankings of Reasons for Reduction of Workforce Over the Past 5 Years*

<b>Response</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Retirement	6	5	2	0	1.69	0.75
Budget entrenchment/ reduction in force	6	1	6	0	2.00	1.00
Employees seeking other employment	1	6	5	1	2.46	0.78
Other, please specify; Family conflicts, Gap in hiring, Buyout, Reorganization	1	1	0	4	3.17	1.33

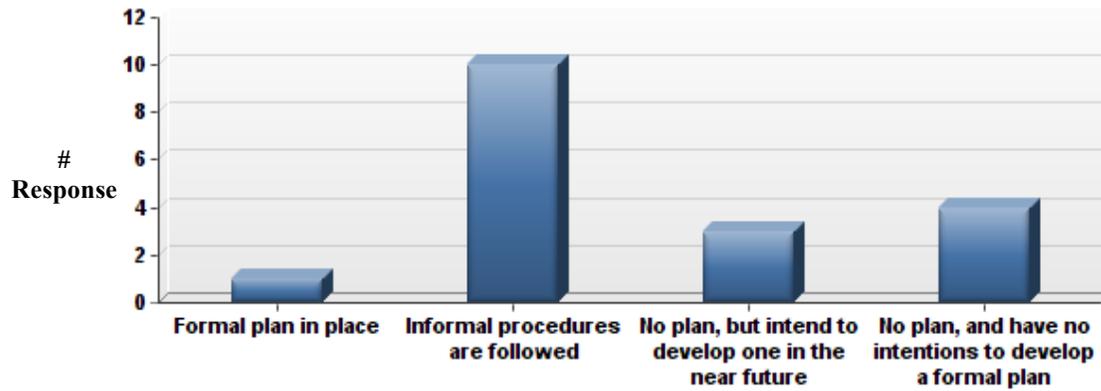
Table 2

*Ranking of Reasons for Reduction of Workforce Over the Past 10 Years*

<b>Response</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Budget entrenchment/ reduction in force	4	8	1	0	1.69	0.75
Retirement	7	1	5	0	2.00	1.00
Employees seeking other employment	2	3	7	1	2.46	0.78
Other, please specify; Family conflicts, Gap in hiring, Buyout, Reorganization	1	1	0	4	3.17	1.33

### **Research Objective 1**

The first objective was to identify the number of states within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System with a formal or informal succession plan. Of the 14 states responding, only one State Extension Director indicated they had a formal succession plan in place. Ten State Extension Directors responded that informal procedures are followed for succession planning. Three State Extension Directors further indicated that they have intentions to develop a succession plan in the near future, and four states indicated they have no intentions of developing a formal plan (see Figure 5).



*Figure 5.* Number of formal or informal succession plans as reported by Southern Region State Extension Directors, and their intentions to, or not to, develop a succession plan.

## **Research Objective 2**

This objective was to describe in the formal or informal succession plan in place in each of the states in the Southern Region Cooperative Extension Systems. State Extension Directors were asked, how well do you feel your organization is prepared to fill leadership positions? Options for response included, extremely prepared, prepared, unprepared, extremely unprepared and depends on the level of leadership. Forty-three percent or six State Extension Directors indicated they felt prepared to fill leadership positions within their systems. Likewise, six State Extension Directors, or 43%, felt they were unprepared, and two responded that it was dependent on the level of leadership (Figure 6).

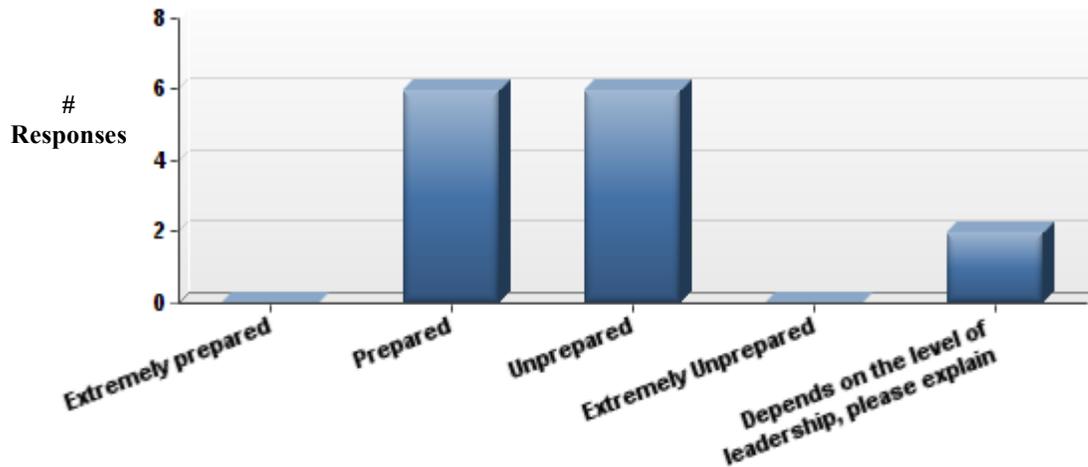


Figure 6. Southern Region State Extension Directors’ perceptions of level of preparedness to fill leadership positions.

Each State Extension Director was asked if their respective organization has a structured process for developing, tracking and evaluating employees for leadership role potential. Options for answers included: evaluates employees annually based on performance; tracks potential leaders’ performance; evaluates employees annually on potential for leadership; develops potential leaders by providing training, and they have no structured process or other. Nine State Extension Directors, or 64%, responded they develop potential leaders by providing training. Three State Extension Directors reported they had no structured process, one State Extension Director indicated they evaluated employees annually based on performance, and one State Extension Director indicated they tracked potential leaders’ performance (Figure 7).

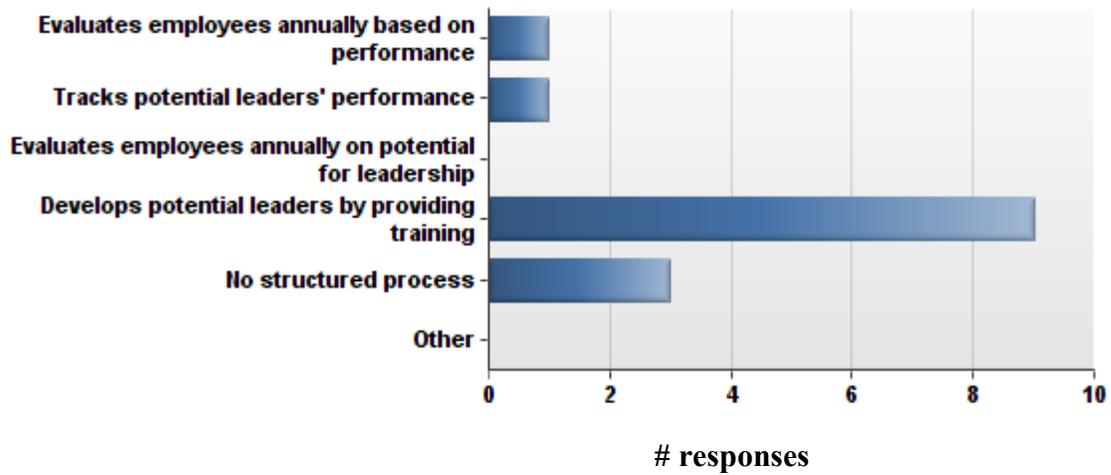


Figure 7. Southern Region State Extension Directors' responses to means of developing, tracking, and evaluating employees for leadership.

The next subset of questions addressed the communication of a succession plan to employees. Each State Extension Director was asked to evaluate the level at which their respective organization communicated the aspects of their succession plan. Respondents used a Likert-type scale on which answers ranged from 1 = *Very Frequently* to 5 = *Never*. There were six different variables, including: communicates to employees what skills and capabilities are needed to fill future employment opportunities within the organization; informs employees if they are potential leaders within the organization; notifies employees if they are on track to fill potential vacancies in the future; includes a strategic method for employees to indicate interest in future job openings; updates employees of possible employment opportunities that are expected in the future; and informs employees when they

are no longer considered for advancement within the organization. State Extension Directors responding they occasionally communicated to employees the skills and capabilities needed to fill future employment opportunities within the organization, resulted in a mean score of 3.0 for this item. State Extension Directors responding they occasionally informed employees if they are potential leaders within the organization, and four State Extension Directors reported that they frequently inform employees if they are potential leaders within the organization resulted in a mean score of 2.86 for this item. State Extension Directors responding they notified employees if they are on track to fill potential vacancies in the future, and their plan included a strategic method for employees to indicate interest in future job openings, resulted in means score of 3.21 and 3.1 respectively, for these two items. State Extension Directors also responded to, occasionally updated employees of possible employment opportunities that are expected in the future, and four State Extension Directors frequently inform employees if they are potential leaders within the organization, and also that they frequently updated employees of possible employment opportunities that are expected in the future, resulting in a mean score of 2.71 for this item. Five State Extension Directors reported that they rarely ever, and four states reported that they never, informed employees when they are no longer considered for advancement within the organization, resulting in a mean of 3.86 for this item (see Table 3). The item mean scores indicate that State Extension Directors occasionally communicate succession plans to their respective organization.

Table 3

*Southern Region State Extension Directors' Rankings of Organizational Communication of Succession*

*Plan*

Question	M	SD
Updates employees of possible employment opportunities that are expected in the future	2.71	0.83
Informs employees if they are potential leaders within the organization	2.86	0.66
Communicates to employees what skills and capabilities are needed to fill future employment opportunities within the organization	3.00	0.88
Includes a strategic method for employees to indicate interest in future job openings	3.07	1.00
Notifies employees if they are on track to fill potential vacancies in the future	3.21	0.97
Informs employees when they are no longer considered for advancement within in the organization	3.86	0.95

*1 = Very Frequently, 2 = Frequently, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Very Rarely, and 5 = Never*

State Extension Directors were asked, which group is primarily responsible for leading the organization in succession planning efforts? Response options were Senior Management positions (i.e. Dean, State Director, etc.), Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Managers, etc.), Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers), Human Resources Department, or Other. Seventy-five percent, or 9 State Extension Directors, reported Senior Management positions, which included potentially the

Dean, State Director, and other similar management positions. Two State Extension Directors reported that Middle Management, which included Area or District Managers and other similar positions, were responsible for the succession planning efforts. Only one State Extension Director reported that succession planning efforts were managed by the Human Resources Department (Table 4). This question was not answered by two State Extension Directors. If a State Extension Director declared they have no plan they were directed past this question.

*Table 4*

*Management of the Southern Region Cooperative Extension Succession Plans*

Answer	f	%
Senior Management positions (i.e. Dean, State Director, etc.)	9	75%
Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Managers, etc.)	2	17%
Human Resources Department	1	8%
Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers)	0	0%
Other, please explain	0	0%

State Extension Directors were asked to identify what groups of employees are included in preparation of a succession plan? Response options were Senior Management positions (i.e. Dean, State Director, etc.), Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Managers, etc.), Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers), Non-

Management Positions (i.e. County Agents or Educators, Program Assistants, etc.), Human Resources Department, or Other. Four State Extension Directors reported Senior Management positions and 4 State Extension Directors indicated that Middle Management positions were included in preparing a succession plan. The instrument instructed the participant to select all that apply. One respondent indicated that the instrument would not allow them to select more than one. One State Extension Director responded that all groups are included in the development of their succession plan (Table 5).

*Table 5*

*Preparing of the Southern Region Cooperative Extension Succession Plans*

Answer	f	%
Senior Management positions (i.e. Director, Assistant Director)	4	33%
Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Directors or Managers, District or Area Specialists)	4	33%
Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers, etc.)	1	8%
Non-management positions (i.e. County Agents or Educators, Program Assistants, etc.)	1	8%
Human Resources Department	1	8%
Other, please describe Would not let select more than one – all apply	1	8%

State Extension Directors were asked what group has primary responsibility for approving and allocating resources to fund the organizational succession plan. Response options were Senior Management positions (i.e. Dean, State Director, etc.), Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Managers, etc.), Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers), Non-Management Positions (i.e. County Agents or Educators, Program Assistants, etc.), Human Resources Department, or Other. Ten State Extension Directors or 83% responded that Senior Management was responsible for approving and allocating resources (Table 6).

*Table 6*

*Responsibility for Approving and Allocating Resources for Succession Plan*

Answer	f	%
Senior Management positions (i.e. Dean, State Director, etc.)	10	83%
Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Managers, etc.)	1	8%
Human Resources Department	1	8%
Non-management (i.e. County level employees, Program Assistants, etc.)	0	0%
Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers, etc.)	0	0%
Other, please describe	0	0%

State Extension Directors were asked, how does your organization evaluate your succession plan? Nine State Extension Directors or 69% responded that it was reviewed as

needed with no specific review cycle. Two State Extension Directors reported they evaluated and updated once per year (Table 7).

*Table 7*

*Southern Region State Extension Directors' Frequency of Evaluation of a Succession Plan*

Answer	f	%
As needed, no specific review cycle	9	69%
At least one time per year	2	15%
Other, please describe	2	15%
Once every two years	0	0%

### **Research Objective 3**

In the first subset of questions, State Extension Directors were asked to rate the following by level of importance to your organization's succession planning process. A Likert-type scale was used to rate the importance of the components listed from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree. Ten State Extension Directors Strongly Agreed and 4 Agreed that the organizations' long-term objectives and goals should be considered when developing a succession plan, resulting in a mean score of 1.29 for this item, indicating this is an important component to State Directors. Seven State Extension Directors Strongly Agreed, and 7 Agreed, that the succession plan should ensure that critical leadership

positions within the organization are filled with qualified successors, resulting in a mean of 1.50 for this item, indicating this is also an important component to State Extension Directors. Six State Extension Directors Strongly Agreed, and 7 Agreed, that the succession plan should identify potential vacancies or personnel gaps in the organization, resulting in a mean score of 1.64 for this item, indicating an important component. Eleven State Extension Directors Agreed that a succession plan should identify gaps in employee competencies and readiness levels, resulting in a mean of 2.07 for this item, indicating it is a valued component. Ten State Extension Directors Agreed, and 3 Strongly Agreed, that employees should be identified who could potentially fill future vacant positions, resulting in a mean of 1.86 for this item, a highly valued component. Three State Extension Directors Strongly Agreed, and 9 Agreed, that the succession plan should consider workforce trends such as, employee retention, turnover, and reduction in budget, resulting in a mean of 1.93 for this item, indicating importance of the component. Two State Extension Directors Strongly Agreed, and 8 Agreed, that the succession plan is linked to the organizational professional development process, resulting in a mean score of 2.21 for this item, indicating it is an important component. Two State Extension Directors Strongly Agreed, and 7 Agreed, that the succession plan is integrated in the organization's strategic planning process, resulting in a mean score of 2.36 for this item, indicating importance of including in a succession plan. Three State Extension Directors Strongly Agreed, and 7 Agreed, that the succession plan provides funding to offer professional development to employees, resulting in a mean score of 2.21 for this item, also ranking high on the list of important components to include in a plan.

Eight State Extension Directors neither Agreed, nor Disagreed, that updating and informing employees on the steps the organization plans to use in the succession plan is important, the mean score for this item is 3.00, indicating average importance for inclusion in a succession plan, yet still important. Five State Extension Directors Agreed, and 7 Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, to include a method to reduce departures from employees in key leadership roles, the mean score for this item is 2.57 indicating average importance for inclusion in a succession plan, yet still important. Four State Extension Directors Agreed, 3 neither Agreed or Disagreed, and 6 Disagreed, that succession planning should focus primarily on the organization's short-term needs, resulting in a mean score of 3.00 for this item indicating average importance for inclusion in a succession plan, yet still important, (Table 8). These scores indicate that Southern Region State Extension Directors value similar components important to the formation of a succession plan.

Table 8

*Southern Region State Extension Directors' Rankings of Components of Importance to Succession Plan*

Question	Mean	SD
Considers the organization's long term objectives and goals	1.29	0.47
Ensures that critical leadership positions within the organization are filled with qualified successors	1.50	0.52
Identifies potential vacancies or personnel gaps in the organization	1.64	0.63
Identifies employees who could potentially fill future vacant positions	1.86	0.53
Considers workforce trends (such as aging workforce, retention, turnover, reduction in budget, etc.)	1.93	0.62
Emphasizes diversity in the workplace	1.93	0.73
Identifies gaps in employee competencies and readiness levels	2.07	0.47
Is linked to the organization's strategic planning process	2.21	0.80
Includes funding to provide professional development to employees	2.21	0.97
Is integrated with the organization's strategic planning process	2.36	0.93
Adequately prepares less tenured employees to fill leadership positions	2.50	0.94
Reduces departures from employees in key leadership roles	2.57	0.76
Is given sufficient financial resources	2.86	1.03
Updates and informs employees on the steps the organization plans to use in the succession planning process	3.00	0.68
Focuses primarily on the organizations short term needs	3.00	1.04

*1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree*

## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe succession plans and components of importance as perceived by the organizational leadership within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System. This research determined the components that are important to a Cooperative Extension succession plan, as perceived by State Extension Directors in the Southern Region.

The conceptual framework used for the purpose of this study is the Human Capital Theory. The Human Capital theory suggests that education and training raises the productivity of workers by providing useful knowledge and skills (Schultz, 1961). Building human capital is likened to other types of investments like education, training, and providing benefits, all of which will contribute to the quality of employees and the success of a business.

Technology, demographics, and budget constraints have created the need for a more planned approach to developing today's workforce. The National Academy of Public Administration has determined the need for succession planning to be greater today than ever (2003). Good succession planning ensures the continued cultivation of leadership and is more proactive for creating long-term sustainability for the organization. Succession planning is the process of identifying and developing experienced and capable employees (Rothwell, 2001).

Today's organizations are faced with a multitude of challenges, and the Cooperative Extension System is no different. According to one State Extension Director, moves towards succession planning have been seriously hindered by significant budget reductions. In that state within the last five years there has been a loss of approximately 25% of all positions. Of that population, approximately one quarter is the result of retirements, one-fifth through lay-offs, and the remaining through attrition. As a result of budget cuts, retirements and attrition, Cooperative Extension is faced with the task of having qualified and skilled candidates for vacated positions and leadership roles. Effective succession planning is significant to the success and long-term viability of the organization.

The study was designed to determine the components that are important to a Cooperative Extension succession plan, as perceived by State Extension Directors in the 15 states in the Southern Region. Fourteen of the State Extension Directors or their designee responded to a questionnaire disseminated through Qualtrics, a web-based survey program. The questionnaire was sent from the State Extension Director of North Carolina Cooperative Extension to the Southern Region Director who forwarded the link to State Extension Directors in the Southern Region. The data were analyzed using the Qualtrics reports. The questionnaire consists of ranking, open-ended, and multiple-choice questions. Based on the State Extension Directors' response, information collected was used to determine the components they perceived as important for building a succession plan for respective Cooperative Extension Systems.

## **Conclusions**

The conclusions of this study are reported under each of the research objectives below:

*Research Objective 1 – To identify how many states within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System have in place a formal or informal succession plan.*

Based on the data collected, a conclusion can be made that the level of succession planning in the Cooperative Extension Systems in Southern Region states is very low, in the case of a formal plan. I would also conclude that a plan for succession is loosely constructed and similarly followed in most of those states. It can also be concluded that few of the State Extension Directors are interested in developing a formal plan for succession. In the questionnaire a formal plan was defined as a recognized policy or process intended for developing and filling specific positions (Fegley, 2006). A formal plan ensures continuity within an organization by anticipating and preparing for changes that will or can occur both expectedly and unexpectedly. The plan is part of an overall long-term plan for the organization and is supported by the organization's leadership team. Also in the questionnaire, an informal plan is defined as not an officially recognized policy or process and often has not been formally endorsed by the organization's leadership. An informal plan involves some discussions or preparations made inside the organization to ensure continuity within, but it is usually not part of the long-term plan for the organization (Fegley, 2006).

Of the 14 State Extension Directors responding, overwhelmingly, it appears that the majority of the Southern Region states do have some form of a succession plan, most of which are informal. Even though most of the plans in the region are informal, the fact that

they have one is an indication that succession planning is valued and somewhat utilized as a tool by the Southern Region State Extension Directors.

*Research Objective 2 – To describe in terms the formal or informal succession plans in place in the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System.*

The results of the study concluded that, of the State Extension Directors in the Southern Region, less than half or 43% of the State Extension Directors responding reported they were prepared to fill leadership positions. This rate is less than desirable. Six State Extension Directors or 43% also indicated they were unprepared to fill leadership positions. Two State Extension Directors responded that their level of preparation to fill positions was dependent on the level of leadership.

From the data collected, 64% of the Southern Region State Extension Directors reported providing training to develop potential leaders, is 64% enough leadership development training? Less than half of the respondents felt prepared for filling vacant positions, would additional leadership professional development training provide a larger pool of skilled employees qualified to fill vacant positions? Based on the Human Capital Theory, the quality of employees can be improved by investing in them. The education, experience and abilities of an employee have an economic value for the organization. (Armstrong, 2009).

Additional results of the study conclude that communication related to important components of a succession plan is less than desirable. It is possible to conclude that State Extension Directors do not feel prepared to fill vacant positions as a result of a lack of

communication to employees, resulting in employees that are unaware of the means to train, or retool to fill vacant positions or move up within the organization

From the data collected, it can be concluded that succession planning in the Southern Region is primarily the responsibility of senior level management. State Extension Directors and senior management (83%) are also primarily responsible for the allocation of resources towards succession planning efforts for their organization. The study also concludes that most of State Extension Directors in the Southern Region do recognize the value and need for succession planning, whether formal or informal. While Senior Management is primarily responsible for the allocation of resources, the researcher could not conclude the type or amount of resources expended towards succession planning.

The researcher also concludes that for the majority of the Southern Region Cooperative Extension Systems there are nearly no regular schedules for evaluating and updating formal and informal succession, primarily evaluation of a plan occurs on an as needed basis only.

*Research Objective 3 – To report the State Director's perception of the components of importance to the formal or informal succession plans of their respective states.*

According to the findings, it can be concluded that most, and in many cases all, of the State Extension Directors agree on the important components of a succession plan; consider the organizations' long-term objectives, goals, and strategic plan, ensure that critical positions are filled with qualified candidates, identify potential vacancies, identify employee competencies and readiness levels, link the succession plan to the professional development process, and allocate resources. As noted earlier in the literature these are key components of

the basic steps for developing a succession plan. Succession planning does not stand-alone; as evidenced by the data and the literature it must be integrated with professional development and the organizational strategic planning process. (Global Leadership Solutions, 2011)

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Increased technology, a growing senior and retirement eligible population, and budget constraints continue to have an impact on today's workforce. Businesses and organizations are constantly faced with challenges resulting from these factors. In order to maintain success and sustainability, they must develop a plan to address the voids created by the changes in the workforce.

Not unlike current demographic trends, the researcher found the majority of State Extension Directors in the Southern Region are facing a reduction in workforce due primarily to budget entrenchments and retirements. Less than half of the State Extension Directors felt they were prepared to fill leadership positions. The researcher recommends that the respective organizations develop a leadership and/or professional development track as a component of the succession plan. Armstrong (2010) provides simple questions based on the Human Capital Theory that will provide a starting point for thinking about this process. "What are the key performance drivers that create value? What skills have we got? What skills do we need now and in the future to meet our strategic aims? How can we develop a culture and environment in which organizational and individual learning takes place, which meets both our needs and the needs of our employees (p. 74)?"

The researcher also found that only one of the 14 State Extension Directors reported having a formal succession plan. Based on the literature, a formal process for succession is a plan where the key pieces are standardized throughout the organization; an informal process occurs in an unplanned and ad-hoc manner. Without a formal process that links training and experience to expected developmental outcomes, there is a waste of time and dollars to the organization (Day, 2007). The researcher recommends that each state organization move towards the development of a formal succession plan. Day (2007), provides a simple list of fundamentals for developing a formal succession plan; identify employees who could potentially fill future vacancies in leadership positions, consider the organization's long-term objectives and goals and the strategic planning process, identify potential vacancies and succession gaps in leadership positions, emphasize diversity in the workplace, and update employees on the organizational succession plan. The Committee on Government Reform (2003), provides similar recommendations for establishing a unified plan for succession, and adds that top leadership should actively participate in the process. These recommendations align with the top ten components identified by the State Extension Directors in the Southern Region.

According to Dresang (1986) and the Global Leadership Solutions (2001) literature, one of the basic steps to developing a successful succession plan is to consistently and regularly evaluate results and determine further measures. Sixty-nine percent of the State Extension Directors reported evaluating their succession plan on an as needed basis. Gold (2015) concludes that one of the basic components of a successful plan is to ensure periodic review of plan's components. He indicates that as your organization circumstances changes,

the succession plan and its effectiveness must be reassessed. Basically it provides a chance to refresh the plan's vitality and confirm the decisions made. The researcher recommends that a regular, more comprehensive evaluation and update of the succession plan would be a critical component to add to the plan.

The data also revealed 10 of the 14 State Extension Directors reported they occasionally, communicate to employees the skills and capabilities that are needed for growth in the organization. Based on this data, there is clearly a need for more effective and frequent communication from administration to employees. Without clear communication from the organization's leadership, Cooperative Extension's ability to react quickly and endure during difficult times is hindered. Deal, Stawiski, & Gentry, revealed in a 2010 Center for Creative Leadership study, employees felt it was highly important to them to be formally identified as high potential employees. Transparent succession plans reinforce the company's message to employees that their skills and experience are valued. (LaMarche, 2015). The researcher recommends that as the Cooperative Extension Systems develop a formal succession plan they incorporate into the plan a method to communicate the plans and processes to employees. As budget constraints continue, one way to communicate leadership opportunities would be through the organization's web presence. Employees would have continuous access to the leadership requirements and training opportunities, enabling them to create their own professional development and leadership career ladder. Of course interactive leadership and professional development opportunities could also be conducted to allow for levels of certification and mastery of skills.

Since the State Extension Directors in the Southern Region feel unprepared to fill leadership positions, the researcher recommends there is a need for immediate action in the development and training of the workforce. A critical step in the process of developing a succession plan is identifying pools of talent and communicating to employees the skills necessary for leadership and other employment opportunities (Kesler, 2002).

As Cooperative Extension in the Southern Region moves forward, facing the changing workforce. The researcher recommends that in order to remain relevant and effective, the respective state systems must consider the development of a long-range succession plan. The organizations should be mindful of incorporating the critical components, but also of communicating the information to employees and of establishing a regularly scheduled evaluation process.

### **Recommendations for Additional Research**

Moving forward additional beneficial research could incorporate similar data from the 1890 Cooperative Extension Systems. As mentioned earlier, the Southern Region is comprised of 15 Cooperative Extension Systems, which includes 13 states plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. This region also includes an additional 13 1890 Cooperative Extension Systems. The researcher was only able to collect data from the 1862 organizations and was unable to include information from the 1890 organizations. For future studies the researcher recommends that similar data be collected from the 13 1890 Institutions. The systems operate differently in many states and would best be studied separately and potentially compared to the results from this study for similarities, possibly making recommendations similar for both.

The organizational structure data that was collected provided a basic breakdown of the structure of the states' system, i.e., districts, counties, etc.; however the question was not directly related to the presence of a base model. Currently North Carolina Cooperative Extension is in a restructuring process and has established a base model for county centers. Further questions regarding the potential establishment of a base model and additional details about a base model would provide greater insight into the succession planning process.

Other information that would be useful to the study and recommendations would include the types of resources allocated to succession planning and professional development. Were the resources human or monetary or a combination and was this the primary barrier to professional development and succession planning? Were there states that were involved in an employee retention and or recruitment plan, if so was this linked to the succession plan, and were resources dedicated to this purpose? One State Extension Director responded that their primary reason for a lack of interest in the development of a succession plan was that "inherent in succession planning is the identification of those with potential, these individuals often develop a sense of entitlement and are often seen by their peers as the heir apparent stifling any chances of an open and competitive process." This response lends itself to determine if this is a common issue in the succession planning process, thus potentially deterring state systems from placing value on the development of a long-range plan.

The questionnaire asked State Extension Directors to rank the reasons for the reduction in workforce over the past five and 10 years. Some additional data useful to the study would be whether the organization had been through a restructuring process. There

was one comment indicating their state had gone through reorganization, although no details were provided. Reorganization or restructuring is a common reason for a reduction in workforce, however the implementation can be conducted using different methods, eliminating middle managers or county employees for example. More description of the methods of reorganization lends itself to better succession planning. Did reorganizing or restructuring state systems, or those with significant reduction in work force have a succession plan in place, and if so, did it make the transition more efficient, or if they did not have a succession plan in place, would it have been useful in this case?

Expanding the population to a national study would provide a more comprehensive snapshot of succession planning as it is conducted in all Cooperative Extension Systems. Similar gaps or strengths could potentially leverage more funding for the process, as well as provide additional useful information for the development of a succession plan.

To be successful Cooperative Extension Systems in the Southern Region must continue to study ways to maintain the level of professional employee that is inherent to its' mission and history. It is the responsibility of the organization to determine the assets and skills of the workforce and develop a plan to maintain these in structured manner over a long period of time.

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## APPENDIX

## *Appendix A*

### *Cooperative Extension, Southern Region Succession Plan Survey*

#### **Cooperative Extension, Southern Region Succession Plan Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to obtain information regarding the formal or informal succession plan you may have in place for your state's Cooperative Extension. The goal of this study is to describe a succession plan utilizing best management practices for Cooperative Extension within the Southern Region States.

The questionnaire can be completed online, and should only take several minutes of your time. I would be very grateful if you could complete within one working week. All of the information provided will be treated with strict confidence, and individual systems will not be identified.

For the purposes of this study, a formal succession plan is defined as a recognized policy or process intended for developing and filling specific positions. This plan ensures continuity within an organization by anticipating and preparing for changes that will or can occur both expectedly and unexpectedly. This plan is part of an overall long-term plan for the organization and is supported by the organization's leadership team (e.g., executive management, senior management, etc.) An informal succession plan is not an officially recognized policy or process and often has not been formally endorsed by the organization's leadership. It involves some discussions or preparations made inside the organization to ensure continuity within, but it is usually not part of the long-term plan for the organization (Fegley, 2006).

Thanks in advance for your participation.

Adapted from survey used in:

Fegley, S. 2006. 2006 Succession planning, survey report. Society for Human Resource Management. SHRM Research.

## **Informed Consent**

You have been asked to participate in a research study that seeks to identify and describe the operational succession plans within the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System.

This survey will ask questions related to the situation in your State Cooperative Extension System. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Completing this survey involves no risk to you. Your responses will be confidential. Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study, skip over a particular question, or quit at any time.

Questions about this research study or procedures may be addressed to:  
Tammy Kelly (Principle Investigator), [tammy\\_kelly@ncsu.edu](mailto:tammy_kelly@ncsu.edu)  
Dr. Jim Flowers (Faculty Sponsor), [jim\\_flowers@ncsu.edu](mailto:jim_flowers@ncsu.edu)

If you have questions about the research and your rights as a participant, you may contact the NC State University Institutional Review Board office at 919-515-4514 or 919-515-7515.

### **Electronic Consent:**

Clicking on the "Next" button below will begin your survey, indicating that:  
You have read the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the survey.

## Importance of Succession Planning to Your Organization

1. Please rate the following by level of importance to your organization's succession planning process.

1-Strongly disagree  
2-Disagree  
3-Neither agree or disagree  
4-Agree  
5-Strongly agree

- a. Identifies employees who could potentially fill future vacancies in positions  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- b. Considers the organization's long term objectives and goals  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- c. Ensures that critical leadership positions within the organization are filled with qualified successors  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- d. Identifies potential vacancies or personnel gaps in the organization  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- e. Considers workforce trends (such as aging workforce, retention, turnover, reduction in budget, etc.)  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- f. Is integrated with the organization's strategic planning process  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- g. Is linked to the organization's professional development process  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- h. Emphasizes diversity in the workplace  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
- i. Identifies gaps in the employee competencies and readiness levels

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

j. Is given sufficient financial resources

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

k. Includes funding to provide professional development to employees

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

l. Adequately prepares less tenured employees to fill leadership positions

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

m. Reduces departures from employees in key leadership roles

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

n. Focuses primarily on the organization's short term needs

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

o. Updates and informs employees on the steps the organization plans to use in the succession planning process

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

## Employee Knowledge of Succession Plan

2. Please evaluate the level at which your organization communicates the aspects of your succession plan.

1-Very Frequently

2-Frequently

3-Occasionally

4-Very Rarely

5-Never

- a. Communicates to employees what skills and capabilities are needed to fill future employment opportunities within the organization

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

- b. Informs employees if they are potential leaders within the organization

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

- c. Notifies employees if they are on track to fill potential vacancies in the future

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

- d. Includes a strategic method for employees to indicate interest in future job openings

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

- e. Updates employees of possible employment opportunities that are expected in the future

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

- f. Informs employees when they are no longer considered for advancement within the organization

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

## Succession Plan

3. How well do you feel your organization is prepared to fill leadership positions?
  - a. Extremely prepared
  - b. Prepared
  - c. Unprepared
  - d. Extremely unprepared
  - e. Depends on the level of Leadership, please explain  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Does your organization have a structured process for developing, tracking and evaluating employees for leadership role potential?
  - a. Evaluates employees annually based on performance
  - b. Tracks potential leaders' performance
  - c. Evaluates employees annually on potential for leadership
  - d. Develops potential leaders by providing training
  - e. No structured process
  - f. Other
  
5. Does your organization have a formal succession plan in place? If the answer is No, answer and move to Question 10 (Qualtrics should divert to number 10).
  - a. Formal plan in place
  - b. Informal procedures are followed
  - c. No plan, but intend to develop one in the near future
  - d. No plan, and have no intentions to develop a formal plan
  
6. What groups of employees are included in preparing the succession planning process? (Check all that apply)
  - a. Senior Management positions (i.e. Director, Assistant Director, etc.)
  - b. Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Directors or Managers, District or Area Specialists, etc.)
  - c. Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers)
  - d. Non-management (i.e. County Agents or Educators, Program Assistants, etc.)
  - e. Human Resources Department
  - f. Other, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

7. What group has primary responsibility for approving and allocating resources to fund your organizational succession plan?

- a. Senior Management positions (i.e. Dean, State Director, etc.)
- b. Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Managers, etc.)
- c. Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers)
- d. Non-management (i.e. County level employees, Program Assistants, etc.)
- e. Human Resources Department
- f. Other, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

8. What group has primary responsibility for leading the organization's succession planning efforts?

- a. Senior Management positions (i.e. Dean, State Director, etc.)
- b. Middle Management positions (i.e. Area or District Managers, etc.)
- c. Secondary Management positions (i.e. County Directors or Managers)
- d. Non-management (i.e. County level employees, Program Assistants, etc.)
- e. Human Resources Department
- f. Other, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

9. How often does your organization evaluate or update your succession plan? (Following this question, those with a succession plan will be directed to Question #11).

- a. We have no Plan
- b. At least one time per year
- c. As needed, no specific review cycle
- d. Once every two years
- e. Other, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

10. If your organization has not developed a succession plan, what would you say is the primary reason?

- a. More immediate organizational needs take precedence
- b. No support from the organization's leadership team
- c. Staff size is too small
- d. Have not given it consideration
- e. Have not been asked to develop a plan
- f. Lack of financial resources
- g. Do not feel there is value in developing a plan
- h. Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Rank the reasons for your loss of your workforce over the past 5 years, 1 being greatest loss.

- \_\_\_ Budget entrenchment/reduction in forces
- \_\_\_ Retirement
- \_\_\_ Employees seeking other employment
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. Rank the reasons for your loss of your workforce over the past 10 years, 1 being greatest loss.

- \_\_\_ Budget entrenchment/reduction in forces
- \_\_\_ Retirement
- \_\_\_ Employees seeking other employment
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Demographic Information

13. Approximate number of employees in your state organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Please signify funding source, check all that apply:

- a. State
- b. County
- c. State and County
- d. Other please specify

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Please describe the management of your organization (i.e. Districts, Regions, Counties, etc.) and provide the approximate number of employees at each level.

15. Please provide any other significant informational details about the succession plan for your State Organization.

## Appendix B

### NCSU IRB Study Application and Approval

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH  
SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

Protocol Number 5666

*Project Title*

A Descriptive Study of Methods of Succession Planning and Organizational Leadership Development with the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System.

*IRB File Number:*

*Original Approval Date:*

03/25/2015

*Approval Period*

03/25/2015 -

*Source of funding (if externally funded, enter PINS or RADAR number of funding proposal via 'Add New Sponsored Project Record' button below):*

*NCSU Faculty point of contact for this protocol:NB: only this person has authority to submit the protocol*

Flowers, James: Agricultural & Extension Education

*Does any investigator associated with this project have a significant financial interest in, or other conflict of interest involving, the sponsor of this project? (Answer No if this project is not sponsored)*

No

*Is this conflict managed with a written management plan, and is the management plan being properly followed?*

No

*Preliminary Review Determination*

*Category:*

Exempt b.2

*Provide a brief synopsis of the study (limit text to 1500 characters)*

The overall purpose of this study is to explore and describe methods of succession planning and organizational leadership development within the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System. With the reduction in force in Cooperative Extension Systems across the United States, some due to retirements others as a result of budget cuts, the organization is faced with the loss of a tremendous wealth of leadership and knowledge as well as the overwhelming challenge of replacing the leadership as positions are open for filling. These changes have reinforced the need for effective succession planning for Cooperatives Extension Systems nationwide.

*Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.*

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the formal or informal succession plans and critical components within the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System. Descriptive statistics are gathered from these selected state organizations that outline critical components of their plan for succession in filling leadership positions.

*Is this research being conducted by a student?*

Yes

*Is this research for a thesis?*

No

*Is this research for a dissertation?*

Yes

*Is this independent research?*

Yes

*Is this research for a course?*

No

*Do you currently intend to use the data for any purpose beyond the fulfillment of the class assignment?*

No

*Please explain*

If so, please explain

If you anticipate additional NCSU-affiliated investigators (other than those listed on the Title tab) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their name and department.

None

Will the investigators be collaborating with researchers at any institutions or organizations outside of NC State?

No

List collaborating institutions and describe the nature of the collaboration

What is NCSU's role in this research?

Describe funding flow, if any (e.g. subcontractors)

Is this international research?

No

Identify the countries involved in this research

An IRB equivalent review for local and cultural context may be necessary for this study. Can you recommend consultants with cultural expertise who may be willing to provide this review?

Adults 18 - 64 in the general population?

Yes

NCSU students, faculty or staff?

No

Adults age 65 and older?

No

Minors (under age 18--be sure to include provision for parental consent and/or child assent)?

No

List ages or age range:

Could any of the children be "Wards of the State" (a child whose welfare is the responsibility of the state or other agency, institution, or entity)?

No

Please explain:

Prisoners (any individual involuntarily confined or detained in a penal institution -- can be detained pending arraignment, trial or sentencing)?

No

Pregnant women?

No

Are pregnant women the primary population or focus for this research?

No

Provide rationale for why they are the focus population and describe the risks associated with their involvement as participants

Fetuses?

No

Students?

No

Does the research involve normal educational practices?

No

Is the research being conducted in an accepted educational setting?

No

Are participants in a class taught by the principal investigator?

No

Are the research activities part of the required course requirements?

No

*Will course credit be offered to participants?*

No

*Amount of credit?*

No

*If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit. Note: the time it takes to gain the same amount of credit by the alternate means should be commensurate with the study task(s)*

*How will permission to conduct research be obtained from the school or district?*

*Will you utilize private academic records?*

No

*Explain the procedures and document permission for accessing these records.*

*Employees?*

No

*Describe where (in the workplace, out of the workplace) activities will be conducted.*

*From whom and how will permission to conduct research on the employees be obtained?*

*How will potential participants be approached and informed about the research so as to reduce any perceived coercion to participate?*

*Is the employer involved in the research activities in any way?*

No

*Please explain:*

*Will the employer receive any results from the research activities (i.e. reports, recommendations, etc.)?*

No

*Please explain. How will employee identities be protected in reports provided to employers?*

*Impaired decision making capacity/Legally incompetent?*

No

*How will competency be assessed and from whom will you obtain consent?*

*Mental/emotional/developmental/psychiatric challenges?*

No

*Identify the challenge and explain the unique risks for this population.*

*Describe any special provisions necessary for consent and other study activities (e.g., legal guardian for those unable to consent).*

*People with physical challenges?*

No

*Identify the challenge and explain the unique risks for this population.*

*Describe any special provisions necessary for working with this population (e.g., witnesses for the visually impaired).*

*Economically or educationally disadvantaged?*

No

*Racial, ethnic, religious and/or other minorities?*

No

*Non-English speakers?*

No

*Describe the procedures used to overcome any language barrier.*

---

Will a translator be used?

No

---

Provide information about the translator (who they are, relation to the community, why you have selected them for use, confidentiality measures being utilized).

---

Explain the necessity for the use of the vulnerable populations listed.

---

State how, where, when, and by whom consent will be obtained from each participant group. Identify the type of consent (e.g., written, verbal, electronic, etc.). Label and submit all consent forms.

Round one of participants (Southern Region Cooperative Extension Directors or designee) will receive the option of linking into an on line survey or completing a paper version. This will be conducted at a Middle Managers Conference. Following the Conference all Cooperative Extension Directors or designee will receive the on line survey. The email will be sent from the NC Cooperative Director. Participants must agree to participate in the survey before completion. An email reminder will be sent two weeks following the original survey, and again on the third week. The survey should take approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

---

If any participants are minors, describe the process for obtaining parental consent and minor's assent (minor's agreement to participate).

N/A

---

Are you applying for a waiver of the requirement for consent (no consent information of any kind provided to participants) for any participant group(s) in your study?

No

---

Describe the procedures and/or participant group for which you are applying for a waiver, and justify why this waiver is needed and consent is not feasible.

---

Are you applying for an alteration (exclusion of one or more of the specific required elements) of consent for any participant group(s) in your study?

No

---

Identify which required elements of consent you are altering, describe the participant group(s) for which this waiver will apply, and justify why this waiver is needed.

---

Are you applying for a waiver of signed consent (consent information is provided, but participant signatures are not collected)? A waiver of signed consent may be granted only if: The research involves no more than minimal riskThe research involves no procedures for which consent is normally required outside of the research context.

Yes

---

Would a signed consent document be the only document or record linking the participant to the research?

No

---

Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study?

No

---

Describe why deception is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures.Does the deception require a waiver or alteration of informed consent information?Describe debriefing and/or disclosure procedures and submit materials for review.Are participants given the option to destroy their data if they do not want to be a part the study after disclosure?

---

For each participant group please indicate how many individuals from that group will be involved in the research. Estimates or ranges of the numbers of participants are acceptable. Please be aware that participant numbers may affect study risk. If your participation totals differ by 10% from what was originally approved, notify the IRB.

There is a potential of 28 participants.

---

How will potential participants be found and selected for inclusion in the study?

The participant group will include Cooperative Extension State Leaders or their designee, from the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System. The Southern Region is comprised of 15 Cooperative Extension Systems, which includes 13 states plus Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands making 15, and 13 1890 Cooperative Extension Systems. Those states considered to be the Southern Region include; Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virgin Islands, and Virginia. A total of 28 participants will receive the survey.

---

For each participant group, how will potential participants be approached about the research and invited to participate?

State Cooperative Extension Leaders or their designee, attending the Cooperative Extension Middle Managers Conference in March 2015 will receive the information and survey in paper or on line version. Following the all State Cooperative Extension Leaders or their designee, will receive an email from the NC Cooperative Extension State Leader attached to the survey.

*Describe any inclusion and exclusion criteria for your participants and describe why those criteria are necessary (If your study concentrates on a particular population, you do not need to repeat your description of that population here.)*

N/A

*Is there any relationship between researcher and participants - such as teacher/student; employer/employee?*

No

*What is the justification for using this participant group instead of an unrelated participant group?*

*Describe any risks associated with conducting your research with a related participant group.*

*Describe how this relationship will be managed to reduce risk during the research.*

*How will risks to confidentiality be managed?*

*Address any concerns regarding data quality (e.g. non-candid responses) that could result from this relationship.*

*In the following questions describe in lay terms all study procedures that will be experienced by each group of participants in this study. For each group of participants in your study, provide a step-by-step description of what they will experience from beginning to end of the study activities.*

Participants will be invited by NC Cooperative Extension State Leader or designee to participate in the descriptive survey, on paper or on line utilizing Qualtrics.

*Describe how, where, when, and by whom data will be collected.*

For anyone completing the paper version of the survey the PI will enter data into Qualtrics. All other participants will complete the Qualtrics version and the data will be compiled utilizing that system. PI will report all findings in the research and report back the results to participants as well.

*Social?*

No

*Psychological?*

No

*Financial/Employability?*

No

*Legal?*

No

*Physical?*

No

*Academic?*

No

*Employment?*

No

*Financial?*

No

*Medical?*

No

*Private Behavior?*

No

*Economic Status?*

No

*Sexual Issues?*

No

*Religious Issues/Beliefs?*

No

Describe the nature and degree of risk that this study poses for each item marked "Yes" above. Describe the steps taken to minimize these risks. You CANNOT say 'none' or 'no risks'.

There are minimal risks associated with this research.

If you are accessing private records, describe how you are gaining access to these records, what information you need from the records, and how you will receive/record data.

N/A

Are you asking participants to disclose information about other individuals (e.g., friends, family, co-workers, etc.)?

No

Describe the data you will collect and discuss how you will protect confidentiality and the privacy of these third-party individuals.

If you are collecting information that participants might consider personal or sensitive or that if revealed might cause embarrassment, harm to reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, what measures will you take to protect participants from those risks?

N/A

If any of the study procedures could be considered risky in and of themselves (e.g. study procedures involving upsetting questions, stressful situations, physical risks, etc.) what measures will you take to protect participants from those risks?

N/A

Describe the anticipated direct benefits to be gained by each group of participants in this study (compensation is not a direct benefit).

Participants will receive results from the data, describing formal and informal succession plans in the Southern Region of the Cooperative Extension System.

If no direct benefit is expected for participants describe any indirect benefits that may be expected, such as to the scientific community or to society.

The results could potentially provide for these participants additional information concerning the development or success of a succession plan for Cooperative Extension.

Will you be receiving already existing data without identifiers for this study?

No

Will you be receiving already existing data which includes identifiers for this study?

Yes

Describe how the benefits balance out the risks of this study.

Will data be collected anonymously (meaning that you do not ever collect data in a way that would allow you to link any identifying information to a participant)?

Yes

Will identifiers be recorded with the data?

No

Will you use a master list, crosswalk, or other means of linking a participant's identity to the data?

No

Will it be possible to identify a participant indirectly from the data collected (i.e. indirect identification from demographic information)?

No

Audio recordings?

No

Video recordings?

No

Images?

No

Digital/electronic files?

No

Paper documents (including notes and journals)?

Yes

Physiological Responses?

No

Online survey?

Yes

Restricted Computer?

Yes

---

*Password Protected files?*

Yes

---

*Firewall System?*

No

---

*Locked Private Office?*

No

---

*Locked Filing Cabinets?*

No

---

*Encrypted Files?*

No

---

*Describe all participant identifiers that will be collected (whether they will be retained or not) and explain why they are necessary.*

Demographic data will be collected on the Southern Region States of the Cooperative Extension System.

---

*If any links between data and participants are to be retained, how will you protect the confidentiality of the data?*

N/A

---

*If you are collecting data electronically, what (if any) identifiable information will be collected by the host site (such as email and/or IP address) and will this information be reported to you?*

No

---

*Describe any ways that participants could be identified indirectly from the data collected and describe measures taken to protect identities.*

N/A

---

*For all recordings of any type: Describe the type of recording(s) to be made Describe the safe storage of recordings Who will have access to the recordings? Will recordings be used in publications or data reporting? Will images be altered to de-identify? Will recordings be transcribed and by whom?*

---

*Describe how data will be reported (aggregate, individual responses, use of direct quotes) and describe how identities will be protected in study reports.*

Data will be descriptive. Electronic responses will be downloaded and kept in a password protected file.

---

*Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed?*

No

---

*Describe any compensation that participants will be eligible to receive, including what the compensation is, any eligibility requirements, and how it will be delivered.*

N/A

---

*Explain compensation provisions if the participant withdraws prior to completion of the study.*

N/A

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*Appendix C*

*Email Request to Dr. Joe Zublena*

Email to Dr. Joe Zublena, Associate Dean CALS and Director NC Cooperative Extension Service and Sheri Schwab, Associate Director of the NC Cooperative Extension Service, concerning dissemination of survey to State Directors in the Southern Region

On Mon, Apr 6, 2015 at 9:30 AM, Tammy Kelly <[tammy\\_kelly@ncsu.edu](mailto:tammy_kelly@ncsu.edu)> wrote:  
Greetings Joe and Sheri,  
Thanks again for agreeing to assist me with the dissemination of my succession plan survey. I really do appreciate it and want to do whatever I can to make this as easy as possible for you and or Sheri.

I have received IRB Approval and have "officially" activated my Succession Plan Survey. Joe, per your suggestions I rearranged the order, changed some questions and inserted a "skip" feature so that those without any plan can be directed further into the study and not answer the questions that are not applicable.

I am attaching the doc copy if you would like to check it out. Of course the features are not available in that version.

As you are aware the purpose of this survey is to obtain information regarding the formal or informal succession plan that each state in the Southern Region you may have in place. The goal of this study is to describe a succession plan utilizing best management practices for Cooperative Extension within the Southern Region States.(I am including the 1890 Institutions).

I will plan to share the results with the participants in what ever manner they would like to receive it.

Marshall indicated to me that you will probably have an email alias for these individuals, if not and I need to gather contact information for you just let me know.

Here is the live link for the survey, it is in NCSU Qualtrics. Please include me in the email request.

[http://ncsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV\\_aW58wxpL5xEWw6h](http://ncsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_aW58wxpL5xEWw6h)

Again thanks so much for your assistance, please let me know if you would like me to provide anything else. I can do the email intro if you like,  
Tammy

BTW Joe, Congrats on your Retirement!!

Appendix D

*Email to Dr. Ron Brown to Forward to Southern Region State Extension Directors*

Email from Tracy Brown, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Ron Brown of link to Succession Planning for Cooperative Extension Survey, for dissemination.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Tracy Brown** <[tbrown2@ncsu.edu](mailto:tbrown2@ncsu.edu)>

Date: Thu, Apr 9, 2015 at 4:21 PM

Subject: Succession Plan Survey Active

To: "Brown, Ronald" <[brown@ext.msstate.edu](mailto:brown@ext.msstate.edu)>

Cc: Joe Zublena <[sscjpz@ncsu.edu](mailto:sscjpz@ncsu.edu)>, Tracy Brown <[tracy\\_brown@ncsu.edu](mailto:tracy_brown@ncsu.edu)>, Tamy Kelly <[tammy\\_kelly@ncsu.edu](mailto:tammy_kelly@ncsu.edu)>

Dr. Brown,

Dr. Zublena asked that I send you the request below to be shared with the Southern Directors.

Thanks  
Tracy

=====  
Southern Directors,

As mentioned at our Southern Directors meeting, Tammy Kelly, County Extension Director, and current NCSU Doctoral candidate is collecting data for her Doctoral dissertation. She is seeking to obtain information regarding the formal or informal succession plan within the Cooperative Extension System in the Southern Region. *Her goal is to describe a succession plan utilizing best management practices for the Cooperative Extension System in the Southern Region States.*

**The questionnaire can be completed online, and should only take several minutes of your time. Results of the survey will be shared with participants.** *All of the information provided will be treated with strict confidence, and individual systems will not be identified.*

Here is the link to the survey:

[http://ncsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV\\_aW58wxpL5xEWw6h](http://ncsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_aW58wxpL5xEWw6h)

Thank you very much for your contribution.

Joe Zublena, Associate Dean and Director, NC State University

*Appendix E*

*Email reminder from Dr. Ron Brown, Executive Director, Association of Southern Region Extension Directors, to Southern Region State Directors.*

REMINDER

Directors,

Please remember that at our meeting in Roanoke, you agreed to Dr. Zublena's request to help Ms. Tammy Kelly with her study about succession planning in Extension in the south. Following is the only reminder you will receive. Due to timing of her study, she needs your response now. Because of confidentiality guidelines, she cannot tell me who has and has not responded, so if you are not sure that you have, please do so. Thanks. rb

*A big thanks to those of you who have had the opportunity to complete the Cooperative Extension Succession Plan Survey. As mentioned at our Southern Directors meeting, Tammy Kelly, County Extension Director, and current NCSU Doctoral candidate is collecting data for her Doctoral dissertation. Some of you have responded, however in order to provide for you the most accurate information, additional responses are needed.*

*For the study you will be asked information regarding the formal or informal succession plan within your state Cooperative Extension System. The goal is to describe a succession plan utilizing best management practices for the Cooperative Extension System in the Southern Region States.*

*The questionnaire can be completed online, and should only take several minutes of your time. Results of the survey will be shared with participants. All of the information provided will be treated with strict confidence, and individual systems will not be identified.*

*Here is the link to the survey: [http://ncsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV\\_aW58wxpL5xEWw6h](http://ncsu.qualtrics.com//SE/?SID=SV_aW58wxpL5xEWw6h)*

*Thank you very much for your contribution.*

Ronald A. Brown, Executive Director  
Association of Southern Region Extension Directors  
P. O. Box 9656  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
[662-325-0644](tel:662-325-0644) (phone)  
[662-325-8915](tel:662-325-8915) (fax)  
[brown@ext.msstate.edu](mailto:brown@ext.msstate.edu)