

# **Putting “Success” in Succession Planning**

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**For Libraries**

**Adapted from Ray Gordon’s NHMA Article  
Ten Steps to Successful Succession Planning**

## About Lara

Lara Berry is the director at the Langdon Public Library in Newington and former trustee and chair of the Harvey-Mitchell Memorial Library in Epping. Lara has previously served as the Chair of the 2018 Small Library Summit, on the NHLTA Board of directors as Education Committee Chair and 2021 Conference Chair, and NHLA Information Technology Section president. She is the author of several articles in the NHLTA newsletter, including "Spotlight on Small Libraries in COVID 19" "Staffing Challenges During COVID 19: Strategies for Retention and Advocacy" and "Further Strategies for Library Staff Retention During the Pandemic." She currently serves on the NHLA EDI Committee, and as Seacoast Library Co-op Chair.

# The Only Thing Constant Is Change

–Heraclitus

Library management and staff are staying in positions for shorter terms and taking longer to replace, leading to stress in library workplaces that can become a vicious cycle causing further attrition. This session adapts [Ray Gordon's 2023 NHMA article "Ten Steps to Succession Planning"](#) for libraries, giving tools and strategies to prepare for change before it happens, maximize organizational integrity, improve morale, and sustain service during and after significant transitions.





# **I. Make a Plan**

- Start before it's needed
- Identify: day-to-day impact of the position
- “Mission critical” duties: what are they and who does them?

## 2. Essential Tasks & Who Performs Them

- Identify already existing back-ups
- Simplify unnecessarily complicated procedures
- Make responsibilities more sustainable for current and future staff
- Handbooks for Facility/Finances/Operations Example:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RnvLS9GlZkrvct\\_g-p2QhBx9JBhHK\\_fol0G-aBC9XE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RnvLS9GlZkrvct_g-p2QhBx9JBhHK_fol0G-aBC9XE/edit?usp=sharing)



### **3. Identify Back-ups & Talk to Them**

- Who are the available alternatives to perform needed tasks or cover needed hours?
  1. On a temporary basis
  2. On a permanent basis
- Talk to them and verify they are interested.

# 4. **Strategize funding for replacements**

- Research cost of alternatives
- Staffing
- Contracted services





## 5. Training

- On the Job
- Professional Development
- NHLTA: [www.nhlta.org](http://www.nhlta.org)
- NHLA: [www.nhlibrarians.org](http://www.nhlibrarians.org)
- NHMA: [www.nhmunicipal.org](http://www.nhmunicipal.org)
- ALA: [www.ALA.org](http://www.ALA.org)



# 6. Take a Vacation!

If possible.  
If not, why not?

Don't wait until a staffing crisis to test this out.





## 7. Return & Re-Examine

- What Worked?
- What Didn't?

## 8. Fine Tune

- What skills do you need and not have?
- Train or hire
- Add duties in job descriptions, re-organize, or add positions



## 9. **Don't Forget You!**

- Trustees:
  1. Chair
  2. Secretary
  3. Treasurer

# 10.

## Stick With Your Plan

- Communicate plan to all stakeholders
- Stick with your plan
- If changes are made, communicate them effectively to everyone involved using pre-established channels
- Coordinate with your team to anticipate challenges to avoid changing the plan

# Q & A

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