

# Implementing the Succession Plan

**Tom O'Brien, Director**  
California Local Technical  
Assistance Program  
[Tom.Obrien@csulb.edu](mailto:Tom.Obrien@csulb.edu)

**Scott Jakovich, Manager**  
California Local Technical  
Assistance Program  
[Scott.Jakovich@csulb.edu](mailto:Scott.Jakovich@csulb.edu)

**Daniel Burke, Training Supervisor**  
Division of Local Assistance  
Caltrans  
[daniel.burke@dot.ca.gov](mailto:daniel.burke@dot.ca.gov)

The image shows the cover of a research report titled "Developing Succession Planning Capacity within Caltrans". The cover features a white background with a black border. At the top right, the title is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the title, there are two orange rectangular boxes. The left box contains the text "September 2024" in white. The right box contains the text "A Research Report from the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center" in white. Below these boxes, the authors' names and affiliations are listed in a smaller black font. At the bottom left, there is a logo for the Pacific Southwest Region UTC, which consists of the letters "PSR" in a stylized font above the text "Pacific Southwest Region UTC" and "University Transportation Center". At the bottom right, there is a logo for CITT, which consists of a stylized orange and black graphic above the text "CITT" and "CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION".

**Developing Succession Planning Capacity within Caltrans**

September 2024 | A Research Report from the Pacific Southwest Region University Transportation Center

Tom O'Brien, Ph.D., College of Professional and Continuing Education, California State University, Long Beach  
Tyler Reeb, Ph.D., Center for International Trade & Transportation, California State University, Long Beach

PSR Pacific Southwest Region UTC  
CITT CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION

## Recap of “Planning to Succession Plan”

- Target 35-49 year-olds to prepare them for future
- Engage under 35 year-olds to encourage leadership interest
- Empower leadership to manage through change
- Three steps to planning:
  1. Develop positional risk matrices
  2. Assess morale and culture
  3. Develop Pre- and Post-Measurables



# Recap of “Planning to Succession Plan”

## 1. Develop Positional Risk Matrices

- Urgency of need
- Impact of loss in skills
- Identification of talent both internal and external
- How do employees define their roles?

### Critical Role Identification

Critical Role Identification						
SCORING	1 = Not true for this role		2 = Moderately true for this role		3 = Extremely true for this role	
ROLE	URGENCY This role is likely to be vacant in < 12 months	IMPACT A vacancy would immediately impact business	SKILLS Role requires specialized /technical knowledge, training and/or certification	INTERNAL TALENT No internal candidates are ready for this role	EXTERNAL TALENT Hiring externally for this role would be difficult	TOTAL
Position 1	2	2	3	2	1	10
Position 2	2	2	2	2	2	10
Position 3	2	1	2	1	1	7
Position 4	2	1	2	1	1	7
Position 5	2	1	2	2	2	9
Position 6	2	3	2	3	2	12
						0

- Identify the most critical positions to proactively address
- Start with Division and District Administrators assessing their direct reports, then filter down

## Recap of “Planning to Succession Plan”

### 2. Assess Morale & Culture

- Need to build trust to maximize buy-in and embrace change
- Survey or 1:1 interviews
- **Tip:** Utilize open-ended questions and document trending key words



## Recap of “Planning to Succession Plan”

### 3. Develop Pre- and Post-Measurables

- Best practices for Pre-Measurables:
  - Use survey to gather baseline for your organization
  - 1:1 if surveys net insufficient results
  - Set goal to exceed industry morale minimum:  
66% Positive feedback ++
- Best practices for Post-Measurables:
  - Verify they validate pre-measurables
  - Share with entire organization or division of organization
  - Be accountable – State areas for improvement and take action
  - Recruit new talent with succession planning in mind
- Institutionalize!

## Recap of “Planning to Succession Plan”

### 3. Develop Pre- and Post-Measurables

- For individuals:
  - IDPs vs. Performance review
  - Regular review of Position Descriptions for skills alignment
  
- For the organization:
  - Response to job applications
  - Retention of high potential employees
  - Internal promotion rate through succession pipeline
  - Fill time for new openings
  - Resources committed to professional development
  - Market rates for similar positions

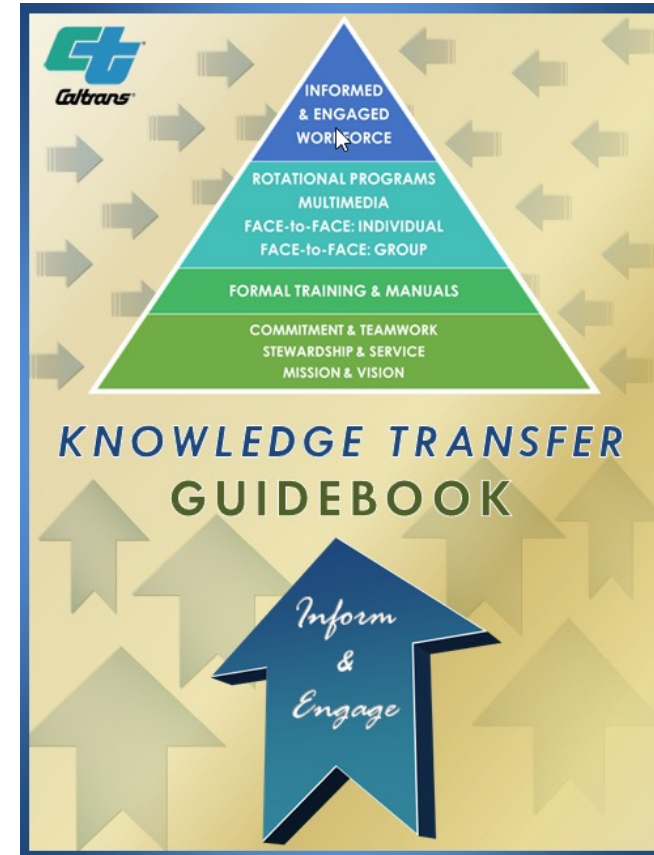
## Recap of “Planning to Succession Plan”

- Maximize morale; maximize buy-in
- Be transparent, update often
- Benchmark against peers in government
- Assemble a team
- 7• Hold everyone accountable



# Caltrans Knowledge Transfer Guidebook

- Designed to capture and transfer critical knowledge and skills of experienced employees to their successors
- Discusses different ways knowledge can be stored and transferred
- Details the importance of tacit vs. explicit knowledge
- 5-step process
  - Plan
  - Analyze
  - Develop
  - Implement
  - Evaluate



# Develop and Implement Guidebook

- Create the succession planning guidebook
  - Keep employees and management informed on progress
  - Update it annually, set milestone reminders (for example):
    - September 15 – Edit and update guidebook
    - November 1 – Have updates reviewed by committee
    - December 1 – Second level review by management
    - December 31 – Set to publish updated guidebook in new year
  - Ensure the guidebook is easily accessible
    - Upload to shared drive
    - Encourage employees to save to desktop
  - Host biannual trainings
    - Incorporate guidebook into training exercises

## State DOT Best Practices Revealed

- Boot camps
  - Effective if instructors are experienced leaders
  - Simple way to reach large audience at the same time, but one-on-ones maximize effectiveness
- Best practice meetings
  - Effective way of standardizing processes & procedures – makes it easier for new hires
- Cross-training combined with job-shadowing
  - Very effective, absences/vacancies can be handled better

## State DOT Best Practices (Continued)

- Structured on-the-job training
  - Walk by the fire, not in it
  - Make standard for new hires
  - Allow for cross-unit integration
- Job rotation programs
  - Caltrans effectively implements this one in several District offices
  - These are your future leaders, give these stars a chance to shine
  - Ideal for new hires: develops early journey-level expertise in career and excellent for larger organizations

# State DOT Best Practices (Continued)

## Psychological Safety

- Required training (via webinar) for all supervisors
- In-person training for supervisors to continue discussion and develop strategies
- Implement one action item and measure success over time





## Other Tools from the State DOT Study

- Illuminate promotional and career pathway for younger workers
  - From hire to retire, and potential post-retirement
- Collaborate with peers across other offices and divisions
  - Break down the silos
  - Benchmark and learn from one another
  - Shine a spotlight on success stories

## More Tools from the State DOT Study

- Focus on success stories through training or short videos
  - Detail paths that leaders took
  - How did they reach each promotional tier?
  - What best practices did they take to get there?
- Develop voluntary pool of future leaders
  - Advertise it and describe ideal candidates
  - Provide constructive feedback for those employees to reach these goals
  - Keep them motivated and challenge them!

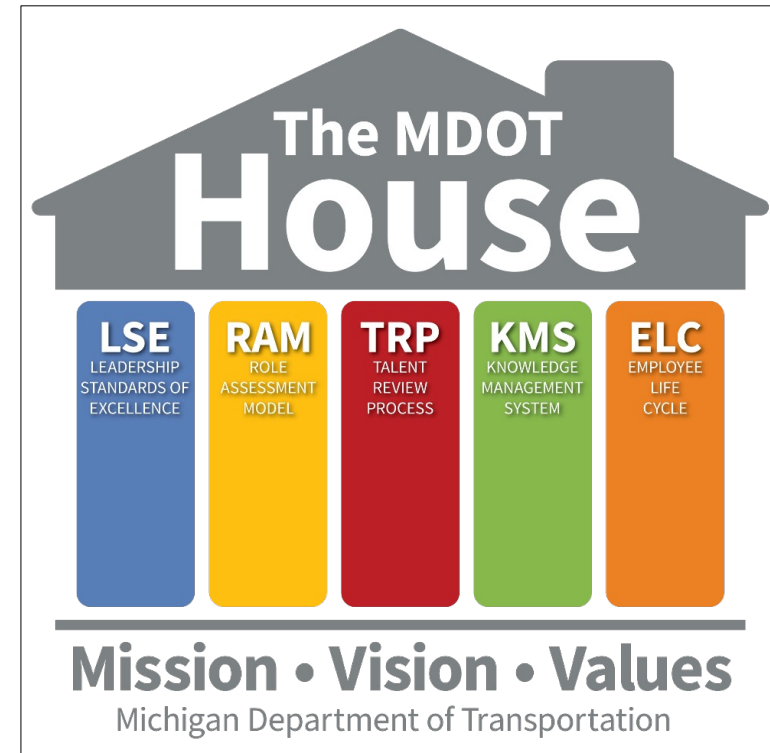
## More Tools from the State DOT Study

- Develop transitional training plan
- Use retired annuitants or part-time experts
  - Create and consult on guidebooks
  - Structured on the job training
  - Provides retirees with an opportunity to contribute
  - Entails fewer bureaucratic hurdles



# Other Tools from the State DOT Study

- Keep management and leaders accountable
  - Provide expectations
    - Team effort to achieve succession planning
    - In duty statement
    - Investing in employees future
  - Succession planning is continuous training and learning
    - Promotions on career path



# Outreach and Resources

- Ensure management and leaders budget 5-10% of time to support guidebook and succession planning
  - Management should discuss during their 1:1s
- Encourage “water cooler talks”
  - Random 10-15 minutes informal check-in with team members on succession planning journey
  - Forms relationships between junior and senior employees



# Outreach and Resources Continued

- Duty statements are updated to reflect succession planning
  - For employees – Minimum marginal duty to attend trainings:
    - Rotational
    - On-the-job
    - Succession Planning Guidebook
    - Voluntary leadership
  - For management & leaders – Essential duties must include supporting succession planning:
    - Facilitating training opportunities
    - Water cooler talks

# Summary

- Develop & implement a guidebook
- Keep everyone accountable
- Develop best practices
- Learn from other organizations

**How can you encourage successful succession planning in your organization?**



# Thank you!

## Any Questions? Contact Us:

**Tom O'Brien, Director**  
California Local Technical  
Assistance Program  
[Tom.Obrien@csulb.edu](mailto:Tom.Obrien@csulb.edu)

**Daniel Burke, Training Supervisor**  
Division of Local Assistance  
Caltrans  
[daniel.burke@dot.ca.gov](mailto:daniel.burke@dot.ca.gov)