

cta

community transport
association

Succession Planning Toolkit

We often think about recruitment for new staff and trustees yet often don't plan for their departure.

This guide considers why succession planning is important.

Introduction

We often spend a lot of time and energy recruiting and inducting people into vacant governance and leadership roles in our organisations such as Chair and Chief Officer. We usually spend much less time thinking about when people might move on, and what this means for succession planning so that the organisation's work continues to run smoothly. This guide considers:

- what is succession planning?
- establishing clear term limits for trustees
- having a governance diary and plan
- board composition and diversity
- conducting a board skills audit
- planning for when key staff leave

How to use this guide

The guide is intended as a conversation-starter, so please use it in any way that is meaningful for your organisation, such as:

- to start a review of your current succession planning process
- to identify gaps in skills, experience and diversity on the board
- to agree clear actions about how a transfer of knowledge will be undertaken

What is Succession Planning?



Succession planning is about a smooth transition for anyone at any level who leaves the organisation. You need to have all the right resources in place to on-board someone quickly and so having a plan in place ensures that this happens.



Community transport organisations may have a board of trustees and a Chief Officer or Coordinator who have been with the organisation for many years.

They hold a deep understanding of the organisation as a whole - its history, values and projects. Understanding the value of staff members and trustees is vital and it is important to prepare for the loss to the organisation when they leave.

Succession planning and development is an important part of an organisation's good governance. It needs to be part of everyday thinking in your organisation so that the delivery of core areas of work remains unaffected when someone leaves. This means considering the roles of Chair and trustees as well as senior leadership positions such as Chief Officer or Coordinator.

Thinking about succession planning is important for both emergency departures (such as the Chair stepping down at short notice on health grounds) and planned departures (for example, the Chief Officer or Coordinator informing the board of their pending retirement).

This requires:

- open communication around succession planning
- clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities
- some shared access to key documents such as payroll and a shared understanding of organisational processes so one person is not holding key information in isolation
- regular meetings
- a culture of learning, development and upskilling
- a sensitivity to, and awareness of, circumstances affecting trustees and staff that may mean someone is not able to commit as they may once have done
- a collective desire to perform effectively as a board, and organisation, with the organisation taking a 'whole team approach'
- a commitment to engage outside support and identify who this may be if needed
- a strong emphasis on forward planning and managing risks, for example, having a plan for what you would do if a key trustee or staff member left suddenly

Part 1: Trustee Succession Planning

This section covers:

- setting limits to terms of office
- using a governance diary
- board composition and diversity
- trustee skills audit

Setting limits to terms of office

Succession planning for trustees starts with your organisation's governing document as it should describe how and when trustees are to be appointed and the maximum term of office they can serve. If this is not clearly set out in the governing document, you may need to consider whether your board is compliant and whether adding clarity on term limits would strengthen governance.

If a board has clear term limits it will know the expected departure dates for trustees and will be better able to plan succession. Term limits can help improve board diversity, as having trustees scheduled to leave at regular intervals provides an opportunity for the recruitment of new trustees to the board. It also allows for continuity of governance as trustees can be replaced gradually rather than through a mass departure.

While the Charity Commission does not prescribe a formal time limit on governance roles, instead emphasising that boards should develop their own policies in line with the requirements of their governing documents, the Charity Governance Code recommends a nine-year maximum term for trustees, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Section 5.7.3 of the Charity Governance Code for small charities recommends: "Trustees are appointed for an agreed length of time, subject to any applicable constitutional or statutory provisions relating to election and re-election.

If a trustee has served for more than nine years their reappointment [should be] subject to a particularly rigorous review [that] takes into account the need for progressive refreshing of the board and [is] explained in the trustees' annual report." <https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en/front-page>

It can be helpful to have an 'at a glance' information sheet recording the key dates for trustee succession purposes, such as the simple example below:

An example form recording information about trustee terms of office

Trustee name	Role	When appointed	How appointed?	Date term ends	Skills summary
Name	Chair	01.01.2023	Elected at first board meeting following 2022 AGM	1.1.2026	Leadership skills, change management, strategic planning
Name	Honorary Treasurer	15.10.2022	Elected at 2022 AGM	15.10.2025	Book-keeping, financial planning, budgeting
Name	Trustee	10.10.2021	Elected at 2021 AGM	10.10.2024	HR, recruitment, employment policies
Name	Trustee	01.01.2023	Co-opted onto board	1.1.2026	Marketing skills and business development

It may also be helpful to have a form detailing each trustee's role and any information they hold that they need to handover on departure, such as:

A trustee information handover form

Name of Trustee	
Post held	
Responsible for	
Key contacts in this role (e.g. job titles, organisations, email addresses / phone numbers)	
Where is information held?	
When / how will it be handed over?	
Any passwords that need to be shared	
Bank access details if appropriate	
Details of any specific projects / areas of work the trustee leads on (e.g. key dates, tasks, current state of play, handover notes)	

Using a Governance Diary

Make succession planning a straightforward part of your annual governance cycle. Your governance diary can be populated with:

- start and end date for trustees' terms of office
- the date of the annual trustee's skills audit
- annual reviews with each trustee
- an away day to review board effectiveness
- the Annual General Meeting
- and similar important dates in your calendar

This gives a helpful structure to your board year and can highlight agenda items for your board meetings.

Annual reviews can be held individually by the Chair with each trustee, to have an honest conversation about how the trustee role is going, how long the trustees see themselves being on the board, and to consider how their skills are needed for the charity and the delivery of its strategy.

It may be the case that a trustee's skills are not needed for the full duration of a term (due to short term needs), and they may plan to step down early.

With knowledge of the expected departure dates of each trustee in hand, boards can plan for recruitment ahead of time; consider the skills they may need to bring on board and, in the case of the Chair, allow for potential candidates to be identified on the board or recruited well in advance to give time for the outgoing Chair and incoming Chair to have a structured handover.

Board composition and diversity

An important part of the succession planning process is to consider the current make-up of the board: what skills, experience and knowledge are currently available, what is missing, and what will the charity need in the future.

Once the board has a clear picture of the existing skills and experience, it can consider what gaps need to be filled, such as financial or human resource expertise, and what gaps will be created when a particular trustee leaves.

A good board takes a lot of work and effort to build, and the trustee recruitment process is an integral part of this. It is important that trustees bring different insights and perspectives to the deliberations and decision-making of the board. Trustees always work as a collective, so recruitment is about finding people who will enhance the spread of skills on the board.

Board diversity is an important consideration and, in addition to factors such as gender, age and ethnicity, succession planning should take into account any practical experience of individuals in the area to which the charity's purpose relates and any special expertise an individual may have in order to ensure that the board gets a wider range of experience and is effective in realising its objectives.

Effective succession planning starts with a clear idea about the optimal board composition and board diversity, so it is helpful to consider the skills, experience and knowledge the board needs to manage the charity now and in the future.

As well as thinking about the range of professional expertise you need, you also want to consider your trustees' diversity of experience, of economic, social, and geographical backgrounds and protected characteristics.

A diversity audit can help you to understand how diverse your board is now and to spot the gaps. Diversity audits often reveal information you might otherwise miss, and the aggregated results of the audit could be used to:

- identify which characteristics are under or over-represented on the board
- explore the implications for your ability to lead and govern well as a board
- discuss why certain groups are under-represented and what needs to change to develop a more balanced board
- agree any changes to recruitment methods

Trustee Skills Audit

Strong boards have a trustees with a mix of personal experience, professional skills and different perspectives. A trustee skills audit can help you to understand your board's current mix of skills and experience and identify any gaps, highlighting the skills you need to prioritise for your next trustee recruitment process.

The audit can also be useful for succession planning and preparing for the future as it shows how your Board may be affected if a trustee leaves, or your charity faces new challenges.

When to do a skills audit

It can be helpful to complete the exercise every year because it prompts trustees to reflect on how their personal expertise has developed and new areas of interest they want to explore. A skills audit can illuminate gaps and highlight if a new trustee would add value even if recruitment is not currently being planned or could indicate training and development needs for the board as a whole.

Completing a skills audit

Identify core skills and experience needed: these will vary according to the size of the charity. You will also need to add those that are specific to your organisation, such as knowledge or experience that is specific to your charity's cause or lived experience of issues that affect the people who use your services.

Identify the challenges and opportunities facing your charity: what are the key challenges and opportunities the charity is facing in the next 3-5 years? Draw on your strategy and consider operational factors and external factors.

It may be helpful to do a simple SWOT analysis to identify the challenges and opportunities facing your organisation. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats and the analysis can aid decision making in different scenarios.

SWOT analysis template

Strengths	Weaknesses
Positive tangible and intangible attributes, internal to your organisation and within its control	Internal factors within your organisation's control that detract from the organisation's ability to achieve its aims
Opportunities	Threats
External factors that exist in the environment that may help your organisation to develop	External factors beyond your organisation's control which could place the charity's operations or mission at risk

Agree what you need from your board for the future: highlight the skills and experience you will need to navigate your specific challenges and opportunities.

Assess the skills and experience your board has: use a simple questionnaire that can be completed in a way that best suits your board e.g. trustees are asked to individually complete a printed or online questionnaire, or the Chair holds individual discussions with trustees and completes the form with them, or the skills audit is done as part of your board's annual away day to review board effectiveness.

Whatever approach you decide on, once the results have been collated, discuss them with the board.

Identify the gaps: consider the gaps between your current board and what you need for the future. Will this change when particular trustees step down? It is helpful to record why you need specific skills and experience.

Consider how you will address board diversity through trustee role descriptions and adverts that encourage people with the skills and characteristics your board needs.

Example Trustee Skills Audit

Scoring System Key

0 - No knowledge/ experience of this area

1 - Basic knowledge or skills

2 - Proficient skills/ knowledge

3 - Significant skills/ knowledge

Skills and experience	0	1	2	3
Governance and Leadership				
Chairing skills and experience				
Experience in a leadership role				
Charity law and compliance				
Strategy development				
Contract negotiation and management				
Measuring outcomes and impact				
Change management				
Equity, diversity and inclusion				

People

HR management				
Recruitment and interviewing				
Volunteer management				
Community development / engagement				
Stakeholder relationship-building				

Financial

Accountancy, book-keeping				
Financial planning, budgeting				
Financial processes and systems				
Understanding and scrutiny of accounts				
Fundraising and bid-writing				
Business acumen / income generation				
Social investment				

Operations

Facilities / property management				
Health and safety				
Risk management				
Knowledge of the CT sector				
Fleet management				
Experience of transport-related exclusion				
Local authority / health board knowledge				
Data analysis and management				

Marketing

Marketing and PR				
Website development				
Branding and brand development				

Part 2: Staff succession planning

This section covers:

- planning for the departure of key staff members
- what the new person needs to know to work effectively
- a timely transfer of information

Planning for the departure of key staff members

Succession planning includes considering the departure of key staff members, such as the Chief Officer or Coordinator, and thinking about ways to capture their business-critical knowledge.

A lot of this experience-based knowledge can be transferred. Succession planning for staff includes:

- understanding precisely what the person does
- creating a simple plan for handling their workload during any transition period
- providing opportunities for shadowing or team learning to share key areas of work
- communicating with the staff team, volunteers, funders and stakeholders about the steps that are being taken to find a replacement and complete projects
- scheduling an exit interview to capture the insights of the departing employee

Document selectively as sometimes organisations ask departing employees to write a 'how to do my job' guide before they leave, but the risk is that no one reads it.

If done properly, however, streamlined handover documents can contain procedural insights, best practice, and key learning. It also doesn't have to be in one document as selective record-keeping is another option.

The employee may keep 'learning logs' of information, for example, about current projects or funder stewardship, that can be entered into a shared information system and used going forward.

Start by identifying the purpose and scope of the handover document and use that to guide any resource that is produced.

Use the exit interview to identify any changes needed to the role, the support provided, or to the wider organisational culture. Your exit interviews could cover:

- reasons for leaving
- the role, including the extent to which the employee found the work interesting and was able to develop knowledge and skills
- relationships with others, including the manager or Chair and wider team members
- their manager, such as the extent to which they set clear tasks / objectives, gave developmental feedback and offered support
- the working environment and culture, such as the physical working conditions, equipment, communication
- overall view of the organisation as a place to work

Have a handover record from the member of staff that is leaving. For example, the record sheet below could be used as a template and adapted to make it fit for your purpose.

Handover record sheet for completion by departing staff member

Name of staff member				
Role of staff member				
Frequency of tasks	Summary of tasks	Key information and deadlines	Handed over to	Date handed over
Daily Tasks that are completed each day e.g. replying to emails, overseeing the day's activities, checking in with volunteers / staff.				
Weekly Tasks that are completed each week, e.g. holding staff handover meetings, contact with the Chair, banking.				

<p>Monthly Tasks that are completed each month, e.g. payroll, staff 121s, Board meetings or partnership meetings.</p>				
<p>Quarterly Tasks that are completed each quarter e.g. monitoring reports, budget updates, project progress reports for board.</p>				
<p>Annual Tasks that are completed each year e.g. AGM, filing Annual Returns, Annual Accounts, staff appraisals, and Board Away Day.</p>				
<p>Other / ongoing Tasks that are done on an ongoing basis, such as researching and applying for funding, collaboration with partners and event planning.</p>				

What the new person needs to know to work effectively

The headings can be used as a reminder to ensure that key content is shared with the new post-holder. Please adapt as required.

Content	Notes
Board Information	
Trustee details (for Charity Commission / Companies House filings)	
Annual cycle of Board meetings / list of dates	
Minutes of Board meetings	
Annual Report and Accounts – production and sign-off	
Policies and procedures – and policy revision dates	
Staff and volunteers information	
Staff contracts, employee handbook, personnel records	
Minutes of staff meetings or supervision sessions	
Volunteer contact details and volunteering records	

CT operational information	
Permit information and renewal dates	
CTA membership number and renewal date	
Vehicle maintenance logs	
Journey booking software subscription details	
Wheelchair passport risk assessments	
Financial information	
Staff pay-scales / date of review / how posts are funded	
Management Accounts, Annual Accounts	
Summary of income streams and any end dates	
Copies of the Tenders, Contracts and Grant Agreements in place and their related Terms and	
Funding applications pending	
Members' Information	
Register of members	
Last review of membership fees or eligibility criteria	
Demographic information about members (e.g. age, gender, disability)	

Project Information	
Details of each project and relevant documentation, including grant terms and conditions	
Monitoring and reporting requirements for each project	
Key stakeholders	
Summary and contact details for key supporters	
Information about main networking meetings and events	
Other information	
Passwords for any IT equipment and subscriptions	
Other (specify)	

A timely transfer of information

Think about a phased approach to handing over information. What information will the new post-holder will need to know on their first day, during their first week, or by the end of their first month?

Is your organisation able to set aside funding for a handover period so the new person has an opportunity to shadow the Chief Officer / Coordinator for a set period? Depending on the size of your organisation, this approach can be very beneficial.

Consider not just passing on the nuts and bolts of information but also the more intangible information such as which stakeholders are very supportive, what the funding stewardship relationship is like with different funders or where there is potential to grow services.

An example of a phased approach to the transfer of information

	What you need to know	Lead person
First day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who's who – introduction to the staff team • The premises – keys, passcodes, fire exits, alarms • Potted history of charity / key areas of work and current projects / main funders • Where to find further information (e.g. grant agreements, minutes of meetings, staff records) • Employee handbook • Vehicles, permits and maintenance logs 	
First week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who's who – introduction to trustee board • Introduction to key stakeholders • Meet the volunteers / accompany a journey • Key policies, employment contracts, HR matters • Payroll, staff pay-scales, appraisal records • Annual returns for regulators • Journey booking software, admin passcodes • Summary of bids pending / contracts for renewal 	
First month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to CTA and membership benefits • Attend a CT Coordinators training session • MiDAS training • Key networks / calendar of forthcoming events • Overview of members, fees, eligibility criteria, and area and service demographic information • Monitoring and reporting requirements for each project, reports and future deadlines 	

Where to get support and information

There are organisations which provide helpful support and information around board diversity, good governance and HR matters, including:

CTA – please do make good use of your membership

We offer members an ‘Introduction to CT’ session to provide an overview about community transport, the diversity of modes, models and passengers, and the practicalities involved in running a CT scheme, such as insurance, safety, training, and vehicle maintenance. Please contact the Development Officer for your area to find out more. Our website also includes information resources on good governance and template policies and procedures.

National voluntary sector infrastructure organisations and local CVCs/ CVSS

The national voluntary sector infrastructure organisations are another source of information, resources and events on governance topics, including trustee recruitment and retention and board diversity. Training costs apply, with discounted rates for members. Your local CVC / CVS will offer information and support. Please visit your national organisation:

England	Wales
NCVO https://www.ncvo.org.uk/#/	WCVA https://wcva.cymru/
Scotland	Northern Ireland
SCVO https://scvo.scot/	NICVA https://www.nicva.org/

The Association of Chairs

This organisation provides information, resources and training to help Chairs feel confident in their role, and to help trustees work well together.

Training includes: ‘building the board you want’; ‘strengthening your trustee team’; and ‘dynamic and productive meetings’. Training costs apply, with discounted rates for members. For more information: <https://www.associationofchairs.org.uk/>

The Young Trustees Movement

Less than 3% of charity trustees are under 30 years of age. The Young Trustees Movement aims to change that. One way it does this is through providing free Young Trustees Movement Champion training. Sessions last 1 hour and are delivered online. <https://youngtrusteesmovement.org/>

The Cranfield Trust

The Cranfield Trust provides free consultancy and mentoring services to empower charities to thrive. Support is tailored to your organisation's needs and could focus on an area such as: strategy, business planning, financial management, governance or impact reporting. Free one-hour webinars on a wide range of governance topics are also available. Please visit the website at <https://www.cranfieldtrust.org/>

Conclusion

Forward planning can alleviate any concerns people may have about 'what happens if someone leaves the organisation?'

Taking a proactive approach by setting up some simple systems, such as a governance diary, annual trustee skills audit and exit interviews with staff, can help ensure that things run smoothly.

A lot of information and support is available externally, so don't hesitate to make use of any resources at your disposal. We are also here to provide advice and support and can link you up with other community transport operators to share experiences and best practice with each other.

Please don't hesitate to contact us - we're here to help!