

AKTIVE

# SUCCESSION PLANNING TOOLKIT

HOW TO ENSURE YOUR ORGANISATION  
WILL CONTINUE TO OPERATE EFFICIENTLY  
WHEN PEOPLE VACATE THEIR ROLES



# OVERVIEW

One of the concerns people have before they even agree to volunteer, is that they won't be able to leave the role due to a lack of willing and able volunteers available to take over. If your organisation has a succession plan, this will be avoided as you'll be prepared, and have excellent people and processes in place to support the transition of people between roles.

.....

## **He aha te mea nui o te ao**

*What is the most important thing in the world?*

## **He tangata, he tangata, he tangata**

*It is the people, it is the people, it is the people*

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# THE PURPOSE



Auckland is a complex multi-cultural environment with many challenges and unparalleled opportunities to increase and sustain participation in sport and recreation. This has led to the establishment of *The Auckland Approach to Community Sport*, a strategic response aiming to create a world-class community sport system in Tāmaki Makaurau, community by community. This toolkit has been developed (and will be updated) by Aktive, with input from delivery partners CLM Community Sport, Harbour Sport, Sport Auckland and Sport Waitākere, based on insights and good practice examples from across Auckland.

The purpose of this succession planning toolkit is to provide information, insights and ideas that will assist organisations to create a robust succession plan which will prepare them for dealing effectively with turnover of volunteers. It can be tailored and implemented as each club/code sees relevant.

# SUCCESSION PLANNING

## WHAT?

A process which involves identifying and developing individuals with the potential to fill key leadership positions when existing post holders vacate the role.

## WHY?

To ensure that an organisation will continue to operate efficiently without the presence of people who were previously holding key positions.

## OBJECTIVES

Identify individuals who are willing and able



Provide development experiences to those individuals



Support the ongoing development of the next generation of leaders



Ensure business critical processes are documented and clear



# WHY IS IT CRUCIAL TO THINK ABOUT SUCCESSION PLANNING IN A VOLUNTEER CONTEXT?

- It allows you to be flexible and accommodating. You'll be prepared for people vacating their role. You'll feel ready if a volunteer decides to leave a role earlier than expected.
- Often people don't volunteer because they are worried that they will be 'trapped' due to a lack of individuals who are willing and able to take over the responsibility. A plan demonstrates that there is a clear pathway back out of volunteering commitments and that there is no expectation for the volunteer to hold their role long term.
- By developing successors, the availability of experienced volunteers is increased.
- Knowledge which exists within a club/code is preserved and passed on.
- It encourages pro-active consideration of future volunteer requirements and training needs which will ultimately assist understanding and preparing for ongoing human resource requirements.
- Volunteers feel more confident, prepared and supported if they have received training and/or mentoring to fill roles.
- Volunteers will recognise the time, attention and skill development being invested in them, which makes volunteering at your organisation more appealing.
- Results in smooth transition from one volunteer to the next.
- Encourages the sharing of workload among volunteers which can help to avoid burn out.

# HOW TO CREATE A SUCCESSION PLAN

Follow the process below to help populate your succession plan. Use your volunteer management planning tool to help with this.

## Identify key positions

- List current roles
- Separate business critical and 'nice to haves'
- Consider whether any new positions would add value
- **Use this guidance to help >>**

## Complete/review role descriptions

- Ask existing role holders to provide detail of what exactly they do to make sure the description accurately reflects the role. Include any significant dates relevant to the role.
- Ensure you clarify the term of the role as this is vital for succession planning.
- **Use this guidance to help you compile robust role descriptions >>**

## Identify gaps and areas of weakness in resources

- List the current vacant positions.
- Establish timescales around anticipated vacancies and when recruitment will be required.
- Identify any plans already in place to succeed these positions.
- Consider skills gaps in currently filled positions or required for vacant positions.

## Create a succession plan for each position

- Consider how you are preparing to fill roles.
  - Is there someone internally who is able and willing to take on the role?
  - Could there be a 'deputy' or someone who shadows the role holder? They could also step in if the main role holder is unavailable.
  - Could a junior or inexperienced volunteer be mentored?
- If there are no internal options, look outside your organisation

## Identify training and mentoring needs

- Identify the potential candidates within your organisation who could be supported and developed into a role.
- Identify individual development needs.
- If you intend to look externally for volunteers, ensure that the role description states whether there is potential for training opportunities.

## Ensure business processes are documented and clear

- All processes and procedures relating to the management and operation of the organisation should be documented and stored in a centrally accessible location.
- This should include clear handover procedures which will strengthen your succession planning.



## IDEAS

It's never too early to find potential successors, exposing them to and teaching them about the role.

Why not ask volunteer role holders to bring someone along with them to learn about their role, assist them and be willing to step in should that person be unavailable. If they aren't willing to be a successor, it's still incredibly helpful to ensure continuity of the role during the existing term.

One other person within the organisation should have a good working knowledge of each key position. Enable and encourage shadowing or ensure that periodically position holders buddy up to talk through what they do with another person in the club.

Create positions for youth on the club committee, or establish a separate committee of youth only, who feed ideas to the main committee through a representative. This can also help young people to gain committee experience.

Develop a mentoring programme. It's the responsibility of the mentee to find out everything about the role they are learning about and the responsibility of the mentor to share all their knowledge of the role and be open and approachable.

Consider whether you could create small, short term roles for potential future volunteers or youths. Perhaps provide opportunities to take on part of a role or deputise when the current position holder is away.

Encourage role shadowing. This could involve attending meetings or standing on the sidelines with a coach and observing. As an observer you should take notes then follow up with the person you were observing afterwards for further discussion and clarifications. Note: there should be no reason as to why individuals who are not board or committee members cannot attend meetings as an observer.

Be open to feedback. Always ask for the opinions of the future volunteer, mentee, assistant.

# BARRIERS TO CREATING SUCCESSION PLANS - & HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

Various reasons have been identified around why organisations don't create succession plans. A few of the common ones are outlined below with some ideas to overcome these barriers.

Barrier	Ideas to consider
Day to day management takes over and it's too much work for an already limited and overstretched volunteer base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think longer term for the ongoing benefit of the organisation. Effort now will result in easier processes in future.</li><li>• Keep it brief and manageable – it doesn't need to be a complex process.</li><li>• Break it down – take each key position within your organisation one at a time and document succession requirements. Then pull it all together.</li></ul>
Lack of understanding by board/committee members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask for this to be on the agenda at a committee meeting and use this guidance to help promote the importance.</li><li>• Consider speaking to board/committee members individually prior to the meeting if you feel that it will be daunting to pitch to them all at once. You might want to have one or two allies if it's likely you will get push back from individuals.</li></ul>
Traditional views and no consideration of diversity or approaching people from outside the club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• View our <b>Diversity and Inclusion resources &gt;&gt;</b> to help you to highlight the positives of utilising a diverse range of volunteers who may or may not be a member of your club.</li></ul>
Poor record keeping practices means the existing succession plan is unclear or new volunteers aren't aware of its existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Part of succession planning is to ensure that business critical processes are documented and clear.</li><li>• Use the <b>Policies and Procedures Toolkit &gt;&gt;</b> to help you ensure that your organisational processes and procedures have been clearly documented, are transparent and available to all board/committee members.</li></ul>



Barrier	Ideas to consider
<b>Lack of skills and knowledge within the existing board/committee/paid staff to undertake this type of planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the skills within your membership as there may be individuals who could help. There is no law that says the people who create a succession plan need to be board/committee members or paid staff! The <b>Insights Toolkit &gt;&gt;</b> and <b>Participation and Membership Toolkit &gt;&gt;</b> can assist.</li><li>• If there is no-one inside the organisation, look outside. Why not post an advert seeking someone for a short-term project-based role?</li></ul>
<b>Rigid, inflexible approach and fear of change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adaptability and flexibility - two of the most important words an organisation needs to understand. You must be willing to adapt and evolve.</li><li>• Challenge 'this is the way it's always been done' attitudes!</li></ul>
<b>The organisation won't agree to provide adequate training or development opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask for clarity around the reasons why, then try to address each specific reason.</li><li>• Speak to your local Regional Sports Trust or Sport Governing Body to find out what opportunities might be available for free or low cost.</li></ul>
<b>Lack of financial resource to invest in the succession planning process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that there is budget allocated for expenditure associated with volunteering. For help with budgets, check out the <b>Finance and Insurance Toolkit &gt;&gt;</b></li><li>• If you can source the right people either from within your organisation, or as a volunteer, it shouldn't cost any money to prepare your succession plan.</li><li>• While you are writing the plan, estimate how much financial expenditure may be required in order to bring the plan to life and present this to the board/committee, demonstrating clearly the benefits this will bring.</li></ul>

# HANDOVER PROCEDURES

As part of your succession plan you should develop handover procedures. This will ensure existing knowledge of the role is not lost and it will also help to provide a smooth transition between volunteers.

It is useful to have a period of shadowing between the existing role holder and their successor. If this is not possible, a handover meeting or training day with the old and new volunteer would be valuable.

## **This process should include:**

- Completion of an exit checklist  
**Template on page 15 >>**
- Conducting an exit interview  
**Template on page 16 >>**
- Completion of a handover report  
**Template on page 18 >>**

## **The volunteer should be encouraged to complete the following steps when they plan to vacate the position they hold:**

- Keep up-to-date and accurate records of their role and the processes they follow
- Help plan for someone to take their place
- Mentor potential successors
- Have early and open communication with club if they are planning to leave
- Complete the handover report

## **EXIT CHECKLIST**

A checklist ensures that a consistent and formalised process is followed when a volunteer vacates their role.

It provides a reminder of procedural documentation or materials, equipment and organisational property which needs to be returned. It also ensures that the opportunity is offered to the volunteer to share insights relating to their experience within a confidential environment.

An example of an exit checklist and the items to include is **provided on page 15 >>**

## **EXIT INTERVIEW**

It's useful to conduct an exit interview with a volunteer when they leave your organisation. It's not a mandatory process but very valuable. If volunteers participate in the exit interview, make sure the purpose of the interview is clear and that you thank them for their time and honesty.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this interview is to learn and enable continuous improvement. Use it as an opportunity to extract valuable business information but mainly to gain insight into the volunteers' experience relating to their role and the wider organisation. This feedback should be used to help improve working practices and the future experiences of your volunteers. When volunteers have finished their role, they may feel that they can be more open with feedback.



**When:** It's best to conduct during the volunteers' last week in the role. However, if this is not possible, or if the departure of the volunteer involved conflict or ended badly, it might be better to try to catch up with the volunteer, in person, a few weeks after they have left. Any longer is probably too long for an accurate reflection of their experience.

**Method:** Face to face is best, but if not possible, it could be over the phone. It's useful to have a written or online questionnaire version which could be used if the volunteer would like to share in writing rather than in person. This may also more accurately reflect their views. Despite best efforts, sometimes opinions may not be passed on as intended when recorded by another person.

The value of conducting exit interviews will depend on the questions you ask. It's important to ask suitable questions that are not biased towards what you want to hear, and that will uncover honest and valuable insights. The template provided on page 16 contains examples of questions you might want to consider asking.

**Follow Up:** Ensure responses are recorded then evaluate the answers provided. Identify any action items from the feedback received around improving processes or the volunteer experience.

Share these insights and proposed actions with the Board/Committee for discussion and agree on any changes to be implemented. Develop an action plan which identifies responsibilities and timescales for making improvements.



## HANDOVER REPORT

This should be completed by the outgoing volunteer. The purpose is to provide the organisation and the role successor with key knowledge and information relating to the position. This will ensure that existing knowledge is passed on and helps to ensure that the transition period is as smooth as possible.

Ideally the handover report should be provided prior to the new volunteer starting in post. Ideally no later than a week before, if the successor hasn't already been shadowing or learning the role.

The report should be as useful and detailed as possible – when completing one, think about what you would have found most helpful when you started in the role. If you think of anything valuable at a later date, do get in touch with the organisation or the successor directly and let them know.



# REVIEWING YOUR SUCCESSION PLAN

## FINALLY: REVIEW

Succession planning is not a one-time event; succession plans should be living documents. They should be re-evaluated and potentially updated annually or as your club evolves and changes.

Strategies may need to be modified and adaptable when change is required.

As part of the review process consider:

### WHAT IS GOING WELL?

Highlight what's going well and keep doing it!

### WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

It's ok if your first plan isn't working. Learn from it and adapt.

### WHAT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ATTENTION?

Prioritise where you need to focus your efforts in the first instance.

## ● WE NEED TO START DOING...

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## ● WE NEED TO STOP DOING...

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## ● WE NEED TO KEEP DOING...

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# VOLUNTEER EXIT CHECKLIST | TEMPLATE

TO BE COMPLETED BY AN APPROPRIATE ORGANISATION REPRESENTATIVE

Name				Term of role	
Position				End date	
Item	Yes	No	N/A	Useful Information	
Has the volunteer been officially thanked?				<i>If not, note the actions required to comply with the processes set by the club to thank and acknowledge the contribution of a volunteer</i>	
Handover Report Complete				<i>If not, ask for this to be completed by the volunteer</i>	
Documents/materials relevant to the role returned or saved in accessible online location				<i>Names of documents provided by the club</i>  <i>Any documents prepared by the role holder</i>	
Exit Interview Conducted				<i>If not, detail why not</i>	
Return Keys/ID				<i>If more than one item, note if all have been returned</i>	
Remove Signatory for Organisation Account(s)				<i>Detail if any further actions required</i>	
Remove access to any online systems, distribution lists or communication groups eg. email, WhatsApp, FB				<i>List relevant groups</i>  <i>Detail if any further actions required</i>	
Any expenses to receive or money due back to Organisation				<i>Detail if any further actions required</i>	
Returned Equipment				<i>Include relevant items of equipment</i>	
Missing Equipment				<i>Include relevant items of equipment</i>	
Permission to provide a written reference in future if requested				<i>Note if the volunteer indicates they might ask the club for a reference for another role in future</i>	
Checklist completed by representative:				Exiting volunteer:	
Name				Name	
Role				Role	
Date				Date	

# VOLUNTEER EXIT INTERVIEW | TEMPLATE

## TO BE COMPLETED BY AN APPROPRIATE ORGANISATION REPRESENTATIVE

.....  
Thank you for your valuable contribution to our organisation. We value your commitment, honesty and time.  
Your feedback is important in assisting us to improve our work practices and ongoing experiences of our volunteers.  
.....

Name of volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_ Term of role: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Exit Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why did you decide to begin volunteering at our organisation?

.....

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2. What is your main reason(s) for leaving?

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3. What did you like most about volunteering with us?

.....

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4. What did you like least about volunteering with us?

.....

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6a. What induction process and methods of support were offered to you when you started in your role?

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6b. Did you feel adequately supported? Do you have any ideas about how we could improve this process?

.....

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7a. What support and training opportunities were you offered throughout the duration of your volunteer role?

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7b. Did you feel that you received adequate training and support? Do you have any ideas about how we could improve this process?

.....

.....

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Name of volunteer: .....

8a. Were there any specific organisational policies or procedures which you found particularly valuable in your role? Please provide details and expand.

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.....

8b. Were there are specific organisational policies or procedures which you found hindered your volunteering? Please provide details and expand.

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8c. What ideas do you have about how we could improve our organisational policies and procedures?

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9. Did you feel that you were appreciated and appropriately acknowledged for your efforts?

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10. How would you describe our organisational culture?

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11. What would you recommend to help us improve the volunteer environment and experience?

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12. Would you recommend our organisation to others?

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13. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your volunteer experience?

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# VOLUNTEER HANDOVER REPORT | TEMPLATE

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VOLUNTEER

<b>Name</b>		<b>Term of role</b>	
<b>Position</b>		<b>End date</b>	
<b>Overview of main activities</b>	<i>Provide details of regular days and times eg, coaching nights; committee meetings Details of duties, particularly if not included within the role description</i>		
<b>Key contacts</b>	<i>Provide contact details of the people you connect with most regularly</i>		
<b>Outstanding Issues / Follow up</b>	<i>Details any specific tasks or actions which need to be followed up or completed, particularly if imminent</i>		
<b>Any changes to the role description</b>	<i>Outline any duties or tasks which differ from those included in the role description</i>		
<b>Any changes to procedures</b>	<i>Provide details of any changes you made to processes or procedures. Have these been adequately documented?</i>		
<b>Key dates/events</b>	<i>Are there any key dates or events organised which your successor should be aware of?</i>		
<b>Recommendations or advice for successor and/or organisation</b>	<i>Include details of any tried and tested methods you have found to work well</i>  <i>Any traditions or examples of good organisational culture in action</i>  <i>Include anything relevant to the role and to the organisation more generally</i>  <i>Think about intel you would have appreciated when you started</i>		
<b>Is it ok to contact you if clarifications are required?</b>	YES /NO		<i>Contact details:</i>
<b>Other comments</b>	<i>Do you have any other notes which you think would be of value to the organisation or your successor?</i>		

# LOOKING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

There is a range of resources available to assist with the running of your club/code.

## HERE TO HELP

Your Regional Sports Trust/Organisations are also here to help – please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to talk through any of this material and/or assistance for your club and/or code.

## MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT THE FOLLOWING:

[aktive.org.nz](http://aktive.org.nz) >>

[clmnz.co.nz/clm-community-sport](http://clmnz.co.nz/clm-community-sport) >>

[harboursport.co.nz](http://harboursport.co.nz) >>

[sportauckland.co.nz](http://sportauckland.co.nz) >>

[sportwaitakere.co.nz](http://sportwaitakere.co.nz)>>

[Volunteering Auckland](#) >>

[Volunteer New Zealand](#) >> 

Information in this toolkit is for guidance only and does not constitute formal professional advice. Where specific issues arise in your club/code, advice should be sought from the relevant expert(s) as necessary.

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