

Succession Planning & Volunteer Recruitment for Landcare Groups

Succession planning is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of Landcare groups, Networks, and Regions. This fact sheet serves as a guide to effective succession planning and volunteer recruitment, outlining key principles, challenges, and practical tools for embedding a culture of leadership renewal and inclusivity in your group. Succession planning is reliant on cultivating inclusive, collaborative spaces that offer flexibility and two way communication with volunteers new and old. This factsheet goes hand in hand with the succession planning webinar available in this Committee Induction Package.

Why Succession Planning Matters

Succession is inevitable, and planning for it ensures the continuity of your group's mission, builds organisational resilience, supports smooth transitions in leadership and honours the time generously given by your volunteers. When we do not effectively plan for succession, it ends up in crisis, if we do plan for it, it is simply succession planning. Proactive succession planning fosters trust, retains institutional knowledge, and engages volunteers meaningfully in your organisation's future.

Key Barriers to Succession Planning

Limited Resources: Time, money, and staff constraints hinder prioritisation of succession planning.

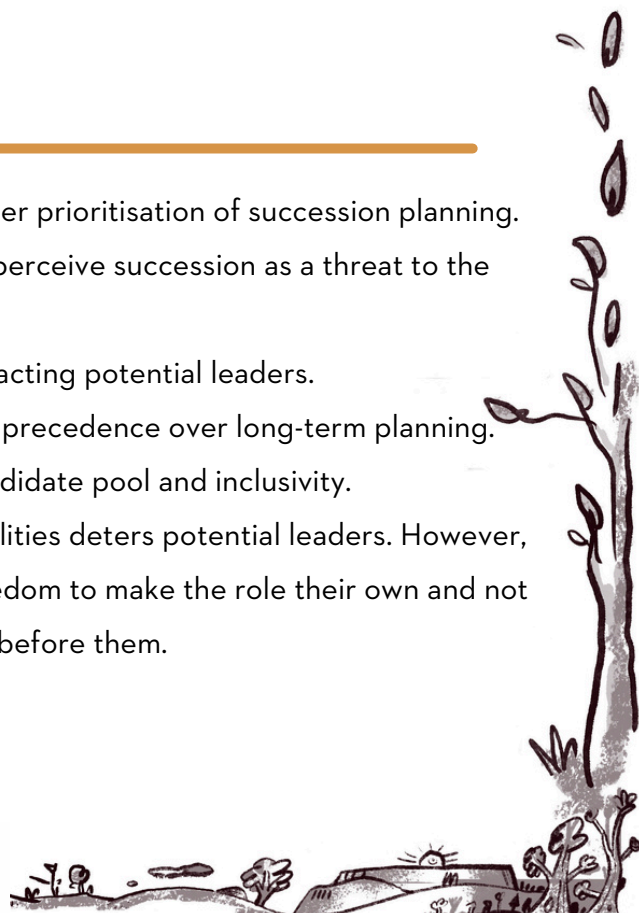
Resistance to Change: Existing leadership can sometimes perceive succession as a threat to the status quo.

Limited Candidate Pool: Challenges in identifying and attracting potential leaders.

Short-Term Focus: Immediate operational goals often take precedence over long-term planning.

Lack of Diversity: Homogeneity in leadership limits the candidate pool and inclusivity.

Undefined Roles: Lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities deters potential leaders. However, the flip side of this is also that leaders need to have the freedom to make the role their own and not be expected to just adopt the practices of those that came before them.



Principles for Effective Succession Planning

Simplify Processes: Reduce complexity in meetings and roles to make participation accessible to a wider variety of people. Are you turning people off with overly formal process and requirements? How might you simplify? Sometimes we don't pause to ask why we do things the way we do them and often practices and habits in group have been inherited from leaders of the past. Consider if your practices need a 21st century shake up.

Task-Oriented Recruitment: Offer small, manageable tasks to potential leaders as an introduction. Consider the option of breaking roles up by tasks as a taster e.g. a Secretary must be accountable that the minutes are a true and accurate account of the meeting but this does not mean they must be the one to take the minutes. You might bring a student or someone in to take minutes or you might use digital tools and then the Secretary can read, edit and sign off.

Cultivate Inclusive, Collaborative Spaces: How do your meeting practices and principles serve you in the collaborative decision making process? When it comes to welcoming spaces it is sometimes the little things that make a big difference. Check for awareness around acronym use. Do you follow up with new recruits after their first visit, are you open to feedback and input from others?

Engage Membership: Foster two-way conversations, regularly survey members (formal and informal), and invite them to participate in leadership discussions. Offer different ways for people to engage with the organisation, different volunteering options, donating funds or goods.

Balance Stepping Down and Stepping In: Normalise role turnover, celebrate contributions, and induct new leaders with respect and support. Focus on the process of someone stepping down as much as that of those stepping in. Utilise the step-back questionnaire contained in this module, to support existing committee members.

Embrace Strategic Planning: Align leadership transitions with organisational goals & timelines through clear, actionable strategies. Recruit for the gaps you have on your committee, in a planned and targeted approach.



Practical Tools and Strategies

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Document recurring tasks (e.g. membership renewals, newsletter writing, calendar management) to preserve organisational knowledge. This does not have to mean writing complex manuals. You might simply screen record yourself undertaking the task and store the short video somewhere safe.

Roles & Tenure Tracking: Maintain a record of committee roles, responsibilities, and tenure to identify gaps and plan for transitions. Have tenure limits and lock this down in the constitution. Even if new people are not recruited into the committee, existing committee members should rotate roles at least every three years.

Volunteer Recruitment - The 5A Method from The Forever Agenda

- **Activity:** Identify key tasks. What is it you are actually recruiting for? Get super specific. What are the tasks, activities, roles you need to fill?
- **Audience:** Who are the types of people that might be likely to undertake these specific tasks, activities or roles? Target potential volunteers based on their skills and areas of interest.
- **Ask:** Make clear, actionable requests for involvement.
- **Action:** Provide guidance and resources for participation. Ensure new recruits take meaningful action right away.
- **Allies:** Leverage partnerships to broaden outreach. Consider that peoples involvement with your organisation will shift and change with their life and rather than focusing on volunteer retention, consider how you can inspire long term allies that engage in different ways over time.

Resources

Strategic Planning Process: Available in [Community Leaders Academy](#), accessible via Shared Services Hub.

Step back Assessment: To support existing committee members with the process of stepping down from their role over time. In this package.

My Meeting Notes: Encourage reflection after meetings with the My meeting notes template, to balance dynamics and foster collaboration. In this Committee Induction Package.

By embedding these practices, Landcare groups can strengthen their leadership pipelines, attract new volunteers, and sustain their vital environmental work for generations to come. This fact sheet complements the webinar of the same name, offering a concise guide to succession planning and volunteer engagement tailored for Landcare and environmental groups.

