



# Washington County Auditor's Office

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**1<sup>st</sup> Follow Up:**

Audit of Succession Planning

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**Final Report**

December 13, 2022



County Auditor: John Hutzler, CIA, CGAP, CCSA

## **I. Background and Summary**

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Every organization needs good leadership and sufficient, well-trained staff to carry out its mission. As leaders and staff depart through retirement, resignation and termination, organizations must replace them.

The Oregon Department of Administrative Services defines succession planning as the strategy of assessing and forecasting workforce needs by identifying critical positions and developing competencies to meet those needs. Succession Planning connects important positions at risk of vacancy with capable candidates through

We undertook this audit to determine whether existing or planned County succession planning efforts incorporate best practices, including well-designed processes to ensure the retention of institutional knowledge.

In June 2021, the Washington County Auditor released his report titled “County Succession Plan Needed for Projected Workforce Turnover,” together with the response of the County Administrator. The Auditor made six recommendations for action to improve County succession planning. Management agreed with all of the recommendations and planned to implement most by July 2022.

We scheduled this follow-up review to determine the extent to which management had implemented the audit recommendations. We found that all six recommendations remain In Process.

## **II. Overview of the Original Review**

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### **Findings and Recommendations**

In the June 2021 report, we reported:

- The County does not have a succession plan, and the County Administrative Office (CAO) does not require departments to have succession plans.
- Succession planning practices vary from department to department. Knowledge retention is informal and ad hoc.
- The HR Strategic Plan includes a succession planning initiative, but HR has yet to start that process.
- The HR Strategic Plan incorporates best practices for succession planning but could be strengthened.

To improve County succession planning, we recommended:

1. The Chief HR Officer should review and update the HR strategic plan.
2. The plan should include ongoing monitoring to measure progress on the succession planning initiative.
3. The Chief HR Officer should propose an Administrative Policy for adoption by the Board that directs the County Administrator to plan for succession in the County workforce.
4. The County Administrator should implement that policy through an Administrative Procedure that defines the roles and responsibilities of the CAO, HR and department management in the succession planning process.
5. Once developed, the Chief HR Officer should submit the succession plan to the County Administrator for implementation or Board adoption.
6. To better guide succession planning efforts going forward, the CAO should develop a new Washington County Strategic Plan for BCC approval.

### III. Status of Audit Recommendations

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We found that management had not yet implemented any of the recommendations. All six remain In Process.

1. The Chief HR Officer should review and update the HR strategic plan.  
**Current Status – In Process.** Management reports CHRO has not begun to revise the HR strategic plan due to staffing shortages and workload priorities.  
**Revised implementation date – December 31, 2023.**
2. The plan should include ongoing monitoring to measure progress on the succession planning initiative.  
**Current Status – In Process.**  
**Revised implementation date – December 31, 2023.**
3. The Chief HR Officer should propose an Administrative Policy for adoption by the Board that directs the County Administrator to plan for succession in the County workforce.  
**Current Status – In Process.** Management reports the Workforce and Succession Planning Policy is drafted and will be presented to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) for review. Once their feedback is incorporated it will be released for an all-County 2-week review prior to going to the BCC for approval.  
**Revised implementation date – March 1, 2023.**
4. The County Administrator should implement that policy through an Administrative Procedure that defines the roles and responsibilities of the CAO, HR and

department management in the succession planning process.

**Current Status – In Process.** Management reports the Workforce and Succession Planning Procedure is drafted and will be presented to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) for review. Once their feedback is incorporated it will be released for an all-County 2-week review prior to going to the BCC for approval.

**Revised implementation date – March 1, 2023.**

5. Once developed, the Chief HR Officer should submit the succession plan to the County Administrator for implementation or Board adoption.

**Current Status – In Process.** Management reports procedure will be implemented after the BCC approves it.

**Revised implementation date – April 2023.**

6. To better guide succession planning efforts going forward, the CAO should develop a new Washington County Strategic Plan for BCC approval.

**Current Status – In Process.** Management reports a committee is forming to prepare an RFP for a vendor to assist with revising the County Strategic Plan.

**Revised implementation date – June 30, 2026**

## IV. About this Review

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In September 2022 we initiated a follow-up review to determine whether management had implemented six recommendations from our June 2021 audit of County succession planning. We asked the County Administrator and Chief Human Resources Officer to describe any actions taken to implement the Auditor's recommendations, and to provide documentation that would support the actions taken. We reviewed the response to our request, reviewed the documentation submitted, and collected additional information as necessary to provide sufficient, appropriate evidence to conclude whether each recommendation was fully implemented.

We identified a recommendation as In Process if management planned to take further action to implement the recommendation.