

Running Head: FORMALIZED SUCCESSION PLANNING: A NEED IN EAST TN

FORMALIZED SUCCESSION PLANNING: A NEED IN EAST TENNESSEE HEALTH

DEPARTMENTS

by

Elizabeth Maples

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

May 2024

Abstract

Gaps in employment competencies can hinder the government from serving the public and the community. The lack of succession planning and the turnover of employees can cause unnecessary strain and unstable situations within an organization. This problem can lead to decreased productivity. Undefined criteria for potential candidates remain an issue of succession planning because leaders have no best way to compare or evaluate applicants. With a growing need to fill jobs, employers complain about a lack of qualified workers. While research included the importance of succession planning, this study will include the need for a formalized succession planning process with the parameters of the Department of Health within East Tennessee. The specific problem addressed is the potential lack of a formalized succession planning process, including leadership development for lower-level employees within the Department of Health in East Tennessee, resulting in potentially decreased job satisfaction and an increased risk of losing high-performing individuals actively looking for employment at other facilities. The first and most prevalent theme included an overall lack of a formalized succession plan and a disconnect between the parent organization and the local management teams. The second theme centered around time and productivity lost when hiring someone new. The third theme included a discussion on employee morale and feeling valued.

Keywords: succession planning, health departments, productivity, employee morale

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Approvals

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Dr. Michael Coleman, Dissertation Chair	Date

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Dr. Darlene Casstevens, Committee Member	Date

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband, Jason, and my three children, Emily, Brooke, and Levi. Though they have no real idea of what my topic meant, they spent countless hours listening to my sentence structure and bouncing around ideas while giving up hours of family time to let me write and seek to make a difference.

Acknowledgments

The list of time, effort, and assistance that goes into a project of this magnitude can appear extensive. Mine is no different. The amount of support that I received throughout this endeavor has not gone unnoticed. I first wish to acknowledge the support of my family. My husband has dealt with my tears, late nights, and ramblings on a subject that he probably never wanted to stay a part of the endeavor. My three children had a mom who was bringing her computer to sporting events and working in between matches and games. Understanding and support from my children is something I only hope to repay. My mom and dad have always supported me in my lifelong learning, transporting children back and forth while I was in class, and, most importantly, always instilling the love of God in me from the time I was a baby. I further wish to acknowledge the countless times and advice from Dr. Coleman and Dr. Casstevens. Without their guidance, I know that this work would remain incomplete. Thank you to the personnel from the Department of Health for supporting me on my journey. The staff from the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence started this drive to seek performance excellence for my organization. And thank you to Jana Chambers for teaching me to believe excellence is attainable.

Always, thank you to God for leading me here and giving me the support system that I have.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Senior leaders in nonprofits and government agencies face the challenge of working through succession planning because of hierarchical tiers and budget limitations. This issue can appear difficult to offer incentives for employee development. Top leaders in government sectors without succession plans in place face higher turnover rates of employees and less consistency overall (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). Harrell (2016.) stated that a lack of preparedness is only part of the problem because *CEOs are being replaced continuously*). Board of directors neglected to find the right man or woman for the job. Effective succession planning at the local level of government or nonprofits can lead to the continued operation of essential government functions. The negative impact on government efficiency reflects a need for succession planning to better impact local communities (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). Studies show that approximately 40% of new CEOs fail to meet performance expectations in the first 18 months of working at the organization (Harrell, 2016). Succession planning can create the opportunity for high employee retention and potentially increase organizational performance (Baker, 2017). Having formalized hiring strategies and succession processes works better to manage current employee expectations and ensure that a talent pool of qualified individuals exists within an organization (Sederstrom, 2018). In public health and civil service organizations, gaps in employment competencies can hinder the government from serving the public and the community (Addison, 2020). While studies included the importance of succession planning, this study reflects the need for a formalized succession planning process with the parameters of the Department of Health within East Tennessee.

Problem Statement

The general problem addressed was the lack of a formalized leadership succession planning process within the Department of Health, resulting in decreased job satisfaction and an increased risk of losing high-performing individuals to other agencies. Despite the expected retirement of many nonprofit executives for several years, few nonprofits have a formal succession plan (*Study shows lack of mission statements to guide giving*, 2015). The lack of succession planning and the turnover of employees causes an organization's stress and instability, which often leads to a decrease in productivity (Cao et al., 2006). According to Ballaro and Polk (2017), employee development remains a challenge when there is no process with defined steps for identifying and training high performers in the organization.

According to a national survey of public health workers, nearly 25% of workers reported plans to retire before 2020, and an additional 18% reported the intention to leave their current organization within 1 year (Pourshaban et al., 2015). Grooming successors are of utmost importance in the public sector because they are essential to fulfilling the public's mandate of improved service delivery (Goodman et al., 2013).

The specific problem addressed was the potential lack of a formal succession planning process, including leadership development for lower-level employees, within the Department of Health in East Tennessee. The problem could result in decreased job satisfaction and an increased risk of losing high-performing individuals seeking employment at other facilities.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore succession planning efforts in public health departments across East Tennessee. I reviewed succession planning practices currently utilized within four local health departments in East Tennessee, two large and two

small, and identified barriers and improvement opportunities. By recognizing different efforts within the sample organizations, potential challenges and obstacles to successful implementation emerged. The results of this study could further develop a model for a formalized process implemented within the Department of Health. A formalized succession plan includes a process that can apply repetitively to recognize and train those identified as leaders to succeed in vacated positions. A well-developed plan can leave the company in a better position to achieve organizational objectives and goals without a long lapse while extensive training occurs for new leaders.

Research Questions

RQ1. What succession planning practices are currently utilized by East Tennessee health departments?

RQ2. What barriers has the organization encountered when trying to implement its succession plan?

RQ3. How have these barriers or the lack of recognition of a formalized succession plan in the health department impacted employee satisfaction or resulted in the loss of high-performing employees?

Nature of the Study

When seeking to contribute knowledge, the work must appear accurate and meaningful, including valid and reliable data. In planning a research topic, the research design and instruments are essential in collecting data (Morgan et al., 2013). Instruments for collecting data are appropriate in the same way across all participants by checking items for clarity and asking for feedback or input from a pilot group (Morgan et al., 2013). This qualitative study included a

flexible design involving a case study method. This design allowed me to explore the depth of individual answers and allow interpretations to develop into theories.

Discussion of Research Paradigms

A research paradigm ultimately consists of the author's beliefs and how that person interprets the acts they see within the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The paradigm chosen is the conceptual lens to explore aspects of the project and determine the research methods used and how data will be analyzed. Determining the paradigm sets the course for the project. The research was designed through an interpretive paradigm to focus on the participants' reality of succession planning in the organization rather than personal perception.

Positivist Paradigm

Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) was the first to propose the positivist paradigm, defining it as a worldview for research grounded in what is commonly known as the scientific method of investigation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Comte hypothesized that since experimentation, observation, and reason based on experience were the basis for understanding human behavior, these were the ways to extend human understanding and gain knowledge (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Postpositivist Paradigm

Post-positivism replaced positivism after World War II (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Postpositivist work forms the assumption that any piece of research is from several well-developed theories apart from other tests (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Positivist and postpositivist research align with quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, including deductive logic, formulation of hypotheses, testing those hypotheses, offering operational

definitions and mathematical equations, calculations, extrapolations, and expressions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Interpretivist and Constructivist Paradigm

Within the Interpretivist Paradigm, the researcher attempts to understand the world as the subject understands it by completely focusing on the subject's interpretation rather than the researcher's interpretation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Emphasis is placed on understanding the individual and their reality, therefore leading to the idea that reality is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Because research may not always begin with a theory but build one as data is collected and interpreted, the Interpretivist paradigm is sometimes called the constructivist paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The researcher is most likely to rely on qualitative data collection methods and analysis or a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods in which quantitative data is used in such a way as to support or expand upon qualitative data and effectively deepen the description (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

The Critical Transformative Paradigm

The critical paradigm sometimes called the transformative paradigm, arose in the 1980s and 1990s from those researchers who felt that available approaches did not address societal and political issues (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Research conducted in the critical paradigm reflects the deliberate efforts of a researcher to promote human rights and increase social justice and reform (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Transformative researchers may use qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods like interpretive and/or constructivist. A mixed-method approach can give the researcher a fuller picture based on

multiple perspectives and lenses, allowing for a broader understanding of diverse values, stances, and positions (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

The Pragmatic Paradigm

The pragmatic paradigm arose from researchers who felt that an accurate picture could not come from utilizing a single approach but by applying multiple approaches to the central problem (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The method includes the relationship of deciding which study method will apply to the pragmatic approach. The pragmatic paradigm includes a mixed method of data collection and analysis methodology for the best insight into the research question.

Discussion of Design

The research design reflects the type of data necessary for analysis. While some paradigms tend to include a dominant methodology, no prohibition of using a single methodology over another exists (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The design was appropriate to show how the data emerged, who participated, which instruments were applied in the data collection, and the data analysis (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Fixed

. Fixed designs are appropriate for knowing which variables must change within the experiment (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The design often includes quantitative measures for collection and analysis. A fixed design may give the researcher better control over time allotment and resource allocation constraints. A fixed design is appropriate for systematically and quantifiably conducting data.

Flexible

A Flexible design allows for more freedom in data collection and analysis. The research results are qualitative and open to interpretation by the researcher (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). A flexible design allows the researcher to gather information for a bigger-picture mentality. The feedback on the research questions may change the course of the experiment (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Data collected utilizing a flexible methodology allows the researcher more fluidity of the research structure and allows for relationships to develop throughout the collection of the research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Mixed

Mixed methodology is conducted using methods from both a fixed and flexible design. This method gathers numeric and text data within the result database (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Mixed-method research has been identified as a critical improvement by providing a more enriched picture by involving a variety of methods for data collection (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Mixed methodology in research design allows the researcher to understand the participant's view better.

Discussion of Method

Using statistics, qualitative data can appear numerically (Creswell, 2002; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Qualitative data emerges through words, images, or emoticons for themes and commonalities. When evaluating qualitative methodologies versus quantitative, a qualitative approach fits best within the parameters of this study. Creswell (2002) noted that quantitative researchers collect, analyze, interpret, and write results. No defined dependent or independent variables exist in the study, but instead, it includes themes in current practices and barriers within the parameters.

Case Study

Creswell and Poth (2018) define case study research as a qualitative approach in which the investigator agent discovers *a real-life*, modern system through complete, extensive data collection with many sources with *case themes*). Defining characteristics of case study research can include identifying a specific case analyzed, defined, or described within parameters. The case study intends to present an in-depth understanding of a case that may have differing approaches. Identifying case themes and ending with conclusions form the overall meaning of the case(s) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case study types can include single-instrument case studies, collective case studies, and intrinsic case studies. A case study methodology applies to real-life cases in progress so that information can appear accurate and within identifiable boundaries. Procedures for a case study include determining if the approach is appropriate, identifying the study's intent, developing procedures for collecting data, specifying the analysis, and reporting the lessons learned (Creswell & Poth).

Narrative

In narrative research, the researcher needs to clearly understand the context of the material to accurately restore the information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For example, the researcher must ensure that the information reflects the subject and is not specifically for interpretation. Narrative research is best when capturing detailed stories or life experiences from an individual or a small group. Instead of presenting a collection of narratives, the study focuses on specific cases within a representative sample of health departments in East Tennessee.

Grounded Theory

A grounded theory research study can progress outside the description and generate a united theoretical justification for a process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Grounded theory includes different experiences from a large group of participants and leads to a general explanation of the

process. The significant characteristics of grounded theory research include a process or action with distinct steps or phases over time. The theory can also consist of developing a theory of process or action. In addition, the theory can include undertaking data and analysis procedures with inductive procedures describing the type of approach. Considering that the study includes a banded group of like experiences with different sources of information, such as different entities within the Department of Health, a case study is the best approach.

Ethnographic

The research results did not develop a new individualized action; instead, I collected information about current practices and barriers to further develop an applicable practice. An ethnographic research study is a qualitative study that includes the learned behaviors, values, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group. However, it would not be an appropriate approach for determining current methods.

Phenomenological

A phenomenological approach is appropriate when a problem is best understood while looking at multiple individuals' experiences with the same phenomenon. A phenomenological approach could lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon when looking at shared experiences. Some qualitative researchers may find The Moustakas approach too structured (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers must manage with care when selecting individuals for a specific study to ensure they have experienced the same phenomenon. The study did not include an explanation of an experienced phenomenon but rather specific practices. Using a case study approach allowed a more meaningful picture to be gathered.

Discussion of Triangulation

Triangulation is a method to increase the credibility and validity of research findings by eliminating biases using a single observer or method in the research (Noble & Heale, 2019). Four triangulation methods proposed by Denzin are data triangulation, which includes matters such as time, place, and people. Investigator triangulation uses more than a single researcher. Theory triangulation includes several theory systems to interpret a phenomenon, and methodological triangulation includes several data collection methods (Noble & Heale, 2019). The study includes a mixed methodological triangulation with historical data from previous applications submitted regarding succession planning practices through different award programs. Interviews with staff in different leadership positions were appropriate for different vantage points. Finally, applications and interviews occurred at multiple locations under the Department of Health to collect information from various data points.

Summary of the Nature of the Study

An interpretive paradigm aligns with research methodologies and methods for gathering and analyzing qualitative data. A flexible methodology and a case study approach led to robust data collection. The case study approach allowed me to conduct an open-ended interview with participants. I conducted interviews with selected participants through a virtual conference or phone call at the participants' preference. This process included asking multi-level research questions to encourage dialogue with open-ended questions. Interviews included open-ended questions to understand the types of programs these organizations developed, how they identify and nurture talent, lessons learned, and any personal anecdotes. I evaluated the interviews for commonalities in barriers, current and best practices by outcomes. This encouraged dialogue to provide a better picture and allowed participants to elaborate on any area. After the interviews

were completed, I evaluated them for recurring themes. These themes applied for the Department of Health to replicate in sites across Tennessee.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is often in the initial stages of a doctoral study to conceptualize the research process (Knight et al., 2010). The framework allows the researcher to follow the focus of the study, moving from the key concepts and theoretical frameworks sustaining the professional context of the study to the research themes and questions. Then, the methodology, implementation of the study, results, and analysis apply to the conceptual and practical outcomes of the study (Berman, 2013). Ravitch and Riggan (2017) defined the conceptual framework as the reasoning behind why the topic matters and why the proposed study method is appropriate. Ravitch and Riggan (2017) argued that a conceptual framework not only molds the study's design and direction but also aligns the development and links the elements of the research process.

Concepts

A lack of preparedness for the hiring and training of supervisors and leaders can lead to a pool of lower-quality employees. Boards neglect to find the right man or woman for the job, with up to 40% of new CEOs failing to meet performance expectations in the first 18 months (Harrell, 2016). Poor leadership can lead to a decrease in job satisfaction for others within the organization. Not having a formalized succession plan may increase the risk of losing high-performing employees to other organizations. Figure 1 depicts the flow between these individual variables. The study included the concept of the current practices, internal barriers, and employee outcomes through interviews conducted with leaders within the health departments of East Tennessee. By understanding how these variables impact the outcomes, a formalized approach

emerged. I presented it to leaders, hoping they would adopt the formal succession plan to promote future leaders.

Succession Planning

Succession planning is a process involving top-level management regularly reviewing employees at a defined level within the department that may portray leadership and other traits with plans to develop these for potential future leadership (Spector, 2013). Retaining a qualified pool of employees with skills and abilities for future organizational needs and leadership can add value to the organization's strategic plan and reduce the onboarding costs of hiring new employees (Baker, 2017). Succession planning is the commitment of the leader and potential successor (Baker, 2017). A potential succession plan may include strategic job shadowing, job rotation, and leadership courses. This allows potential successors to learn the different aspects and tasks of the position while having a strong support system in place. Advancing internally has added benefits such as increasing morale, easing role transitions, and enhancing engagement by having someone already familiar with the workplace culture in the role (Baker, 2017). Succession planning can set the stage for employee retention and potentially increase organizational performance (Baker, 2017). Schepker et al. (2018) stated that formalized successional planning can lead to better decision-making outcomes. Those employees who are not routinely part of decision-making processes may make suboptimal decisions because they feel included.

Although succession planning can appear to become an excellent tool for managers, it can only work successfully with efficient information processing (Schepker et al., 2018). An initial evaluation of talents for potential talent is necessary to identify gaps. Practical succession planning is necessary, which involves managing knowledge and experience, saving costs for the

organization, reducing staff turnover, and providing professional learning for employees (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). Succession plan programs should have the commitment and backing of organization administrators, clearly identify skills and competencies required for leadership positions, and identify current employee developmental gaps (Baker, 2017).

Actors

The environment within the Department of Health is rapidly changing. Public health is, by nature and definition, aligned with the public's health needs. Succession planning can limit the training period for changes in management and result in a more agile response system. Reflecting on succession planning practices and barriers, a best practice for a formalized process that managers can implement.

Leadership Development

Leadership styles are the methods a leader employs to provide direction, implement plans, and motivate employees. Employees can react in different ways to different approaches. Reflecting on different leadership styles can reveal which strategy best fills the gap between employers and employees. Different approaches by management can potentially gain the most success for their company. Employees have different personalities, traits, and demands that they look for in an effective leader. Influential leaders can create higher morale, more productivity, and success for the company. Dias and Borges (2017) stated that leaders feel leadership directly influences team performance. Most workers (75%) do not leave a position because of the position itself but because of their bosses (Mowll, 2016). This problem adds credibility to the conventional saying that- people do not leave their jobs; they leave their managers. By tuning into what the employees desire and deem essential traits, a manager can determine and develop management styles that strengthen the workforce, resulting in a more engaged workforce. A

positive commitment by management can lead to a workforce willing to produce quality outputs, lower turnover rates, higher productivity, and higher employee satisfaction. Research results show that almost 14 % of US employees have an abusive supervisor. This dysfunctional type of leadership costs companies an estimated 23.8 billion dollars annually because of absenteeism, healthcare costs, and decreased productivity (De Cremer & Tao, 2017).

Healthcare systems integrated into government systems need efficient leaders. Leadership development can ensure that all the aspects of the position work competently. Organizations such as General Electric and Chrysler turned around from the threat of bankruptcy to become two of the world's most profitable organizations through the effective leadership of Jack Welch and Lee Iacocca (Robbins & Coulter, 2007). This study will include how leadership development within the organization goes together with an effective succession plan.

Job Satisfaction

John Maxwell (2018) defined greatness as the ability to empower others, not just the power they hold themselves. How a leader interacts with the workforce can have a direct impact on the attitude of the workforce. In return, negative behavior can influence employee satisfaction with their job, positively or negatively. The impact of employees' job satisfaction can influence their productivity.

A workplace that encourages and takes steps to enhance employee engagement will most likely have increased commitment and energy among the organization's workers, which, in turn, can increase production and performance (Kumar & Swetha, 2011). Employees who enjoy their work are more confident, increasing employee satisfaction (Younas et al., 2020). The overall benefits of employee job satisfaction include numerous positive impacts on productivity, workplace morale, a more robust corporate culture, and longevity.

Employee Turnover

Michelle Maloney, regional vice president of operations for Sunspire Health, researched hiring strategies by gathering input from 28 organizations and identifying general trends that emerged about what strategies work best to groom future leaders (Sederstrom, 2018). For instance, Maloney found that formalizing hiring strategies and succession processes worked better to manage current employee expectations and ensure that a talent pool of qualified individuals existed within an organization. Informal processes by management tended to lead to employee dissatisfaction and increased litigation. *For example, a manager who wants to progress in the organization can lead to low morale and high turnover if a process or an opportunity for them does not exist* (Sederstrom, 2018). Recent reports show that Baby Boomers are not delaying retirement as previously thought; over half surveyed were either partially or fully retired by age 61 (LaPonsie, 2012). According to Garg and Weele (2012), a lack of succession planning leads to high turnover. Since succession planning has a training component, employees who receive training seem to express lower intentions of leaving an organization (Cho & Lewis, 2012). The study includes the effect that succession planning has on employee turnover rates.

Constructs

This study included the current succession planning strategies used by the local health departments that structure the East Region in Tennessee. These strategies convey those who hold leadership positions within their specific offices. By researching current strategies, I determined which would best receive implementation specific to the Department of Health. When studying practices, internal barriers and opportunities for improvements emerged.

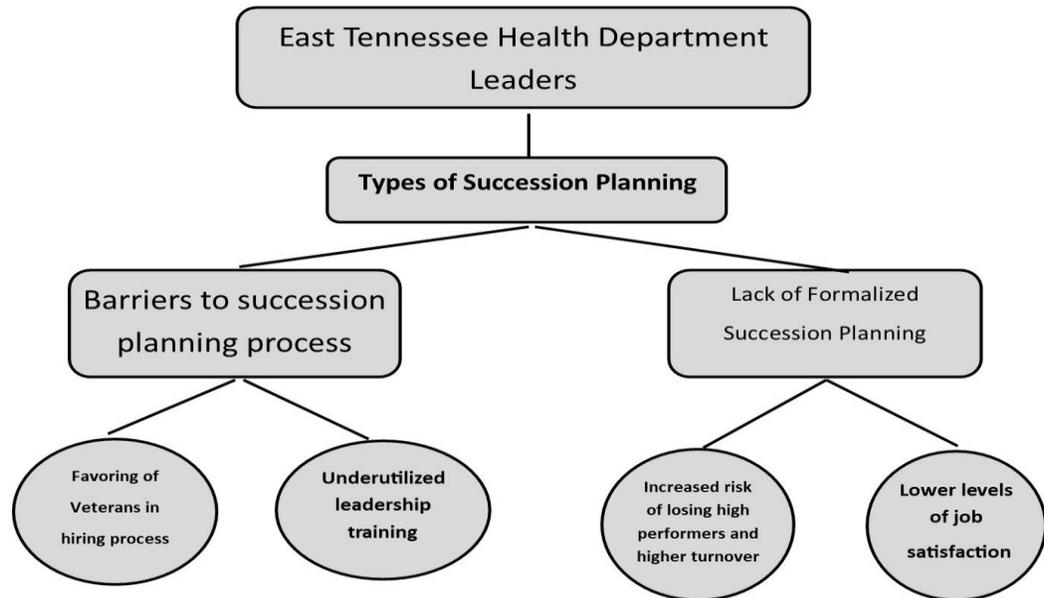


Figure 1. Relationships between concepts

Summary of Research Framework

When examining the different relationship variables, some trends emerged. Several local health department staff implemented succession plans. The local and regional health departments all share the same parent organization and face the same barriers. Some will face individual obstacles based on the size or location of the health department and local government rules in their respective counties. Currently, the State of Tennessee officials have no clear succession plan consistent amongst all health departments. Though localized succession plans may exist, the identified candidate is not guaranteed a job.

Definition of Terms

Barriers to Success

In business, barriers to success include conflicts with existing assets and business practices. Processes of experimentation and evaluation and successful leadership of organizational change must overcome these barriers (Chesbrough, 2010).

CEO

A chief executive officer (CEO) is the most powerful executive in the top management team (Tang, 2020). The CEO is the leader of the organization. External stakeholders frequently view and interpret firms' actions considering their understanding of who the CEOs are and what the leaders' attributes imply about the volition of those actions (Gupta & Misangyi, 2018).

Employee Development

The simplistic process defined by Mello (2015) demonstrates three primary considerations for decision-makers when designing jobs: what workers do, what workers need, and how jobs interface with other jobs in the organization. Different approaches can relieve boredom and lead to more stimulating work for employees. This process can include job rotation. Job rotation is a crucial tool for employee development, and a key means for HR professionals to further their careers (Mello, 2015). Rotating into different positions and functionalities can help identify gifts of employees that may not otherwise manifest.

Employee Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is the overall fulfillment that results from the affective experience of the job situation and the relationship to matching value and fulfilling the employee's needs and expectations. Employee satisfaction relates to employee motivation, performance, and pro-social work behavior (Wisse et al. & Scheibe, 2015).

High Performing Employees

High-performing employees are those who outperform coworkers and will outperform in areas critical to the organization (Kirchmer, 2017).

Leader

Leaders possess qualities that make them who and what they are. These can be different for leaders in different scenarios or roles. A leader is present to his staff. According to Hershey and Blanchard (2019), an employee's willingness to perform a task and their ability to do so can be influenced and enhanced by a good leader setting the bar and level of what is expected. Leadership guides the organization in a clear direction toward their common goal.

Leadership Development

The leadership development process expands the capacity and knowledge of leaders (or potential leaders) in the organization. Developing leadership sends leaders a crucial social exchange message about the importance of development, well-being, and personal growth (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Executive coaching is an effective short-term leadership development activity that includes goal setting, feedback, and performance to address knowledge gaps (Bartlett et al., 2014).

Succession Plan

Succession plan programs should have the commitment and backing of organizational administrators. They should clearly identify skills and competencies for leadership positions and employee developmental gaps (Baker, 2017). Succession planning is when top-level management regularly reviews those at a certain level within the department who may portray leadership and other traits with plans for developing potential future leaders (Spector, 2013). When looking at potential candidates for succession planning, some may possess skills more associated with past successes than future demands (Spector, 2013).

Workplace culture (Organizational Culture)

Organizational culture has the influence of founders or subsequent leaders that shape or develop through the collectives of staff. Workplace culture can appear as the DNA, personality, or mindset of an organization seen through visible behaviors, which are invisible beliefs, values, and assumptions about *how we do things around here*. In this manner, culture determines guidance – *intentional or not – on what is done or not in an organization*, how it is done, and why (Vijfeijken, 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions

I assumed that organizations had a base knowledge of succession planning and a plan to enhance potential leaders. Practices followed in the clinic, experience where I am employed, and experience with other health departments. If discovering that clinics did not have a succession plan, an alternate department was desirable. The study included additional categories or follow-up questions for those not identifying as potential leaders.

From the results of the research, most clinic managers who employed succession planning strategies encountered specific, identifiable barriers when filling vacant positions. Another critical factor is to ask the questions clearly for the participant to understand (Baxter & Jack, 2008) fully. The barriers existed in the facility where I am employed. These barriers included veteran favorability, panel interview boards, and state hiring requirements. If it was found that clinics have additional barriers or different barriers, these were modified accordingly.

The interviews were conducted under the assumption that leadership would provide truthful answers concerning their current practices. An essential element was to recognize and address confidentiality when presenting data. Another critical element is to read through the

research from the participants' perspective for potential confidentiality issues (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). As a Department of Health employee, I assumed that leaders would participate and answer questions accordingly. If leaders did not wish to participate or did not provide truthful answers, this lessened the sample size of participants.

Limitations

A limitation of the study was the number of participants. Although I assumed that leaders from the identified East Region health departments would participate, some did not participate. This sample size reflected practices being utilized or proposed in the identified health departments in East Tennessee. Although the design was for repetitive purposes across the state, it was minimal in functionality across other regions.

The research style was a case study, and consequently, another limitation included a broad topic on behalf of the interview participants. Although I attempted to keep the participants on topic, the case study approach was acceptable for the participants to turn away from the subject matter. This situation resulted in lengthy and tedious transcription processes for nonapplicable information. I presented the topic before beginning interviews to attempt to prevent this issue from happening.

Delimitations

Leaders came from local health departments. The region includes 13 health departments, some with county directors covering more than one county. I selected four health departments, including two large and two small. Additional leadership included nursing and clerical supervisors because they supervise most staffing types in the local health departments.

Significance of the Study

Succession planning is when top-level management regularly reviews those at a certain level within the department who may portray leadership and other traits with plans of developing these for potential future leadership (Spector, 2013). When considering candidates for succession planning, essential to note is that some candidates may possess skills with past successes rather than future demands (Spector, 2013). Retaining a qualified pool of employees who possess skills and abilities for future organizational needs and leadership can add value to the organization's strategic plan and employee commitment and reduce future onboarding costs of hiring new employees (Baker, 2017). Succession planning does not need to appear as an entitlement role but rather an earned achievement. As a combined commitment of both the leader and potential successor, succession planning may include strategic job shadowing, job rotation, and leadership courses. The plan can lead to successors learning the different aspects and tasks of the position while having a solid support system. Advancing internally increases morale, easing role transitions and enhancing engagement by having somebody already familiar with the workplace culture (Baker, 2017). Succession planning can set the stage for employee retention and increase organizational performance (Baker, 2017).

Reduction of Gaps in the Literature

The study results can serve as succession planning practices within four of the thirteen local health departments in East Tennessee. By reviewing practices and determining which are appropriate, an overarching process can occur for implementation. In uncertain environments, planning and environmental forecasting allow organizational managers to respond in a coordinated manner (Daft, 2016). Managers develop contingency and scenario planning strategies focusing on continuous learning, adaptation, and innovation (Daft, 2016). As

uncertainty increases and change occurs, managers can recall these frameworks and rehearsals when deciding how to respond. Schepker et al. (2018) stated that formalized successional planning can lead to better decision-making outcomes. Those employees who are not routinely part of the decision-making processes may make suboptimal decisions because of a lack of knowledge of the processes.

Although succession planning can be a great tool for organizations, it can only be successful with efficient information processing (Schepker et al., 2018). Effective succession planning involves managing knowledge and experience, saving costs for the organization, reducing staff turnover, providing professional learning to employees, and keeping employees informed about opportunities (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). In the study, I sought to fill the gap between current practices and a formalized process in the East Tennessee Health Departments.

Implications for Biblical Integration

God designed man to work before, even in the womb, therefore being predestined to His chosen path.

He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will (Ephesians 1:4-5).

Working lives can have a direct correlation with how people function within society. Self-esteem and a sense of identity and purpose can affect job performance (Hardy, 1990). Work has a way of pushing to discover specific talents and abilities and integrate them into one's place in society. Though some view work as tedious and boring, many have a purpose for their jobs. The job can lead to an outlet to exceed, grow, and find the good in things leading to an opportunity to spread God's word to those who may not heard. Acts 20: 28 states, *pay careful attention to yourselves*

and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Succession planning can allow an organizational leader to keep updated with the latest expertise. Individuals ask questions to further understanding that can help connect people and allow them to perceive the emotions of others (Weinstein et al., 2009). By aligning an employee's workplace growth and identification of leadership abilities with the organization's goals through succession planning approaches, managers can ensure that an employee will achieve goals that matter to the organization. Strong leaders can also inspire trust. How they interact with employees can determine a level of trust within the organization. The leader's behavior is essential in determining trust within the organization (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Without trust in relationships, employees are not able to progress, and the community will not obtain the benefits. Individuals in a group will not encourage others to accomplish tasks if trust does not exist (Blanchard et al., 2016).

Employees who enjoy their work show more confidence. This level of confidence leads to higher levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction (Haldorai et al., 2020). By developing systems that are in place with an organization's overall goals, mission, and values, a greater chance of success exists for the systems. Employees who feel connected to work perform better and are less likely to look for other employment (Haldorai et al., 2020). By developing an employee's strength (developing their gift from God in the way of work), an employee can become loyal to the organization. Succession planning and leadership development can lead to opportunity, time, and place for potential leaders to improve their leadership and interpersonal skills. With clear expectations and defined processes, a positive outcome can emerge for individuals and the organization. According to Romans 8:28,

those who are called to God's purpose work together using the gifts He gave to work together for good. Some paths may seem the clear, obvious choice, but do not function in a Christ-centered environment. It is important to seek His guidance to lead the organization down the path of God's will. Working through struggles does not take away from the Lord's blessings; the blessing can give the means to overpower and overcome hurdles (Proverbs 10:22).

The Bible includes the importance of continuity in Numbers 27:17 (KJV): The congregation of the Lord will not act as sheep without a shepherd, and those that have gone before them may go them and lead. Building a sustainable organization (or tribe in this verse concerning Moses and Joshua) requires orderly authority transfers. When continuity is lost, those following may become confused and lose focus, which can cause work structures to weaken and fall apart. The leader needs to show support for the new leader to demonstrate confidence in their abilities to the flock they are leading.

Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate

When an organization is at risk of losing skilled and experienced employees, succession planning will limit their impact and help ensure the stability and long-term continuity of achieving the goals (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). Planning may appear urgent in stable environments as opposed to unstable work situations (Daft, 2016). Given instantaneous access to operating environment statistics and information, company leaders are more adept at analyzing trends and adjusting their strategies. Organizations operating in stable environments can focus their efforts on presenting operational problems and solutions. The least amount of stress possible will result in the best outcome, and planning will eliminate stress. Vecchiato (2015) stated that in a chaotic world with constantly changing environments, an important dominant

determinant of success is the ability of the business to handle the changes or uncertainty by sensing and seizing them. Complications in organizations are more complex and require complex resolutions and complex assessments of risk. The evidence of the complexities within a corporation is the increase in the number of departments an organization needs to handle the vast workload, such as marketing, procurement, legal, and E-business departments. Organizational leaders must select executives who are as diverse. In a fast-paced, changing world, there are so many more levels of uncertainty and planning exists in a vast massive amount in the success of a business.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

Succession planning can alleviate some of the hardships that can occur when an organization is changing leadership. The results of the study could show the importance of implementing a formal succession planning structure within the Department of Health in East Tennessee. The barriers make succession planning attempts challenging to follow through on the hiring of identified successors. A lack of a formal planning process can lead to a decrease in job satisfaction as well as turnover of high-performing employees seeking to rise on the corporate ladder. Reflecting on solutions, I hoped to propose a formal plan to diminish the undesired outcomes.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

When beginning this research project, a structural definition of succession planning and inputs into the process were necessary. The literature review included the definitions of overall processes and the individual inputs and impacts. The determinants lead to the importance of succession planning on determinants within East Tennessee health departments and the impact on predetermined variants relating to employee behavior and productivity.

Business Practices

Thirteen rural health departments fall into the East Tennessee region with an overarching parent organization that is the State of Tennessee. The 13 health departments have some autonomy in decision-making on policies mandated by the parent organizational leaders. Many procedures, including those that are innovative or new practices, must receive approval from state offices before enacting or adopting into practice. Creating standard practices across the different departments enables health department officials to offer the same services to different populations across Tennessee. The health departments considered are *metro*, such as Knox County Health Department, with workers acting independently based on directions from a local board of health.

Overview of Services Provided

The local health department's services are designed and orchestrated to meet the needs within their local communities as determined by community health assessments completed and administered yearly (Chambers, 2013-2015). These health services employees must meet the needs of Tennessee's identified objectives which are the *governor's priorities* (Chambers, 2013-2015). Children's health can impact other health risks going into adulthood; consequently, individual health department employees' primary focus includes well-child checkups (for those insured and uninsured) and immunizations. The screenings can help identify abnormalities that may need a referral to a specialist or outside provider (Tennessee State Government). In some specified counties, medical professionals can provide primary care services for those who are eligible. Services include diagnosing, treating, and monitoring acute illnesses. Specific diagnostic testing may prove necessary, including contracted lab panels and pap smears. Family planning services, including well-woman exams and birth control options, are available on a

sliding fee scale. Screening for sexually transmitted diseases, including gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis C, is available during a visit with a clinic nurse. Once diagnosed, counseling and treatment are available at no charge. Tuberculosis testing and treatment are also available through the Department of Health. Nutrition counseling and food benefit packages are available for eligible women, infants, and children through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program. Additional resources for eligible families are available through the Children Special Services and Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee (CHANT) programs (Chambers, 2013-2015). Birth and death certificates are available to print locally. Outreach programs are available according to community needs. Health educators from the health departments target specified areas of improvement. Services are personal to a certain extent to local management; however, the employees of the parent organization oversee all services and products.

Organizational Structure, Including Parent Organization

Each county in Tennessee has a county health department, with some larger counties having multiple facilities. Eighty-nine primarily rural county health departments exist under the Tennessee Department of Health's direct supervision, headquartered in Nashville. In contrast, the six larger, urban counties, such as Madison, Shelby, Knox, Davidson, Hamilton, and Sullivan, have health departments that operate under local governance but work closely with the Tennessee Department of Health.

The Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner appoints 89 primarily rural health department directors. The county leadership appoints directors of the six larger, urban county health departments. Sometimes, a health board appointed by the mayor will provide recommendations regarding appointments, and in part by the County Commission. The county

director (CD) is directly accountable to the East Tennessee Recovery (ETR) regional director (RD) and works collaboratively with the county mayor and county commission by contractual agreements. The Shelby County Health Department's local management team (LMT) comprises the nursing supervisor, the assistant nursing supervisor, the office supervisor, and the assistant OS. LMT members practice servant leadership and ensure all day-to-day operations follow the DOH guidelines, policies, and procedures. TDH's executive leadership team, and the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) commissioner provide the LHD's governance and ultimately set the focus and direction for the entire organization (Chambers, 2013-2015).

Local Management

Health departments comprise supervisors in different departments. The office supervisor (PHOS) supervises employees in the clerical section of the organizational structure. The nursing supervisor (NS) supervises all nurses, nutritionists, health educators, and social counselor supervisors. A county director oversees the functions and productivity of the health department and directly manages the OS and NS. The Department of Health (DOH) employees lead the functionality of the health department. The DOH staff determines which services are available through each health department and designs protocols to ensure the safe delivery of services. The DOH staff maintains all policies and guidelines disseminated across the State of Tennessee health departments. The direction of the DOH descends to the Commissioner of Health, who reports directly to the governor of the state. All levels of departmental staff work together to provide the services recognized as a need within the community to promote the health and prosperity of its constituents (Chambers, 2013-2015).

The Problem

Succession planning has existed since the beginning of recorded history (Garman & Glawe, 2004). This succession can align in royal lineages or domestic situations where power and leadership move on to the next generation. In recent years, the process has become more formalized and repeatable to plan for future vacancies and ensure leadership during transitions (Garman & Glawe, 2004). According to Rothwell (1994), one of the few writers to recognize the organizational need for succession planning was Henri Fayol (1841–1925). Fayol's management points indicated that management is responsible for ensuring the *stability of the tenure of personnel*. Failure to meet that need for stability leads to employees who are ill-prepared for the role (Rothwell, 1994).

Succession Planning Defined

Succession planning is a process involving top-level management regularly to review employees at a specified level within the department that may portray leadership and other traits with plans of developing these for potential future leadership (Harper et al., 2018; Spector, 2013;). Succession planning can include various human resource functions within the organization to ensure a smooth transition of leadership (Kim, 2010). Rothwell (2010) noted that succession planning began as a tool to help top-level leaders mitigate the loss of key leaders. Although the practice of succession planning is not new, it evolved to consist of positions identified as leadership roles (Kim, 2010). Phillips (2020) defined succession planning as a business's proactive strategy to continually identify qualified candidates to ensure availability when vacancies occur.

Although the process may not appear difficult or complicated, a straightforward process is appropriate involving enough time to complete the goal (Cavanaugh, 2017; Lancaster et al.,

2020). A potential succession plan may include strategic job shadowing, job rotation, and leadership courses. Deliberate acts of leadership development allow potential successors to learn the different aspects and tasks of the position while having a solid support system in place. Succession planning is an excellent tool for organizations to use; however, it can only work with efficient information processing (Schepker et al., 2018). An initial evaluation of talents may exist for potential talent to identify any gaps. Practical succession planning efforts involve managing knowledge and experience, saving costs for the organization, reducing staff turnover, providing professional learning to employees, and keeping employees informed about opportunities (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). Succession plan programs should include the commitment and backing of organization administrators, clearly identify skills and competencies required for leadership positions, and identify current employee developmental gaps (Baker, 2017). Succession planning can limit the training period for changes in management and result in a more agile response system with a foundationally set team.

Concepts

Importance of Succession Planning within Organizations

Succession planning is a proactive tool that can save valuable dollars and time in training new employees to take leadership roles as planned and unplanned departures occur (Harper et al., 2018). By identifying, encouraging, and developing talent, a company can have a surplus of talent ready to fill leadership roles or engage in roles as necessary (Phillips, 2020). By diminishing the training (and the void where a lack of knowledge in leadership) or simply having someone step into a leadership role when vacated, the company can maintain the journey toward goals and outcomes without significant time lapses (Lancaster et al., 2020). During lapses in leadership, the organization can lose momentum, and employee uncertainty may increase

(Cavanaugh, 2017). Effective succession planning can attract and retain employees who seek advancement. Succession planning can set the stage for employee retention and potentially increase organizational performance (Baker, 2017).

The organization must have the ongoing education of its board, medical staff, and administrators so that all stakeholders are ready to execute the transition (Lancaster et al., 2020). Succession planning should not be limited only to those in top management positions but also address the need for critical job backups in any category (Rothwell, 1994). Organizations taking active steps in building high-performing work environments by decentralizing decision-making can extend the definition of succession planning beyond management (Rothwell, 1994). A specific goal of succession planning includes matching the organization's current talent (those that are available) with potential future talent needs to have leaders in the right place at the right time (Rothwell, 1994). These incidents demonstrate the value of succession planning as a fundamental tool for learning within the organization, ensuring experiences that improve work outcomes (Rothwell, 1994).

Attract and Retain Talent

Considering the importance of onboarding tactics or evaluating future positions during strategic planning, the type of employees the organization is seeking to recruit is essentially critical. Jeffrey Mello (2015) proposed that organizational leaders need to manage human assets as an investment of the company to increase their value and commitment. Company managers should consider succession planning as a type of roadmap that directs employees in which direction they need to succeed and thrive (Carr, 2004). Crucial to note is which positions may have the potential for a vacancy within projected dates (Guise, 2016). Individuals who show interest in promotional consideration may receive placement in a talent pool by leadership.

Individual career planning should integrate into strategic planning to commit to developing those who have an interest in promotions (Rothwell, 2011). Professionals who perceive that they are in line for promotions or advancements are likely to display loyalty to the organization and less likely to seek improvement elsewhere (McDonald, 2008).

Proactive Identifying and Developing Qualified Talent

Person task fit is an approach an organization uses to pair suitable potential candidates with open roles in the organization (Spector, 2013). Necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and other required information (KSAOs) critical to performing organizational tasks competently are appropriate to ensure the success of this approach. After defining the candidates their skill levels apply in areas to find the best fit for that job vacancy (Spector, 2013). The appropriate development allows organizational leaders to ensure the competence and skills of employees to enable them to perform at their maximum potential (Torraco & Swanson, 1995). Choosing suitable activities to ensure the workforce has the skill set to complete a current or future task can lead to a strategic opportunity for improvement in the workforce. This approach can save the company resources in various ways by finding the right employee to fill the proper role within the organization. When employees align with the correct position, they are happier in their roles and likely to grow in the organization. Retaining a qualified pool of employees with skills and abilities for future organizational needs and leadership can add value to the organization's strategic plan and the employee's commitment and reduce future onboarding costs of hiring new employees (Baker, 2017). Human resource directors who value employees and strive to create a welcoming atmosphere can have a significant role in the organization's success. By developing systems that are in place with an organization's overall goals, mission, and values, a greater chance of success exists for the systems. Employees connected to the work and an overall goal

are likely to perform better. By developing an employee's strength (developing their gift from God in the way of work), an employee can react committed and loyal to the organization. Trust in the leader is an employee's psychological state, which involves positive expectations about the leader's intentions or behaviors in situations entailing risk (Gao et al. et al., 2011). Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) demonstrated that trusted leaders can extract more work from employees, and employees are prone to display vulnerability to a trusted leader's actions.

Maintain and Develop Knowledge in a Competitive Environment

Succession planning t occurs frequently in organizations that experience uncertainty or frequent changes in their workforce, particularly leadership roles. Succession planning is an intentional and systematic strategy to identify and develop potential organizational leaders (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). In addition, some senior leaders may question the value of an HR-related effort, but most of them can immediately recognize the value of having critical backups identified in case of short-term or long-term emergencies. A key selling point for replacement planning is the support from skeptical senior leaders (Rothwell, 2011). When an organization is at risk of losing its most skilled and experienced employees, succession planning could limit the impact and help to ensure the stability and long-term continuity of achieving the organization's goals (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). The least stress possible will result in the best outcome, and planning will eliminate stress. *When markets and entire industries continuously emerge, collide, split, evolve, and die, the primary determinant of success is the ability of the firm to cope with growing uncertainty and handle external changes* (Vecchiato, 2015).

Economic Trends and Employee Turnover

Preparing for future events is critical for risk management practices considering terrorism, natural disasters, pandemics, and potential cyber-attacks (Rothwell, 2011). In addition, the loss of baby boomers has had a significant impact on the reduction of the workplace, which creates the need for replacements. Projections from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics show that new jobs added into the economy will generate jobs to keep pace with the changing workforce left by baby boomers gradually leaving the workforce. An estimated 20 % of 150.9 million jobs declined between 2008 and 2018 (Epstein, 2010). A new generation of employees show less loyalty to the organizations and have a higher frequency of changing jobs (Fang et al., Dai, & Tsai, 2020). The higher turnover rate with the new generation of employees may lead to losses of customers and knowledge transfer (Fang et al., 2020). Management practices need to integrate new talent demand into approaches to optimize current employee behavior and fill vacancies to achieve organizational goals. COVID-19 caused employers to explore options for product offerings and employee environments, including working remotely from alternate locations. The remote work environment leads employers to analyze how they offer products and services and how they alter an ever-changing economy (Meyer, 2021). While employers looked at remote workforces as a response to an initial crisis, a noticeable shift emerged. The results of Gallup studies found that *more than a third of employees working remotely during the pandemic would like to continue after the COVID-19 crisis*. The increased cyber and security risks that arise from moving to a decentralized workforce created a need for enhanced security measures, including network security in an employee's home. Organizational culture is proving to evolve as managers try to create a corporate culture that extends to remote workplaces. The demand of the changing environment needs incorporation into the organization's leadership plans adapting to a pool of leaders from those working remotely.

Succession Planning According to the Tennessee Department of Health

Generalized succession planning practices exist within the Department of Health (Chambers, 2013-2015). However, the guidelines are not open to interpretation. They include steps a health department can take to enhance leaders without measurable steps.

Current Succession Planning Practices

Private sector employees have a history of studying and implementing succession planning activities. Succession planning received minimal attention in the public health sector (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). Outside of studies completed in Ohio, Wyoming, and Washington, little information is available about succession planning in health departments. Succession planning is essential for an aging workforce. In addition, increasing demand for services from the health department against a backdrop of chronic budgetary pressure means that leaders need to generate operational efficiencies. Succession planning can have a significant impact, including improved operational continuity, organizational stability, systematic development of leadership competencies, preservation of institutional knowledge, financial stability, increased innovation, and decreased recruitment costs. Leaders must assess where health departments are in succession planning practices and see the benefits of addressing workforce challenges.

Stringent guidelines on the civil service system within federal agencies do not often center activities around succession planning (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). Guidelines describe how employees must have the knowledge, skills, and experience to be promoted to higher responsibilities (Jarrell & Pewitt). Hiring employees must ensure they are proficient in their responsibilities. According to the Tennessee Department of Health's Agency Workforce Planning Guide (WFP (2019), leaders need to look at innovative ways to incorporate ways to address developmental challenges within planning. The Tennessee WFP process results from a

benchmark study of states that have strength in workforce planning (Agency Guide to Workforce/succession Planning - tn.gov 2019). Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin were in studies to analyze documents and website reviews. The following are some critical aspects by the Tennessee Department of Health officials: a) focus on critical business priorities, b) voluntary use of the process over mandatory compliance. The process must adapt to the agency's business needs and culture. Managers must use adequate resources. Small initial steps should reduce needless paperwork. In addition, managers must act on feedback throughout communicating expectations with a commitment from the employees at the top and lower levels of the organizational chain of command. Managers must strongly associate human resources with performance-based budgeting and strategic planning. The project team responsible for generating and implementing an agency's workforce plan should ensure that an agency's needs align with the agency's appointing authority.

Reasons for succession planning: Retain key talent, prepare individuals for future challenges, e.g., growth, new strategies, accelerate the development of critical individuals, ensure continuity of management culture, avoid lost productivity, control cost (developing internal talent is less expensive than hiring), make the organization more attractive to job candidates and achieve diversity goals.

Barriers

An essential planning guide from the Department of Health exists for succession planning and identifying potential talent; the hiring structure does not include automatic promotions. The hiring process of managers from the Department of Health limits the role of county senior leaders in succession planning. When positions become available, a written justification is necessary to fill the vacancy aligned with the regional director. After the

appropriate approval of the new position, posting in the state or county system for applications and a panel of at least three people conduct the interviews. If someone locally is an excellent candidate to fill a position, no guarantee exists that they will receive a job offer. In addition, for state positions, a written justification is necessary if a veteran or minority receives the position.

Best Practices

In Tennessee, workforce planning is not a constitution; however, influential leaders use workforce planning to plan, align, and manage human capital resources to achieve their mission and objectives. Workforce planning is the responsibility of agency leaders because they are accountable for achieving the agency's mission. HR personnel have a crucial role in supporting leaders in meeting their responsibilities. The critical component of effective workforce planning is strategic data-driven talent decision-making specific to an agency or division, which ultimately is a leadership responsibility. The process and supporting tools help leaders in their talent decision-making. According to Chambers (2019), Sevier County Health Department leaders seek to challenge identity barriers by requesting *assistant* positions. The intent is to prepare the assistance for advancement and provide training opportunities both in the classroom setting and through Edison learning modules to prepare staff to transition into leadership positions. Leadership duties are rotated without supervisors to identify those in the potential talent pool.

Constructs

Leadership Development

With ever-changing business environments and technological additions leading to organizational transformations, effective leadership has a critical role in adapting and performing effectively in these new environments (Mintzberg & Waters, 1982). *When organizational leaders change to reflect technology, the environment and the completion of programs are*

critical in orchestrating the process (Bass & Bass, 2008). Identified as a focus, organizations include development strategies relating to leadership in strategic priorities that can lead to competitive advantage (Day et al., 2009). While organizational leaders increased spending on leadership development, an emerging consensus shows a lack of talent in the leadership pool to meet organizations' needs (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Survey results demonstrate that those who hold leadership positions fail 70% of the time to achieve those objectives, alluding to a leadership crisis (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Research on leadership development flourished with several books, including the *Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development, Integrated Approach to Leader Development*, and *Leadership Development in Balance*. Scholars documented the benefit of experience from lived experiences that are novel and of high significance. A need exists for people to manage change with diverse groups of people and across organizational boundaries (DeRue & Myers, 2014).

McCall noted that leading is taught, and the primary source of knowledge is experience (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Individuals in higher-level positions possess more leadership traits than those in lower-level positions (Fleenor, 2006). When considering the trait approach, the five major leadership traits are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Northouse, 2019). Regarding the five leadership traits, Judge et al. (2002) noted that extraversion no longer exists as the trait associated with leadership, with conscientiousness almost equally associated with leadership. Northouse (2019) further summarized extraversion as *a tendency to act assertively with positive energy*. In other words, individuals with the natural tendency to seek social situations and positively communicate increase leadership ability. Detailed extroverts associate with leadership roles. Regarding the role of gender and its impact on leadership traits, the research results show that the more leadership experience female leaders

have, the less they desire dominance. However, cooperation remains consistent regardless of experience (Nichols, 2015). Intelligence allows a leader to analyze the employees' strengths and weaknesses and how to work with them effectively. In addition to assessing traits to identify weaknesses and obtain the skills to take the company to greater heights, as a result. Those who pride themselves as *super bosses* tend to possess the following traits. In addition to assessing traits to identify weaknesses and obtaining the skills to take the company to greater heights. Those who pride themselves as *super bosses* tend to possess a competitive advantage, vision, and integrity. In addition, these individuals strictly adhere to a core vision or a sense of authentication (Finkelstein, 2016). However, a company could not be successful without the employees' work. Fiaz et al. (2017) indicated that employee motivation to follow their corporate leadership varies depending on the style and character of an organization. A leader's personality and traits set a spirit throughout the organization (Goleman et al., 2001).

Researchers examined outcomes associated with leadership development, including leadership knowledge of individuals, abilities, motivations, and identities (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Leadership development is the process of preparing individuals and collectives to engage in leading interactions with several assumptions. Enabling effective organizational leadership processes is essential (DeRue & Myers, 2014).

Servant Leadership

Robert Greenleaf introduced the term *servant leader* in his 1970 essay, *The Servant Leader*, where Greenleaf posits that authentic leadership is from the desire to help others (Spears, 1996). Greenleaf (1977) stated that servant leaders do not mind serving others. Servant leaders must learn to lead by example and act accountable. Servant leaders look at themselves as equals to those they lead. According to Greenleaf, *the servant-leader is a servant first and begins with*

the sentiment that everybody desires to serve co-workers (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf received credit for the concept of servant leadership; however, its roots are Biblical (Spears, 1996). Greenleaf's foundation of servant leadership includes the leader's ability to serve. Biblical Christ-centered servant leadership includes serving God and trusting him to lead the servant-leader relationship before serving others (Duby, 2009). Serving God first is throughout scripture, expressly noted in Matthew 6:33, which directs Christians to seek first his kingdom, and again in Proverbs 3:6, which states, *In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success* (Proverbs 3:6, TLB). The Biblical foundation for servant leadership by Christians acknowledges the biblical stresses of serving others; however, Christians must first serve God, as stated in Matthew 6:33 (Duby, 2009). Additionally, Coulter (2003) asserted that Christ did not want to prove himself to his followers; he only sought to serve, and *a primary component of servant leadership is to act like Jesus*. Servant leadership parallels transformational leadership (vision, influence, credibility, trust, and service). However, servant leadership progresses beyond transformational leadership by aligning leaders and followers (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

Transformational Leadership

. The results of many studies found that job satisfaction correlates with organizational factors such as quality of supervision, subordinate relationships, and workplace training (Wisniewski et al., 2019). Poor healthcare leadership and management are more significant causes of discontent than personal welfare issues, including ineffective leadership (Oleribe et al., 2016). The transformational leadership theory aligns with leadership roles and engaging others to increase motivation (Burns, 1978). By setting examples through actions, a transformational leader can lead by showing a follower the expectations. Transformational leaders must establish

trust. By developing trust, leaders can give followers a sense of competence and hope for future outcomes. Mehta and Maheshwari (2013) demonstrated a significant correlation between leadership behavior and employee job satisfaction. Maheshwari stated that leadership behaviors represent 29% of job satisfaction. Researchers found that leadership style perceptions lead to 36.6% of the variance in job satisfaction scores (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013). The transformational perspective aligns with the advocacy of change for others, consistent with society's popular notion of leadership (Northouse, 2019). People are attracted to transformational leadership because it makes sense to them, and a leader will provide a vision for the future. In addition, transformational leaders direct a process between followers and leaders. The focus is primarily on relationships in the organizational structure.

Trait Leadership

Many argue that some are born with specific characteristics that make them great leaders. When studying the theory of trait approach, the five major leadership traits included are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Northouse, 2019). Strengths result from having specific talents and using supplementing skills (Rath, 2007). The trait approach includes the leaders rather than other theories. The trait approach has a narrower structure than other theories (Northouse, 2019). This approach does not have a set of rules or guidelines but rather a reaction to different situations. Team leadership models include a shared decision-making process with group interactions and collaboration. This approach allows multiple members (employees, managers, and stakeholders) to participate in complex problem-solving, creating a culture that includes cohesiveness, values, beliefs, norms, and respected practices (Curry, 2014). Curry (2014) indicated that leaders who include others in decision-making utilize unnoticeable skills and expertise for problem-solving and collaboration. Shared

team leadership can lead group members and empower them to assume responsibilities because of increased trust and respect from coworkers (Curry).

Situational Approach

Situational leadership is a complex style built around inter-relationships, which include giving directions, providing support, listening, and developing value (Walls, 2019). The situational leadership style can lead to different job classifications together to form a unified idea that will strengthen the leader's ability to manage and highlight the importance of being flexible as well as putting the needs of others first. Kouzes and Posner (1992) stated that leadership aligns with the heart rather than with the mind. A leader must support his people and adjust to meet needs that arise without compromising beliefs or goals. The goal of any leader is to drive and guide followers to reach goals while, hopefully, creating some growth.

. Education is essential, but nothing replaces on-the-job training (Thomas & Carnall, 2008). Having a defined culture can help employees know what to expect from leadership. Organizational culture includes images, tongues, ideologies, values, practices, and illusions. Organizational culture impacts functioning (leadership, control, norms, and purpose) and includes a system of meanings that gives people a sense of reality and direction for actions (Plakhotnik, 2014). Successful companies build a culture with employees at its core. Leadership should help highlight the company's culture with a purpose. Boosting the image of leadership and investing in employees' futures can help portray leadership as a benefit. A leadership alliance accounts for a significant variability within engagements, and some argue it is the central mediating variable in achieving successful leadership (Linley et al., 2009). Axelrod (2010) demonstrated several areas that create a better perception of employees and leaders. By developing systems that align with an organization's overall goals, mission, and values, the

systems have a greater chance of success. Mauri (2017) stressed the importance of leadership to learners.

Knowledge as Competitive Advantage

Michael Porter's strategies are some of the definitive guides on establishing a competitive advantage (Hales & Mclarney, 2017). Porter's research on these strategies determined that a competitive strategy is vital to an organization's sustainability. Porter's strategies include strategies for competitive advantage based on cost, differentiation, or focus (Daft, 2016). Organizations that do not make clear strategic choices could remain stagnant and not move forward. Porter defined competitive strategy as *a broad formula for how a business will compete, what its goals should include, and what policies are appropriate to carry out those goals* (Nickols, 2016). Broad, long-term corporate goals and objectives may include a strategy for a general action plan. Such goals might include the nature of the organization, its culture, its leadership, the markets it will enter, the basis to compete, or any other attribute (Nickols, 2016). The importance of intent, seeking advantage over adversaries, objectives of survival and expansion, and utilizing resources with inherent strengths and weaknesses to leverage the advantage successfully are relevant to a business organization. Strategic thinking involves aligning resources to objectives to gain an advantage to maximum limits. This process is logical or creative. Strategy formation is deliberate or emergent. A diverse model of strategic management exists. However, all models include the importance of aligning the dynamics of a business system with its environment to meet long-term objectives. Strategic management aligns with a competitive advantage (Daft, 2016).

Knowledge management is a critical factor for obtaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. When used within the workplace, knowledge is a strength in business activities

throughout work systems, such as a mixture of academics, business factors, governments, creative communities, and media (Ginting, 2020). A combination of these factors within the work system can make the habitat and culture of the workplace and knowledge. Creating intellectual capital from knowledge management can lead to collaborative knowledge and a competitive advantage. Existing knowledge in the organization can produce high-quality work and ideas that can lead to solutions. Intellectual capital is a component of corporate value that may appear more valuable than a tangible asset. Intellectual capital theory, human capital, structural capital, and other knowledge assets are part of a company's intellectual capital, which is the sum of all knowledge in creating the business process (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005). Intellectual capital is a hidden value between market value and book value, and it is the knowledge of social collectivity, scholarly communities, or professional practice. Intellectual capital includes the skills and abilities that enable people to react in new avenues (Ginting, 2020). Intellectual capital is non-monetary and non-physical, which includes creating organizational value and extracting values through knowledge stored in organizational databases, business processes, systems, and relationships (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005).

Knowledge Transfer in the Workplace

Knowledge, skills, abilities, and other information critical to performing organizational tasks competently are needed to ensure success when positions are vacated (Spector, 2013). Once these requirements are defined, candidates can be screened to determine their skill levels in needed areas to find the best fit for that job vacancy (Spector, 2013). Choosing suitable activities to ensure the workforce has the desired skill set to complete a current or future task can be a strategic opportunity for improvement. This approach can save the company resources in various ways by finding the right employee to fill the proper role within the organization. When

employees are in the correct position, they are happier, more likely to stay, and want to grow in the organization. Retaining a qualified pool of employees with skills and abilities for future organizational needs and leadership can add value to the organization's strategic plan and employee commitment and reduce future onboarding costs (Baker, 2017). An industry that is competitive experiences the margins coming under pressure. Different industries have different economic and technical features that may make their basic structure. This structure is susceptible to change, which is important for a firm. This understanding of change in structure can allow managers to determine an effective strategy in the face of competition. Porter argued that a strategy that can change the rules of the competition and create an advantage possesses the traits of a successful strategy. The five-forces of strategy model *allows a firm to see through the complexity and pinpoint those factors critical to competition in its industry, as well as to identify those strategic innovations that would improve the industry's profitability* (Porter, 1985). While a strategy can positively impact, it can also hurt the industry. The strategy can potentially impact price sensitivity, competitive consequences, and lowering of entry barriers. Leaders may take time to include a longer-term perspective to affect the market and its sustainability. Leaders should remain aware of how they impact an industry's potential structure because of size and power (Porter, 1985).

Cost and Operational Efficiency

With a low-cost leadership strategy, the organization can increase its market share by keeping costs lower than its competitors (Daft, 2016). Organizational leaders aggressively seek ways to streamline costs, such as facilities, cost reductions, and tight controls, to produce products or services more efficiently than competitors. Leaders can offer customers the products at a lower price by working with efficient costs. The strategy is about stability rather than taking

risks or seeking new opportunities for innovation or growth (Daft, 2016). Understanding industry structure can result in the desire to create a sustainable competitive strategy, leading to an advantage for a leader concerning their competitors. An organizational manager can complete a value chain analysis that helps them to determine activities that can assist in creating superior value for their consumers and gaining higher profits than the average. *Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is daring, proactive, and innovative. Porter's generic competitive strategies are principal concepts within entrepreneurship and management studies* (Linton & Kask, 2017).

Absorptive capacity may make firms efficient and effective at processing information on demand and, in turn, managing external knowledge flows (Liu et al., 2021). Absorptive capacity complements a firm's flexibility when responding to demand, competition, and technological uncertainty (Patel et al., 2012). Regarding labor costs, boosting productivity and efficiency is an essential issue that absorptive capacity can enhance (Liu et al., 2021).

Innovation and Knowledge Transfer.

The leaders of firms are in a highly competitive, rapidly changing environment where knowledge is the only source of sustaining a competitive advantage (Liu et al., 2021).

Knowledge management involves creating value from intangible assets and creating knowledge using a mixture of different concepts from several areas of intelligence (Ginting, 2020).

Considering the fast-paced which technology is growing and advancing, organizational leaders search for ways to combine external knowledge and opportunities with knowledge available internally to develop new products (Liu et al., 2021). Companies traditionally have 3 alternative generic strategies to achieve a competitive advantage: cost leadership, market differentiation, and niche orientation. However, companies face new challenges, namely globalization, intangibles, and interconnectivity, requiring leaders and managers to understand the changing nature of

competition and adopt additional strategic approaches (Ginting, 2020). Ginting (2020) demonstrated that intangible resources tend to produce a competitive advantage in a competitive landscape, which is the most important intellectual capital because it is difficult to duplicate. Creating a competitive advantage in market conditions with rapid changes can advance an organization in an ever-changing environment where resources and products are easily duplicated (Ginting, 2020). Corporate knowledge can encourage company managers to produce new knowledge and enhance the status of knowledge-based resources. As many workforces retire from the organization, knowledge management is critical to success.

Phased Retirement in the Workplace

Employers and households without substantial employer-paid benefits face a high cost of employee retirement (Rappaport, 2018). One solution is for the organization to phase in a retirement program, allowing older employees to transition into retirement gradually (Kozak, 2018). The program could control the costs for some seasoned workforce and the appropriate transfer of institutional knowledge to the remaining workforce while allowing the individual to remain in the workforce for a few additional years (Kozak). Those who reach retirement age are often experienced employees who contribute valuable business contributions (Rappaport, 2018). In addition, older employees may need to continue to work past the average retirement age for additional income (Rappaport, 2018). Phased retirement options may assist the employer and the employee reduce some of the hardships of retiring from the workforce. The federal government officials adopted a phased retirement program (Clark, 2020). However, fewer than 1,000 employees entered phased retirement, with a workforce of over 2 million retiring each year (Clark). Many people have several steps to go through to exit the labor force. Phased retirement

can include a change in the amount of work, place of work, responsibilities, and a new job after retiring from another job. (Rappaport, 2018).

The federal program, named the Moving Ahead Program, includes half-time work for half-time pay in exchange for forfeiting half of a federal pension while the retiree phases in retirement (Clark, 2020). In addition to the retiree spending at least 20% of their time mentoring, phased retirement does not lead to higher pension benefits when the retiree does leave the retirement plan (Clark, 2020). Terminology concerning career employment and total exit from the labor force includes phased retirement, working during retirement, part-time work, bridge jobs, etc., and may be formal or informal (Rappaport, 2018). Most responsibilities include modified work arrangements and scaled-down duties with the same employer before retirement. (Rappaport, 2018).

Retirees may re-enter the workforce temporarily in similar positions, specific projects, or working as contractors. Employers that offer defined benefit pensions must decide whether to continue pension benefits during rehire or limit benefits by requiring fewer hours worked or specific terms of separation (Rappaport, 2018). Considering a small increase in income for those working half-time in phased retirement, a disincentive may exist for those who are long-term employees covered by the retirement system (Clark, 2020). The average age for new hires within the federal job system rose by 2.9 years, while the mean retirement age increased by almost 5 years since 1998 (Clark, 2020). The projected number of employees eligible to retire will increase from 18.2% in 2018 to almost one-third of all employees by 2022 (Clark, 2020). The Office of Personnel Management's 2018 Federal Workforce Priorities Report includes priorities to plan the retiring workforce, including succession planning and knowledge transfer. In addition, the program can consist of utilizing communication tools, strengthening existing tools

and capacity for human capital data and analytics, broadening opportunities for employee development, enhancing employee recognition programs, and focusing on employee health (Clark, 2020). Succession planning and transfer of knowledge can have a direct impact on phased retirement. Incentives to the individual, implementation, and supervision of the program determine the success of the phased retirement program for specific organizations (Clark, 2020).

Soft Skill Development in the Workplace. It has been noted that the notion of skill is expanding from technical and cognitive conceptualizations to include soft interpersonal and social elements, including a set of skills such as professionalism, attitudes, personality traits, and socio-emotional factors (Hurrell, 2016). Soft skills may be nontechnical and not reliant on abstract reasoning, involving interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities to facilitate mastered performance in particular social contexts (AbuJbara & Worley, 2018; Hurrell, 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2017). Soft skills include oral communication, teamwork, customer handling, and self-presentation (Hurrell, 2016). Developing value-centered approaches to leadership is possible with an intense and intentional focus on behavioral principles and cognitive skills (AbuJbara & Worley, 2018). However, the complexity of interpersonal relationships and workplace environments amplifies the importance of soft skills (beliefs, ways of thinking, and ways of focusing). Soft skills are drivers of success in education and professional careers.

Soft skills include communication and establishing and enhancing customer relationships in service industries to enhance cultural diversity, globalization, and technology in the workplace (AbuJbara & Worley, 2018). Soft skills are in demand by employers (Hurrell, 2016). An employee must possess soft skills and hard skills to stay competitive. Hard skills refer to technical experience, but soft skills are the skills of people who maintain the job (Ibrahim et al., 2017). However, a significant emphasis is on soft and interpersonal skills like emotional and

social intelligence that combine emotional intelligence competencies with interpersonal social *nontechnical* skills.

Customer service work is essential throughout the occupational spectrum (Hurrell, 2016). A growing recognition exists regarding the role of interpersonal skills across occupations with reliance on high-performing work systems that include interdependency and teamwork. Soft skills could contribute to greater leadership effectiveness in management, central to leadership capabilities to excel in vision articulation, communication, influence, and delegation (Hurrell, 2016; AbuJbara & Worley, 2018). Commonly identified leadership soft skills include wisdom and intelligence, perspective-taking, complex problem-solving, motivation, flexibility, collaboration, and teamwork. The development of these skills is not recognized in leadership development programs in favor of the development of hard skills that are definable and measurable. Leadership soft competencies such as communication, compassion, sense-making, sensitivity, responsiveness, flexibility, and problem-solving enable leaders to improve the work culture and motivate followers. Soft skills shown by leadership can help project management with challenges in different phases of projects.

Stretch Assignments in the Workplace

In addition to phased retirement and leadership development, stretch assignments are essential to performance evaluation. One of the best ways to accelerate those with high potential for senior leadership positions is to place them in new assignments that present increasing levels of challenge. Stretch assignments may include working in a different office, leading a specific project team, and exposing the employee to situations involving company resources, markets, and critical products (Wojcik, 2014). Placing employees in challenging situations and allowing

them to stretch beyond their current capabilities helps bridge a gap between current skills and mandatory skills for the task (Preenen et al., 2011).

The demands of such stretch assignments force developing leaders to go beyond their comfort zones, acquire new skills, and cope with the anxiety of uncertainty and risk. Considering demanding work, employees must invest more of their physical, cognitive, and emotional resources into the tasks for a higher level of meaningfulness tied to the experience (Preenen et al., 2011). With each new experience, these leaders grow more adaptive, resourceful, and resilient. As a result, the leaders bring greater capacity to their new challenge and, therefore, the enterprise leader's competence, confidence, and maturity emerge.

Impact of Succession Planning on Leadership Development

The impact of succession planning on leadership development is a mechanism for evaluating a candidate's viability to the senior executive team (Richards, 2008). CEOs refer to a person's achievements in profit and loss terms, aligning outcomes with the organization's goals. Achieving outstanding monetary success is the path to senior corporate leadership since most CEOs relate their success to the organization's profitability. When pressed to indicate whom they relied on most to advise them about senior executive appointments, none of the CEOs referred to the human resource management director (HRM) as a primary source but noted the leadership team as their avenue for information (Richards, 2008). Although some CEOs indicated they would speak to their senior human resource personnel as part of the process, the discussion was irrelevant (Richards, 2008). Succession planning and knowledge transfer can directly impact the organization's leadership development needs. The needs of the organization and retiring employees, incentives to the individual, implementation, and supervision of the program determine the success of leadership development programs (Clark, 2020)

Leadership Development in Health Departments.

According to Chambers (2014), local health department managers are developing leadership on a local level. Supervisors must complete individual training courses for leadership and management skills. On a local level, employees need to take available courses. Courses are not mandatory outside of annual regulatory training. However, some local health departments encourage participation in courses through individual development plans designed to help employees grow (Chambers, 2013-2015).

Job Satisfaction

Satisfaction in the workplace relates to behavior and productivity in daily job duties (Spector, 2013). Satisfaction also relates to a worker's sense of accomplishment and success while on the job and rewards for doing a job well. Employees want to work where they enjoy doing the job, feel well and are rewarded for their effort (Aziri, 2011). Job satisfaction is the crucial ingredient that lends to feelings of fulfillment by receiving recognition, earning income, possibilities of promotion, and achieving goals (Kaliski, 2007).

History of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction by early organizational theorists Abraham Maslow and Frederick Herzberg is a desire to fulfill intrinsic and extrinsic needs (Ting, 1997). An individual employee's job satisfaction reflects how much the characteristics of the job fulfill the person's needs. Job satisfaction is a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that meet satisfaction with their job (Aziri, 2011). With this approach, it is noted that job satisfaction may be under the influence of several different external and environmental factors. Still, it remains an internal feeling that gauges an employee's satisfaction (Aziri, 2011).

Job satisfaction may align directly with the employee's job role within the organization. Job satisfaction is how a person feels about their job (. Factors within the organization influencing job satisfaction include the work environment, the equipment to do a job, coworkers, income, and management. The definition of job satisfaction has changed; it is no longer enough to have a job simply. Employees want to feel that their work is making a difference (Mullins, 2005).

Importance of Job Satisfaction

The importance of job satisfaction can lead to happy employees being productive employees. Unhappy employees have higher absenteeism, lack of loyalty, and lack of enthusiasm (Spector, 2013). The essential features of job satisfaction consist of human values, worker behavior, and utilizing job satisfaction as an indicator of organizational activity. Human values should lead an organization, meaning managers should treat workers respectfully and fairly. Higher levels of employee satisfaction may serve as an indicator of employee productivity (Aziri, 2011). Workers' behaviors depend on their satisfaction level and can impact productivity and other actions relating to the organization (Spector, 1997).

Those satisfied in their job will correlate with positive behavior. In contrast, those unhappy with their job will exhibit negative behavior (Aziri, 2011). Satisfaction levels can indicate organizational activities (Spector, 1997). Measuring satisfaction in different work areas can allow the organization to see where changes may boost performance (Aziri, 2011).

Evaluation Tools

When measuring job satisfaction, the product of different variables can influence the employee's attitude (Ting, 1997; Walker, 2020). Job satisfaction of federal government employees relates to job characteristics, pay satisfaction, promotional opportunity, task clarity, and significance. In addition, other attributes of job satisfaction are skills utilization,

organizational characteristics, organizational commitment, and relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Ting, 1997; Walker, 2020).

The human relations perspective demonstrates that employees' experiences concerning the organizational environment are essential in job attitudes—employee perceptions about job security and opportunities for promotion influence job satisfaction. The survey results found that a perceived lack of promotion opportunities was the most vital reason federal employees resigned from government service (Walker, 2020). The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and the Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS) are tools for gathering information from federal employees. The FEVS conducts annual surveys by the US Office of Personnel Management to obtain perceptions of the workplace environment and job satisfaction among all federal employees nationwide (Leider et al., 2016).

Outcomes of Job Satisfaction

A leadership vision is foundational to Biblical Christ-centered servant leadership; however, it must communicate with others so they know where the leader is taking them and by what values they must adhere to during the mission (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). Such a vision should ignite the leader's passion and encourage followers' commitment (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). Many leaders can set a vision for a company; however, servant leaders usually anticipate a different approach. The difference is *their deep desire to pursue this vision* of modesty, compassion, and commitment to ethical conduct (Page & Wong, 2000). The servant leader creates a vision and then empowers those around them to work toward the completion of the vision. Ensuring an attainable goal can allow employees to know where they are heading and establish work and outcome expectations.

Job Performance

Data from the 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and 2014 Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey showed that correlates of job satisfaction included pay satisfaction, organizational support, and employee involvement (Leider et al., 2016). In the survey, approximately 40% of federal, state, and local staff considered leaving the organization within the next year (Leider et al., 2016). Job performance can relate to how someone feels in their roles or tasks. Job performance can directly link to how satisfied someone feels in their roles or tasks (Leider et al., 2016; Ting, 1997; Walker, 2020;). In general, people tend to need and like jobs that exploit their knowledge and abilities (Walker, 2020). Employees who perform tasks that have a greater level of skill, job significance, and feedback are happier than employees who perform tasks with fewer attributes (Walker, 2020). Employee development can refer to employee training, promotion, safety, and growth (Daft, 2016). The success or failure of the organization depends mainly on employee performance. Therefore, organizational leaders invest vast amounts of money in employee development programs to enhance skills and performance (Hameed & Waheed, 2011). Employees who develop new ideas are active in the workplace.

Employees who develop new ideas are active in the workplace. By developing employees' skills and task ability, an organization can increase output with the same amount of available human capital (Daft, 2016). Satisfied employees with pay and promotional opportunities are likely to develop positive attitudes toward their place of employment (Ting, 1997). Several studies show that the deterioration of pay and lack of promotional opportunities align with job dissatisfaction among public employees and their tendency to leave civil service. Public employees at the local level have a more significant opportunity to interact with citizens and provide services to their communities; employees who can see the results of their labor are likely to have greater job satisfaction (Walker, 2020).

Productivity

Job satisfaction is a primary factor in an organization's efficiency and effectiveness (Aziri, 2011). Influential leaders can create higher morale, more productivity, and success for the company. Seventy five percent of workers voluntarily left their employers because of their supervisors. The conventional wisdom is that people do not leave their jobs; they leave their bosses (Mowll, 2016). Organizational leaders run the risk of decreased productivity with vacant positions (Addison, 2020). Leadership can positively impact employee satisfaction and job productivity. Organizations such as General Electric and Chrysler turned around from the brink of bankruptcy into the world's most profitable organizations through the effective leadership of Jack Welch and Lee Iacocca (Robbins & Coulter, 2007).

The mission of public health is to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life for the United States population through the core functions of public health, including assessment, policy development, and assurance (Leider et al., 2016). Approximately 300,000 public health employees work at the federal (20%), state (30%), and local (50%) levels (Beck et al., 2014). Each of these levels of government is essential to the public health enterprise. The preconceived notion of unhappy public health employees is that they are less productive in job roles and likely to leave, resulting in high levels of turnover (Durst & DeSantis, 1997). Furthermore, organizational and individual performance declines because workers who intend to leave are less efficient and effective (Leider et al., 2016). Combining employee involvement techniques and greater job satisfaction may contribute to higher productivity and greater efficiency (Durst & DeSantis, 1997). Job satisfaction can lead to higher longevity in job roles (Walker, 2020). Those who are in job roles longer tend to have more knowledge and comfort in their job roles, leading to better efficiency (Walker, 2020).

Impact of Succession Planning on Job Satisfaction

The importance of job satisfaction results in many negative consequences, such as a lack of loyalty, increased absenteeism, and accidents (Aziri, 2011). Task clarity refers to the degree to which job tasks and the rules that affect how to perform them are communicated to individuals (Ting, 1997). Individuals are happy if their jobs contribute to the organization's mission. Succession planning is how an organization develops its plan to meet its most critical employment needs (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). Assessing and evaluating the drivers of employees can allow organizational leaders to encourage employees to develop themselves in the appropriate direction the organization needs to fill roles.

Impact of Succession Planning on Job Satisfaction in Health Departments

Researchers postulated that individuals are attracted to organizations that they perceive as having similar values (Gebbie et al., 2004). Many individuals come to public service to satisfy their beliefs and desire to serve the public and the community's needs (Leider et al., 2016). These individuals tend to place less importance on pay and promotion but rather on public spirit motivation. Civil service through the public health sector includes opportunities to satisfy the desire to help others in the community where they live (Tilson & Gebbie, 2004). In addition, employees may focus on characteristics that result in a positive work environment. Retaining institutional knowledge through employees is especially important in the public sector, which experiences high levels of change (Leider et al., 2016).

Turnover

The number of employees leaving the workforce depends on different factors, including voluntary turnover, promotions, and retirement (Addison, 2020). Employees vacating positions can lead to a lack of agency knowledge, with trained employees not fully ready to assume

leadership positions (Addison, 2020). Consequently, leaders in the public health field can expect to see a significant turnover rate (Leider et al., 2016).

History of Employee Turnover

A study found that 38% of state health agency employees intend to leave governmental public health (Leider et al., 2016). High employee turnover led to loss of expertise and institutional knowledge, high costs, and decreased organizational performance. Retaining institutional knowledge through employees is vital in the public sector, which experiences high change levels (Goodman et al., 2013). Voluntary employee turnover occurs when an employee decides to exit an agency. If a personnel loss is not strategic, leadership and institutional knowledge gaps will develop (Addison, 2020). Additionally, the cost to recruit and train new employees can lead to 50% to 200% of the employee's annual salary (Leider et al., 2016).

Costs occur when an employee leaves an organization. The costs can occur in recruiting, hiring, training, and loss of production from the vacant position (Leider et al., 2016). To minimize turnover, an organization needs to determine the factors that impact voluntary turnover (Addison, 2020). Employees who receive the appropriate development in the workplace tend to have lower intentions to leave. Then, the employee may demonstrate higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Addison, 2020). Employees who feel they receive fair treatment and have accurate performance evaluations will remain on the job for a substantial period (Addison, 2020). A decrease in the workforce can mean gaps in critical areas of the organization. Consequently, succession planning and recruitment are critical to organizational practices and strategic planning (Preenen et al., 2011).

Choosing Outside Applicants

Board directors hire CEOs outside their firms (Ors et al., 2013). A shift in generations in the workforce includes job loyalty and job hopping instead of progressing the corporate hierarchy (Sabina & Colwell, 2018). When facing external competition, internal candidates may increase productivity. Middle-line managers may not demonstrate as much productivity when facing internal recruitment if no external pressures exist. If a board member is not happy with the results of the business, they may bring in an external candidate to take command (Mason, 1992). An external candidate can bring a fresh perspective without emotional feeling tied to the organization (Mason, 1992; Sabina & Colwell, 2018). Hiring from the outside comes with risks, including the ability of the candidate to adapt to the organizational culture (Mason, 1992). New external management may not always receive support from existing management, making new ideas difficult to implement (Mason, 1992). Although a hiring committee may evaluate an external candidate before hiring, proper handling of the job performance is not certain.

Choosing Internal Candidates

Hiring an internal candidate from within the organization allows employees to see that advancement is possible, making entry-level jobs attractive (Roach & Dixon, 2006). Internal hires allow the organizational leaders to choose from a sample of employees who fit the firm well. Selection is the most crucial element in the process, as an organization's managers and staffing departments are responsible for selecting individuals who display characteristics that match the organizational needs (Sabina & Colwell, 2018). This strategy enhances employee and organization rights (Roach & Dixon, 2006; Mason, 1992). Hiring from within may appear less expensive (Roach & Dixon, 2006; Ors et al., 2013). After selecting external candidates, internal candidates who felt overlooked for promotional openings may consider leaving the organization to search for employment at another organization (Mason, 1992). When addressing internal

succession planning, managers must invest time, energy, and resources in aspiring leaders who may not obtain higher positions (Mason, 1992; Sabina & Colwell, 2018).

Impact of Succession Planning on Turnover

Though rarely utilized in the public sector, succession planning is frequently used in the private sector (Addison, 2020). However, with baby boomers now exiting the workforce, organizations find themselves scrambling to find a pool of those with leadership potential (Walker, 2020). While these positions need replacements, it is also essential to build a continuous pool of talented employees (Walker, 2020). By utilizing succession planning, leaders in the organization can focus on employees who may be asked to take on additional responsibilities in their job areas (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). When the organization invests in its employees, those employees feel as if the organization cares about them and tend to have lower intentions to leave the organization (Addison, 2020). Evaluating employees as they begin can allow the organization to start development and skills early on (Walker, 2020). A successful organization is not one that just has a collection of successful individuals but has also created them (Carr, N.D.). A succession strategy encouraging up-and-coming managers to develop talents and gain experience can make a difference between success and failure (Carr, N.D.).

Anticipated and Discovered Themes

. Local health departments have different practices to prepare staff to cover workforce turnover and absences. Cross-training is a method of compensating for absences in all health departments. The process allows interim employees to fill in until human resources hire a replacement. The local and regional health department staff share the same parent organization and face the same barriers. Some will face individual obstacles reflecting the size or location of the health department and the local government rules in their respective counties.

Most employers focus on the hiring process and the lag time of the job approval process before the interview, background check, and final hiring process. The State of Tennessee has no formal succession plan that is constant among all health departments. Some department officials were unfamiliar with the idea of succession planning. Some felt that the approach was more cross-training than actual succession planning. Localized succession plans do not guarantee that a candidate is the right person for the job. Successful succession plans progressed naturally through the different levels of management, and other employees expressed frustration at being overlooked for job openings.

Summary of the Literature Review

Over time, leaders have refined the concept of succession planning to meet their mission, but it should still be used to project employee turnover, identify future vacant positions and other measures based on agency needs (Addison, 2020). Different levels of staff offices had respondents demonstrating they were planning to retire, including CDC (19%), SHA Central office (24%), BCH LHDs (22%), and other LHDs and RHDs (24%) (Leider et al., 2016). In addition to retirement, more than 25% of staff at the CDC and SHA Central office, compared to almost 20% of LHD respondents, the state considered leaving before next year (Leider et al., 2016) Among PH WINS respondents (SHA Central Office, BCHC, and other LHDs and RHDs) who were not planning to retire, 5% of staff indicated that they were considering leaving for another job in governmental public health. Three percent indicated they were searching for a government job but not in public health. Two percent indicated they were searching for a nongovernmental job in public health. Two percent indicated that they were searching for a nongovernmental job but not in public health, and 8% indicated that they wanted to find another type of job (Leider et al., 2016).

Summary of Section 1 and Transition

By engaging in succession planning, leaders can ensure they have the right staff and engage them in leadership development programs (Addison, 2020). Leaders should remain active in the secession process and decision-making to meet the organization's future needs. The succession plan links to the strategic plan with flexibility and improvement when changes occur. In public health and civil service organizations, gaps in employment competencies can hinder the staff from serving the public and the community. Craig et al. (2012) noted that public service employee turnover reflects political preference, leading to a lack of empowerment.

Section 2: The Project

The State of Tennessee Department of Health managers participated in annual evaluations for the Excellence Program through the Tennessee Center of Performance Excellence, a state-level excellence award program. The state level of an Excellence Award comes before pursuing the Malcolm Baldrige Excellence Award. Throughout the evaluation and feedback processes, succession planning is an opportunity for improvement on multiple levels of the organization.

The leaders evaluate succession planning practices on the local level. Once processes are complete, a best-practice systematic approach to creating a replicable process across state health departments longevity or turnover occurs. Local health department managers experience higher levels of turnover; therefore, they determine the relationship between succession planning, employee productivity, and turnover that may allow the health department to increase its talent pool and lower turnover rates.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore succession planning efforts in public health departments across East Tennessee. The study included succession planning practices within 4 local health departments, 2 large and 2 small, in East Tennessee and barriers and opportunities for improvements. By identifying different efforts within the sample organizations, potential challenges and obstacles to successfully implementing succession planning emerged. This study can apply in developing a formal succession planning process model within the Department of Health. A formalized succession plan includes recognizing and training individuals as leaders to succeed in vacant positions. The planning and training process can leave the company in a better position to achieve organizational objectives and goals without a long lapse while extensive training occurs for new leaders.

Role of the Researcher

“Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit” (Proverbs 12:17 ESV). Social researchers must clarify their roles in utilizing qualitative methodology to make their research credible. Qualitative researchers can assume various roles in the research setting (Unluer, 2012). The roles can range from complete membership of the group studied (an insider) to complete strangers (an outsider). The researcher's duties include aligning methodologies with research goals, using a range of tools to acquire information and interpret data, writing up reports and presenting findings, identifying trends and patterns, and protecting confidential information.

Action of the Researcher.

I conducted interviews with participants through virtual conferencing or phone calls, depending on which method the participant preferred. Interviews included open-ended questions

to gain information about the types of programs these organizations developed, how they identify and nurture talent, lessons learned, and any personal anecdotes. The interview responses received an evaluation for commonalities in barriers, current practices, and best practices. The interviews were under the assumption that leadership would provide truthful answers concerning their current practices. The data will remain confidential when presenting it. I read the research responses from the participants' perspective for potential confidentiality issues.

(Morse & Coulehan, 2015).

Avoiding Personal Bias

Bias is commonly understood as any influence that leads to a distortion in the results of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Qualitative researchers agree that rigor and trustworthiness are pertinent to qualitative research's reflexive, subjective nature (Galdas, 2017). Several strategies for upholding these concepts during the qualitative research process developed. In addition to triangulation to deter biases in the research process, bracketing can assist in limiting the tainting of research (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing can refer to refraining from judgment or staying away from the everyday, commonplace way of seeing things (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). Bracketing can be applied to separate the researcher's personal experiences.

Many aspects of bracketing practice, such as personal reflection, journal writing, and extensive literature review, are almost universal habits among learners and researchers (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). Validation strategies can include using the researcher to check the accuracy of the account by triangulating the data, discovering negative case analysis, and clarifying researcher bias. Another process was using participants for validating by member checking feedback, prolonged engagement in the field, collaborating with participants, enabling external audits, generating a detailed description, and having a peer review or debriefing

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study included a mixed methodological triangulation by reflecting historical data from previous applications regarding succession planning practices through different award programs. Interviews with staff in different leadership positions will also be conducted to provide different vantage points. In addition, applications and interviews occurred at multiple locations under the Department of Health.

Research Methodology

The research design reflects the type of data collected and how it will apply to the analysis. While some paradigms include a dominant methodology, no prohibition exists for using a single methodology. (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The design reflects the appropriate collection approach, who is participating, and which instrument applies in the data collection and the data analysis process. The design reflects the appropriate collection approach, who is participating, and which instrument applies in the data collection and analysis process. (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). An interpretivist paradigm aligns with research methodologies and methods to gather and analyze qualitative data. A flexible methodology and a case study approach were appropriate for a robust collection.

Discussion of Flexible Design

Flexible design is appropriate for freedom in the data collection and analysis. Qualitative research is open to interpretation. A flexible design allows the researcher to gather information for a *bigger-picture* mentality (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Feedback from the research questions may change the course of action depending on responses and new information (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Data collected utilizing a flexible methodology allows the researcher to develop variability in the research structure and relationships between components throughout the collection of the research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

Discussion of Case Study

Creswell and Poth (2018) defined case study research as a qualitative approach appropriate for exploring a real-life, modern restricted system or multiple systems with in-depth data collection involving multiple sources. The approach reflects a case explanation and themes. Defining characteristics of case study research can include identifying a specific case defined or described within certain parameters. The case study intends to present an in-depth understanding of the case, which may have different approaches, identify themes, and conclude with conclusions about the overall meaning of the case(s) (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Case study types can include single-instrument case studies, collective case studies, and intrinsic case studies. A case study methodology is to study real-life cases in progress, so information is accurate, not by time and when identifiable boundaries exist. Procedures for conducting a case study include determining if the approach is appropriate, identifying the study's intent, and selecting a case. In addition, the study is essential for developing procedures for collecting data, specifying the analysis approach, and reporting the case study and lessons learned (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I utilized the case study approach for this research project by asking participants open-ended interview questions.

Discussion of Method for Triangulation

Qualitative researchers are integral to the process, and separation from their values and opinions is undesirable (Galdas, 2017). Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that validity is an evolving construct that leads to understanding traditional and contemporary perspectives for qualitative researchers and readers. The concern is whether the researcher is transparent and critically self-reflective about their preconceptions, relationship dynamics, and analytic focus about how the data emerged, analyzed, and presented (Galdas, 2017). Triangulation can be

utilized to reduce personal bias in research. The researcher will utilize mixed methodological triangulation in this project to reduce bias.

Summary of Research Methodology

I interviewed participants through virtual conferences or phone calls at the participant's preference. This included asking multi-level research questions to encourage dialogue with open-ended questions. Interviews included open-ended questions to understand the types of programs these organizations developed, how they identify and nurture talent, lessons learned, and any personal anecdotes. The interview responses received evaluations for commonalities in barriers, current practices, and best practices as evidenced by outcomes. The data collected using the flexible case-study methodology gave me a well-rounded picture of the data.

Participants

Leaders came from local health departments. Thirteen health departments were in the region; some have county directors covering more than one county. Four health departments were appropriate, including two that were defined as large health departments and two that were small. Additional leadership included nursing and clerical supervisors because they supervise most staffing types. The identified staff were involved in designing the succession planning strategies within the local level of the health departments. The chosen participants included county directors, office supervisors, and nursing supervisors. By recognizing different efforts within the sample organizations, potential challenges and obstacles to successful implementation emerged.

Population and Sampling

According to the State of Tennessee website (www.tn.gov), each county in Tennessee has a county health department, with some larger counties having multiple facilities. A total of 89

primarily rural county health departments operates under the direct supervision of the Tennessee Department of Health, headquartered in Nashville. The six larger urban counties have health departments that operate under local governance but work closely with the Tennessee Department of Health. Every health department has a similar employee structure. The nursing supervisor (NS) has direct reports for the nursing and specific program staff. The office supervisor (OS) has direct reports made for the clerical staff. The county director oversees the OS and the NS. These three positions are part of the senior leadership and local management teams.

Discussion of Population

The health departments operate under similar directives; however, some leniency and autonomy exist locally. Considering the departments' flexibility, I included two health departments from smaller counties and two from larger counties—a prevalence aligned for the individual characteristics of things that work in either size county. The participants work for the state of Tennessee at a local health department within the East Tennessee Region. Participants were in a leadership position and familiar with the application and writing process for TNCPE. The nursing supervisors and county directors obtained advanced degrees within the position's criteria; however, the office supervisors have a high school diploma as required. These positions structure the local management team in most health departments and are centralized to decision-making.

Discussion of Sampling

I wanted to emphasize those who previously underwent the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE) application process. Previously, the health commissioner required that all health departments apply through the TNCPE organization at level 1. The level

indicates interest in the award program. The process does not stipulate submitting a complete application, but it does include an organizational chart in addition to answering basic business profile questions. Several health department officials decided to go further and apply for higher levels. Applications reviewed determined which included succession planning (with identified opportunities for improvement) and selected those contributing to this study.

Sampling Method

. I determined the feasibility of collecting data from all the participants and the sample size representing a larger population. Sampling methods can generally be split into probability or random sampling and non-probability or non-random sampling (Taherdoost, 2016). A non-probability sampling method was appropriate for the case study method. Non-probability sampling applies in case studies with small samples intended to explore a real-life phenomenon instead of making a statistical inference (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, purposive, or judgmental sampling is a strategy in which specific subjects are chosen because they can provide important information that other individuals could not provide (Maxwell, 1996).

Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is a list of cases to select from a small population sample (Taherdoost, 2016). The frame should reflect representatives of the population. For this project, the frame included health departments in the East Tennessee Region. The four large counties were Anderson, Blount, Hamblen, and Sevier. The other health departments were small or medium, which included Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Loudon, Roane, and Scott counties. Collectively, the listed county health departments formed the sampling frame.

Desired Sample and Sample Size

Leaders from the qualified health departments were appropriate for the study. As leaders in the local health department determine which methods are appropriate for local succession planning, they were the participants interviewed. The health department staff at the higher levels of the TNCPE award program provided the most insight into current succession planning practices and how they relate to turnover and satisfaction. In health departments, leadership teams often comprise county directors, nursing supervisors, and office supervisors (Chambers, 2013-2015). Four local health departments were appropriate as participants; the total sample size included management teams from those departments, totaling approximately 12 individuals, pending the characteristics of the leadership team.

Summary of Population and Sampling

I determined the target population, sampling technique, and appropriate sample size. Non-probability sampling was appropriate to gather information from subjects deemed adequately exposed to succession planning and can provide insight into their current practices. The sample came from health department employees within the sampling frame with additional award levels through the TNCPE program beyond the required Level 1 application.

Data Collection and Organization

Qualitative data includes experiences as they occur in the lives of participants. Data comprises spoken or written words that serve as evidence for descriptions (Polkinghorne, 2005). Data sources may include interviews, observations, artifacts, and documents (Polkinghorne, 2005; Gill et al., 2008). The most common methods, especially for qualitative data in healthcare, are interviews and focus groups (Gill et al.). Qualitative methods can lead to a deeper meaning and bigger picture of research than quantitative methods (Gill et al.).

Data Collection Plan

Depending on the type of research conducted, different methods can apply to collect data (Gill et al., 2008). In the research, a qualitative approach was appropriate to collect information through interviews with leaders of health departments. To gather quality data, participants received an evaluation for the best fit. This process included reviewing submitted TNCPE applications for awarded performance levels. Those health departments in the East Tennessee region received awards at least a Level 2 were the participants. By utilizing those familiar with succession planning and identifying their practices for improvement and effectiveness, more quality data emerged for best practices. The study included a mixed methodological triangulation with historical data from previous applications submitted regarding succession planning practices through different award programs. Interviews with staff in different leadership positions were appropriate to provide different perspectives. Finally, applications and interviews occurred at more locations under the Department of Health.

Instruments

I conducted the research using person-to-person interviews. The purpose of the research interview was to explore individuals' views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations on specific matters. Three fundamental types of research interviews include structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Gill et al., 2008). Structured interviews are generally a set of verbally administered questions with little deviation and no follow-up questions to responses (Gill et al., 2008). Structured interviews are quick and easy to administer; however, they include limited participant responses with little use of in-depth research.

Unstructured interviews occur with little organization or structure (Gill et al., 2008). Unstructured interviews may begin with an open-ended question that reflects the participant's

experience (Gill et al., 2008). The interviews continue based on the initial response (Gill et al., 2008). Without a predetermined structure, interviews take more time than necessary, lasting several hours (Gill et al., 2008). Unstructured interviews are likely challenging to manage and confusing, but their use is significant when little information is available about the subject (Gill et al., 2008; Polkinghorne, 2005).

Semi-structured interviews consist of several important questions that help define the areas explored and allow the researcher or participant to diverge from pursuing an idea or response in more detail (Gill et al., 2008). I used This interview format frequently in healthcare, as it provides participants with some guidance to discuss. This research project included the flexibility for the discovery of information that is important to participants. An interview guide was appropriate in this project for standard questions [See Appendix A]. I used the guide for open-ended questions and answers with follow-up questions to provide a robust perspective from the participants.

Data Organization Plan

Public offices must have transparency through Sunshine laws; therefore, participants received anonymity to ensure complete participation in data collection. Most ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects include confidentiality or anonymity and informed consent to maintain dignity (Behi & Nolan, 1995). The participant can only trust that the researcher will guarantee that their information will remain confidential throughout the presentation of the data's results. The participants complied with the expectations that I would present the data as intended. Presenting information as intended can lend credibility to the research and the researcher. After selecting the participants, the researcher can complete interviews. I recorded the interviews and took notes. Once the interview was complete, I

transcribed and saved the information to a Word document. The file received password protection, and an assigned number-maintained confidentiality. The data collected was then compiled and analyzed for recurrent themes and outcomes. Themes included specific practices with successful outcomes according to TNCPE measures or measures by the organization for success.

Summary of Data Collection & Organization

I sought to ensure the confidentiality of each participant by excluding names and keeping data on a protected flash drive. In addition, the interviews involved voice recording and note-taking. These notes received analysis for emergent themes. The information compiled into findings describing the relationship between success planning practices and employee turnover, productivity, and engagement.

Data Analysis

Numerous techniques exist for analyzing data. Considering the appropriate choice is to provide high-end quality data, the researcher must review and select the best fit for analysis. The analysis needs to be completed in a way that includes findings logically and sensibly. The researcher can identify ideas during collection and develop a code or theme for analyzing data.

Emergent Ideas

Ideas are read as the researcher reviews the data, which includes reading to get a sense of the database (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher should make notes or memos in the margin. These notes can include ideas or thoughts that occur as an essential concept. The researcher should prioritize throughout the analysis and have a process for sorting the memos and embedding strategies. Recording emergent ideas early in the process can assist the researcher in connecting steps and creating an integrated theory.

Coding Themes

A code is the label a researcher attaches to a particular piece of data (Fade, 2011). In qualitative data, such as transcripts, a piece may include a single word, a group of words, a sentence, or a paragraph. Recording the rationale behind a coding memo is necessary. Essentially, codes are for everything within the transcript that interests the researcher or potential aspects of coding (Fade, 2011; Swift & Tischler, 2010). This process allows the researcher to review the data in response to specific research questions (Swift & Tischler, 2010).

The theme includes relating codes (Fade, 2011). Some researchers relate themes into categories but will often start to see issues clustering together from the moment they start collecting data. Recording the observations allows the researcher to avoid overlooking valuable thoughts without imposing structure too early in the analytical process and inhibiting novel insights. Recording the rationale behind a coding memo is necessary (Fade, 2011). Essentially, codes are for everything within the transcript that interests the researcher or potential aspects of coding (Fade, 2011; Swift & Tischler, 2010).

Interpretations

Some researchers choose not to go beyond the transcription or reporting by the interviewee (literal coding), while others will perform interpretive coding reflecting on the inference from the data (Fade, 2011). Braun and Clarke (2006) advised working systematically while coding, paying full and equal attention to all the data. Coding has the potential to go on indefinitely; stopping the coding is necessary when the information is no longer adding value (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Representation

Data representation is a convention for arranging things in the physical world to enable coding and decoding information by suitable automatic systems. Understanding principles and issues of data representation is essential for researchers because only those who understand that digital objects in their care represent information can take practical steps to ensure that the information is not lost. The long-term sustainability of digital objects is through the methods of data representation and tradeoffs between different courses of action assessed with an understanding of how the information reflects physical objects). To represent information and create and sustain a direct analogy between the information and the physical representation, the type of physical representation should correspond to the operations or information presented (Borovsky, 2014).

An analogy of properties between the representation and the represented is analog. A fundamental property of an analog representation of information is that representations with similar physical properties embody similar things. Small differences in the state of a representation correspond to small differences in the information represented and have different meanings. A consequence of small errors in the representation will result in small (though often tolerable) errors in the results of a calculation (Sperberg-McQueen, 2012).

A different representation aligns with a symbolic relation between an object and its representation; the physical representation serves to record a metaphorical expression or notation, and the expression has an arbitrary relation to the information (Borovsky, 2014). The data representations include modern computer systems, all of which align with representation. The physical phenomena represent sequences of binary digits (zero or one) and are read as integers, real numbers, characters, or other *primitive* data types. These representations are digital

from using binary digits as a fundamental building block (generally from the similarity of the representations to the use of fingers) (Sperberg-McQueen, 2012). The fundamental property of digital representations is that they are on a finite number of discrete symbols to represent information. Minor errors occur in the physical representation of information, such as. The accidental flipping of a single bit can often lead to erratic results.

Text can occur by a scanned image on a written page, in which the data format records information about the hue and brightness of the light from different points. This process is an analog representation of the text (or the page). The text (and the page) can have a sequence of characters that represent a distinct pattern of bits, with no physical appearance of the paper but the identities of the symbols to encode the text (Sperberg-McQueen, 2012). Analog representations often mimic physical attributes without distinction between those that bring meaning and those that do not. However, digital representations include understanding the properties of the thing represented. Typically, digital representations have better access to information of interest than analog representations (Borovsky, 2014).

Analysis for Triangulation

The study included a mixed methodological triangulation with historical data from previous applications regarding succession planning practices through different award programs. Interviews with staff in various leadership positions were appropriate to provide different perspectives. In addition, applications and interviews were conducted at more than a single location under the Department of Health to collect information from various data points.

Summary of Data Analysis

When choosing a data analysis technique, a decision is necessary to determine what the analysis results mean. The technique should match the desired outcome and purpose. Many

qualitative researchers work within strategies of inquiry that may promote the use of analytical techniques (Swift & Tischler, 2010). However, regardless of whether the researcher is working within a strategy, the research method must appear appropriate for answering the research question (s) and match the philosophical assumptions about ontology, epistemology, and methodology for the overall design of a study.

Reliability and Validity

Validity

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is an evolving construct that needs an understanding of traditional and contemporary perspectives to inform the work of qualitative researchers and readers. Qualitative research approaches can align in a quantitative-focused environment. Using different terminology, researchers found certain qualitative equivalents parallel to traditional quantitative approaches. Some terms include credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as equivalents for internal validation, external validation, reliability, and objectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some methods for ensuring the operationalization of these terms include triangulation of data sources, methods, and prolonged engagement.

In addition, the other types of validation include triangulation, construct validation, face validation, and catalytic validation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These terms are unique and include ironic validation, paralogical evaluation, rhizomatic evaluation, and voluptuous validation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Validation strategies can include the researcher checking the accuracy of the account by triangulating data, discovering negative case analysis, and clarifying researcher bias. The participants validate by member checking feedback and using others beyond researchers by enabling external audits, generating detailed descriptions, and having a peer

review or debriefing (). Data saturation occurs when no new information emerges to replicate the study. Consequently, the ability to obtain additional new information no longer exists, and further coding is no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data description gains from relevant collection methods appear valuable in assisting the process, coupled with an appropriate research study design that includes the best opportunity to answer the research question. A follow-up interview allows the interviewer and the participant to reflect on the discussion in the first interview, allowing new insights or aspects to emerge (Polkinghorne, 2005). The follow-up allows the researcher to clarify questions or test interpretations with the participant. This approach can lead to more data and enhanced validity.

Reliability

Qualitative researchers agree that trustworthiness is pertinent to qualitative research's reflexive and subjective nature (Galdas, 2017). The trustworthiness or consistency of a study reflects the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods to ensure the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016). Researchers should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for a study that leads to worthy consideration by readers (Connelly, 2016). Qualitative researchers accept the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985). These criteria include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability; they later added authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The reliability of qualitative research occurs in several ways, including the intercoder agreement (the use of multiple coders). Procedures for assessing intercoder agreement can include establishing a common platform for coding, developing, and sharing the codebook among coders, applying the codebook to transcripts, assessing and reporting intercoder agreement among researchers, and revising the codebook (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Bracketing

Bias is any influence that distorts a study's results (Polit & Beck, 2014). Bracketing can refer to refraining from judgment or staying away from the commonplace of seeing things (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). Bracketing applies as a way for the researcher to separate their own experiences from the study. Many aspects of bracketing practice, such as personal reflection, journal writing, and extensive literature review, are universal habits among learners and researchers.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

The constructs used for validity were a) clarifying researcher bias, b) member checking and seeking participant feedback, and c) collaborating with participants. Data triangulation was appropriate for gathering data from multiple sources, such as interviews, note-taking, and archived data through TNCPE applications. In addition to triangulation to discourage biases, bracketing can reduce the spoiling of the research (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing refers to refraining from judgment or staying away from the commonplace of seeing things (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). Data reliability in research can reflect an intercoder agreement with a common platform for coding.

Summary of Section 2 and Transition

The research included local practices that formulate a best-practice systematic approach to creating a replicable process across state health departments and its relationships to employee productivity, longevity, and turnover. I interviewed participants by virtual conferencing or phone calls, depending on which method the participant preferred. Interviews included open-ended questions to understand the types of programs these organizations developed, identify and

nurture talent, lessons learned, and personal anecdotes. The interviews received an evaluation for commonalities in barriers and current and best practices.

An interpretive paradigm aligns with research methodologies and methods to gather and analyze qualitative data. A flexible methodology and a case study approach are for robust data collection (Yin, 2003). The case study approach allows the researcher to conduct an open-ended interview with participants. Leaders from the qualified health departments were in the study. I strived to ensure the confidentiality of each participant. In addition, each interview received a recording with voice recording and note-taking. I compiled and analyzed emergent themes. The results revealed the relationship between successful planning practices and employee turnover, productivity, and engagement. The discussion regarding the findings of these interviews is in the next section.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In section 3, I provided an overview of the study, the research findings, how they relate to the research questions, and how the project applied in professional practice. I added a biblical perspective and the relation to the field of study. Recommendations for future study, personal reflection, and a summary of the study's importance are concluded in section 3.

Overview of the Study

In the qualitative case study, I sought to explore succession planning efforts in public health departments across East Tennessee. Senior leaders in nonprofits and government agencies face the challenge of working through succession planning because of hierarchical tiers and budget limitations. Offering incentives is difficult for employee development. Top leaders in government sectors without succession plans face higher turnover rates of employees and less consistency (Ballaro & Polk, 2017; Harrell (2016) stated that a lack of preparedness is part of the

problem, as *CEOs are being poorly replaced*. The board of directors' neglects to find the right man or woman for the job.

Effective succession planning at the local level of government or nonprofits can lead to the continued operation of essential government functions. The negative impact on government efficiency demonstrates a need for succession planning to impact local communities better (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). Study results indicated that approximately 40% of new CEOs fail to meet performance expectations in the first 18 months at the organization (Harrell, 2016). Succession planning can set the stage for employee retention and potentially increase organizational performance (Baker, 2017). Having formalized hiring strategies and succession processes works better to manage current employee expectations and ensure that a talent pool of qualified individuals exists (Sederstrom, 2018). In public health and civil service organizations, gaps in employment competencies can hinder the government from serving the public and the community (Addison, 2020).

The literature reflects the relationships between succession planning in the private and public sectors; however, not much relates to health department operations. A void exists in the literature on succession planning practices in health departments in East Tennessee and their impact on employee morale and productivity. In the study, I sought to fill the gap by asking leaders of local health departments what practices were in place locally and at the level of the parent organization, which holds the power to create and implement processes. Leaders within the health departments included the county director, nursing supervisor, and office supervisor.

The research questions for this project included determining current succession planning practices and how they relate to employee productivity and turnover. To answer these questions, I selected leadership team members from those health departments who had applied and received

level 2 or higher awards from TNCPE. I had to obtain the State of Tennessee Department of Health's permission to interview the staff.

After obtaining consent from the parties, meetings were set up with the appropriate participants. The participants received 15 questions (see Appendix A) highlighting succession planning practices while staying within the conceptual framework. During the interviews, I asked open-ended questions with personal observances or interactions. The individual's responses included first-hand experience with practices and happenings in the workplace centering around the hiring process. I provided files with initials to protect the identity of the participants. Participants have a number to identify within the research text (P1, P2, P3, etc.). The interviews received transcription and were reviewed while looking for themes.

Presentation of the Findings

After recording and transcribing the interviews, I shared the responses with the participants. The participants received recorded interviews. In addition, I used bracketing to refrain from personal bias. Bracketing refers to refraining from judgment or staying away from the commonplace way of seeing things (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). Bracketing is the practice of separating personal experiences from study. Many aspects of bracketing practice, such as personal reflection, journal writing, and extensive literature review, are universal habits among learners and researchers. I used personal reflection throughout the responses and aggregation of themes to reduce personal bias. The responses collected were reviewed for commonalities and themes. Several themes emerged from the participants, while some were developing among the majority.

Themes Discovered

The first and most prevalent theme reflected a lack of formal succession plans and a disconnect between the parent organization and the local management teams. The second theme centered around the time and productivity lost when hiring new employees. The third theme included a discussion of employee morale and feeling valued. In summary, I obtained precious feedback from the staff. The staff provided first-hand knowledge and interaction with current practices. The staff provided valuable input into the questions asked. Some participants did need clarifying questions, leading me to believe that some staff do not fully understand how the organization carries out specific practices. The situation is that employees accept the buy-in from their employer to provide that feeling of value and that they are making a difference.

Interpretation of the Themes

The following presentation of the findings from the qualitative study contains themes and stories that address the original research questions. The compiled answers came from 15 interview questions provided by the leadership participants within the local health departments in East Tennessee. In addition to answering the interview questions, the findings contain references from the literature in section 2 and the conceptual framework. The core concentration of the study included succession planning. Spector (2013) stated that succession planning is a process involving top-level management regularly reviewing employees at the level within the department that may portray leadership and other traits.

Theme One- Lack of Formalized Plan and Trickle Down

The first major theme found in the study was narrative responses to questions 1, 2, 11, 12, and 13. Each of these questions prompted participants to speak about personal experiences they had with succession planning. For example, question 1 indicated how the participant defines

succession planning within the organization. Questions 2, 11, 12, and 13 indicated to the participants to define how the organization transports certain succession planning practices. These interview questions aligned with research question 1, which indicates which practices health departments use in East Tennessee. The following sections were recurrent among leaders.

Defining Succession Planning

The first prevalent theme is the lack of a definition for succession planning within the Department of Health. After interviewing the participants, I found that they clearly had different ideas of what succession planning entails. P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, and P12 stated they were unaware of what succession planning meant. I provided a definition to proceed with the interview. Different participants said that they felt the department either does not have a succession plan or a fully developed one. In response to question 2, P2 stated, “I think they are very much behind the curve in that they wait until a position is empty to post it and to interview and to fill.” In response to question 13, asking how the department could improve in relation to succession planning, several respondents answered the theme of needing a plan. P1 answered, “It’s hard to improve on something they don’t have.” This process can allow qualified candidates to transition effectively into vacated leadership positions. Government leaders should continue to run smoothly in times of transition. In public health and civil service organizations, gaps in employment competencies can hinder the government from serving the public and the community (Addison, 2020).

Lack of Trickle Down to Local Offices

Question 12 indicated what practices were in place to promote succession planning. Almost all participants felt that the organization prepares through interim replacements rather

than succession planning. P3 relayed practices include “having someone with similar job duties perform the needed duties until a replacement is hired.” P4 stated,

Someone that acts in that job role will come cover, but they are still expected to be doing their job as well. You aren't getting a full presence. While they are being interim, that person may be shorting the duties they already have in order to provide a limited number of duties for whomever they are filling in for.

While this practice includes coverage in times of absence, it does not prepare future staff to take over the vacated positions. The interim positions allow an employee who is familiar with the vacated position's skill set to cover job duties while the hiring process continues. P6 noted that this practice can cause more harm than good. P6 stated,

You know that really tied your hands because [sic] here you're stepping into the new role. The person coming in, stepping in is pretty much not getting any training from the person who was there, you know. And I know we move people around the region so that you can work with others, but, and as much as we try to have uniformity, no place is exactly the same. Not only did I see no succession planning or preparation to fill vacant positions, but I also think it was even detrimental. I think what the way they did was [detrimental]. Making it even harder than it should have been.

Some of the local health department leaders tried to put their own succession planning practices in place. These practices involve stretch assignments, shadowing, training, cross-training, and additional measures to ensure that all duties of a leader are complete in the event of a vacated position. P1, P2, P3, and P7 spoke to these practices in the local office. The practices in place at a single office are not necessarily the same that are being carried out in other offices. Some

offices may share leadership positions and, therefore, similar staffing practices. However, interviewees say no mandated practices exist from the parent organization.

Challenge with the Hiring Process

With the state hiring process, employees participating in local or individual office practices are not certain of progressing to a vacated position. P6 spoke of the waiting that goes into approval to post applicants for a vacant position,

Layers of having to request for approval to fill. We have to just post it so you know. So, I'm fully expecting if I do get an approval that that I'll have to open it up to outside people. And I just I think that's a slap in the face for people who've worked hard and ought to be able to just be rewarded for that hard work and move up.

The East Region leaders send job openings for the region by email to all current staff to notify them of opportunities. Available jobs on different levels of the parent organization are online. An employee would have to seek employment opportunities for availabilities actively. P5 expressed frustration about the lack of information on promotional opportunities with different levels of the parent organization. “There are no emails sent out for high performers to be made aware of advancement opportunities. I would have to be seeking something out to find it.”. P6 and P8 mentioned not receiving an advancement for a position they were already training for. Considering the current hiring process, an employee who may have the qualification or interim for the position may receive denial through the application screening process before review by the local human resource department (Participant Interviews, 2022-2023). P1, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9 stated that this practice has led to lower morale in the workplace because of employees not feeling valuable enough for advancement opportunities.

Theme Two- Time and Productivity Level

The second theme apparent in the study reflected on the time and productivity loss when a new hire takes place. Questions 5, 6, 7, and 8 reflect preparing for the time spent in the transition of new leadership. As new leadership comes, time is necessary for adjusting to what new expectations will come from the parent organization and the local clinic. The new leader must learn the protocols and running of the clinic. With a government agency that has a parent organization, the new leader must know the working of the parent organization and their local office. A new nursing position must have orientation time. Other positions have set guidelines and training needs. Although the organizational leaders may provide for an interim in open leadership positions, this person is often a leader from another health department or holds another role in the organization. This means the leader cannot fully devote their time and efforts to the additional role to ensure the local health department is thriving. When the position is filled, the leader often *learns as they go* while going through designated training. P4 stated,

There's a dip in productivity because we may or may not have someone in place who knows how to do, like, the scheduling. Onboarding takes a long time.

Training takes a long time. Checking off takes a long time, so unless somebody's prepared to do that ahead of time, then, we don't have anyone that can do that in two weeks. It is not enough time to show them. Even if you share the duties, it's not enough time to divvy out everything and show someone how to do it proficiently (Participant Interviews, 2023).

Preparing for the gap

Question five reflects how the organization prepares for future vacancies of leadership positions. The current practice of the organization is to have another employee, sometimes from

another office, act as an interim until the human resources vacancy. The hiring process within the state requires approval to fill vacant positions. During a specified period' personnel in a department within the parent organization screen the applicants. Qualified applicants receive a set of first-round interview questions. The results of the interviews are then sent to the local HR manager. The HR manager and supervisors of the position select interviewees and an interview date. Once a panel interview is conducted and human resources selects a potential hire, they check the background of the applicant.

The parent organization personnel must approve the salary and the hire before they offer the job to the candidate. At that time, the parent organization personnel will send an official start date. There is no way to better prepare for a time when the position will remain empty. P2 stated,

I have not seen much planning for that, and I have experienced gaps in both ways, either retirement or [sic] someone turning in a notice. Generally, there's [sic] a kind of a scramble in, hurry up and try to get something posted and you know, just trying to get the word out that we have a job available,

Public health is, by nature and definition, responding to the health needs of the public. Succession planning can limit the training period for changes in management and result in a more agile response system with a team that is foundationally set. P10 states," They don't really avoid the gap; they just have somebody to fill in to pick up your role". In public health and civil service organizations, gaps in employment competencies can hinder the government from serving the public and the community (Addison, 2020). Effective succession planning efforts involve managing knowledge and experience, saving costs to the organization, reducing staff turnover, providing professional learning to employees, and keeping employees informed about opportunities (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). Preparing for gaps in employment can help

transition new leadership and keep a more seamless drive toward organizational goal. P4 stated, “If there's not a good plan in place, it's almost like reinventing the wheel every single time.

Continuity of Services

In response to question six, what practices has your organization adopted to allow for continuity of services when a leadership position is vacated, most participants felt this was satisfied through the previously mentioned cross-training. Although the private sector implements succession planning activities, succession planning receives minimal attention in the public health sector (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). The health departments are tasked with providing services to the public they serve. Therefore, it is essential to keep up with those services that the public needs. Increasing demand for services from the health department against a backdrop of chronic budgetary pressure means that they need to generate operational efficiencies and improve inefficiencies (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). The mission of public health is to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life for the United States population through the core functions of public health, including assessment, policy development, and assurance (TDH; Leider et al., 2016). These services can cause detrimental effects on those people who use the health departments as their only source of care. With those leadership positions providing clinic services, interviewees noted that it could take six months to a year to fully acclimate to duties and responsibilities. P3 stated,

By the time we go through the interview process, the posting, the interviewing, the hiring, and then getting them on board, that process is gonna be about six months just to get them to where they have a feeling for what they're doing. I would say a good year,

. With the public health environment constantly environment, there is always learning to be done. P7 stated,

She's just in there a year now, in October, so it's taking her at least a year to learn everything that they need to know. And she's still learning. There's still stuff she hasn't been able to do consistently.

Theme Three- Employee Morale and Feeling Valued

These three became apparent when talking about high-performing employees seeking outside employment. Multiple participants stated that because they cannot monetarily compensate high performers, those performers tend to seek employment elsewhere. The state of TN does have a “Pay for Performance” program that is a benefit for most DOH employees that are funded through the state. However, the staffing of health departments is made up of different funding sources. Human resources may not pay employees who have the same job role with the same money. Therefore, a high performer may not receive a performance raise if they fall under a different budget. P3 stated,

pay is also hindering, and the fact that some of your staff are in state and nonstate positions. Some are in DGA positions, and some are in county positions which affect their pay depending on the county. They may be doing the same job sitting right next to a state employee, and, in some counties, they may make quite a bit more than the state person. In other counties they make quite a bit less. So, there's no equity.

This problem can lead to a disgruntled employee who does not feel valued, leading to seeking outside employment.

Feeling valued

In completed employee driver surveys, the question “What is the main reason you work at the health department?”, the top reason indicated was “my work has meaning.” For those employees who seek to make a difference, they may stay without money being a driving force; however, seeking new ways or roles within the organization to continue to provide and develop new ideas may entice the workforce to continue providing quality service to make a difference for those receiving those services. High performers are not sought out for positions higher than the local levels. P5 felt that, although they are considered a high performer in their office, they are not fully recognized and have actively sought outside employment within the last three months. P6 stated, “I would have might have been interested in that, but I had no clue. You know that that that was even an option”. P8 indicated If an employee is asked if they feel they could hold a leadership position, it can make them feel more valued. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the lack of succession planning and acknowledgment of opportunities can leave employees feeling discouraged. P6 stated, “It sort of feels like it's a slap in the face that, you know, she's gonna have to compete against other people on the same playing field to stay here and to move up in her career,” These workers also tend to get heavier workloads. P4 stated, “Your high performers are definitely frustrated with it because they do get the workload, and they're the ones that you rely on the most,” When succession planning efforts are utilized, it can help your employees feel valued and appreciated. P1 stated,

To feel valued, feel like they're making you know they're hard work and contributions are noticed and appreciated and, you know, of course you always have those ones. Well, you know, if I do better, then I get more work. You know, if you show you can do it, then you're always gonna get more work. But at the same time, I think that really shows potential for advancements I think it does

help to an employee to feel valued and that their work means a lot and plays a huge contribution to the success of the department.

Employee Morale. Advancing internally has added benefits such as increasing morale, easing role transitions, and enhancing engagement by having someone already familiar with the workplace culture in the role (Baker, 2017). P3 stated, “If an employee feels like they may have an opportunity to advance and their role, or in another role, I think it gives them initiative it increases their morale.”. According to Sederstrom (2018) low morale and turnover can come from employees not having opportunities or processed P3 stated,

If an employee feels like they may have an opportunity to advance and their role, or in another role, I think it gives them initiative it increases their morale. I can move up. I can do this. I've, you know, I've seen them do it and I feel valued. I feel like, yes, they do want me to work here. They value my work.

Succession planning can set the stage for employee retention and potentially increase organizational performance (Baker, 2017).

Productivity

The overall benefits of employee job satisfaction are numerous, including positive impacts on productivity, morale of the workplace, a more robust corporate culture, and longevity. P10 shared the outlook of workers harder for potential gains, “They might be a little more productive if they know that there's a chance that they might receive a job”. P8 shared a similar statement, “If the employee knows that they are being groomed to succeed for a higher position, they want to learn more. They wanna do more, and they value their job more”. Investing in employees can help boost job satisfaction and productivity as a result. P1 stated,

It can be a morale booster anytime we can develop our employees, you know, even if they don't necessarily have any kind of interest in maybe assuming a leadership position. But, there are still things that we can do to help them be better employees,.

Succession planning leads to smoother transitions, especially in higher management positions, so staff can feel more prepared and less anxious about the change taking place.

P2 stated,

The new change was gonna happen, so if you could go ahead and have that person in place that they knew was gonna succeed, that person could be like -OK, we know who they are. We know their background. We know they're familiar. We know that [the current position holder] is gonna be training them on some things that we like. And you know, when she's gone, we can talk about the thing maybe we didn't like. But at the same time, it makes for a smoother transition.

Representation and Visualization of the Data

Identified Area	Respondent Answer
Define Succession Planning:	Ensuring that we have qualified individuals
	For someone coming into a position to be able to succeed at what they're doing
	I looked it up, but I think it's just training people to take over for other people who are fixing to maybe retire or be on a long leave of absence.
	Existing managers, directors, supervisors grooming their direct reports.

	I don't have a clue.
	Preparing the workforce for when the older workforce and those who you know when someone leaves or retires, it's having kept that institutional knowledge in place, having a plan or strategy to keep that in place so that it doesn't leave with that individual.
	I looked it up- a structured plan to help an organization replace someone that leaves fairly quickly.
	I'm not sure.
	Preparing and grooming the next generation of leaders or the department
	I don't know.
	I feel like I've heard it before, but I don't know.
	Next staff member in line that you see as having leadership potential so that they are encouraged to build on that and start training them. Someone who gets the training and the knowledge to succeed.

Preparing for future gaps:	We really don't do a good job.
	They make sure someone is picking up some of your roles.
	When you have everybody trained cross training everybody to do different jobs, so when you know somebody's going to be out, somebody else can take over for that.
	There was nothing.

	Regionally or from a state perspective, there's other positions that do the same job.
	I don't think they do, honestly.
	Condensing what you have to accommodate less.
	As a department as a whole, I don't think we do a great job at that.
	I think they are very much behind the curve in that they wait until a position is empty to post it and to interview and to fill.

Length of recovery:	6 months- 1 year
	At least a year plus continuing to learn
	1 year
	At least six months to a year
	It would take at least six months for you to feel comfortable
	At least six months minimum
	Probably 6 to 8 months. Maybe longer.
	A lot of times you'd I don't know that you ever recover them.
	No consistency.

High performers/ outside employment:	I feel like we're a steppingstone for a lot, especially those who are just leaving college
	Yes, especially if they want to move up quicker than they could move up here.
	I know for fact they have.
	Absolutely.
	Maybe
	I don't think so.
	Mostly it's been because of money
	I feel like if you were really on a path that you want to grow into a leadership or supervisory position, there's not always a whole lot of opportunity at the local level.
	I think they would.

Challenges:	Policies. Pay. Micromanagement from the State level. Communication from higher up.
	Can take a long time to get the okay to fill a position.
	People that you knew they were really, really good. But they hire someone else. Why they didn't get that position.
	Layers of having to request for approval to fill. we have to just post it, so you know. So, I'm fully expecting if I do get an approval that that I'll have to open it up to outside people. And I just I think that's a slap in the face for people who've worked hard and ought to be able to just be rewarded for that hard work and move up.

	I don't think that we train with cross training up and we don't know how to use everybody else's technology, which I think is a big deal. All your processes of how you do your job or what needs to get done, but statewide there's not. There's checklists, but when you really get down to it, they're just checklists. There's not really any kind of training with it.
	General lack of policies or direction for this to happen. It has to be intentional.
	Delays and limited resources.

Table 3.1- Respondent Answers

The themes identified answer the research questions of what processes are currently being utilized, what barriers exist, and how the process overall relates to turnover and employee satisfaction. Satisfaction within the workplace directly links with behavior and productivity in daily job duties (Spector, 2013). Participants felt that succession planning demonstrates development and growth in employees leading to a more loyal workforce. Practical succession planning involves managing knowledge and experience, saving costs for the organization, reducing staff turnover, providing professional learning to employees, and keeping employees informed about opportunities (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). Participants acknowledged the need for a more formalized plan for local health departments to be able to identify and grow potential leaders of the organization. Current practices consist mainly of cross-training to fill job gaps in interim periods while a permanent replacement is sought out. This interim may be someone in a similar job role from another location. This process can allow for most of the continuity of services; however, this can place a strain on the employee who must fill both job roles. Job satisfaction is the crucial ingredient that lends to feelings of fulfillment by receiving recognition, earning income, possibilities of promotion, and achieving goals (Kaliski, 2007).

Relationship of the Findings

The steps of this project included the process of a case study. The process includes the identification of a specific case for description and analysis. Which can define or describe within certain parameters., Intent of conducting the case study, present an in-depth understanding of the case., Differing approaches to the case, identifying case themes, and end with conclusions formed about the overall meaning of delivering from the case(s) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview questions correlated back to the initial research questions. The interview questions included specific current practices and barriers. Questions also related current practices to turnover in the organization. The summation of information learned from the narrative response to interview questions answered the overarching research questions.

Research Questions

A succession plan utilizes a process that human resources can implement repetitively to recognize and train those identified as leaders. The leaders can succeed in vacated positions when they occur, leaving the company in a better position to achieve organizational objectives and goals. Without a long lapse, while extensive training occurs for new leaders, the research questions were designed to look at current practices and barriers. Current practices and barriers in place affect input, employee productivity, and employee job satisfaction. Interview questions one through seven specifically have verbiage to encourage participants to talk about current practices in place. These same interview questions also encourage participants to talk about any barriers or lack of processes that may hinder the preparation for vacancies of leadership positions. Elaboration on these questions ultimately tied back to research question two (identifying barriers). The remaining interview questions sought how current or perceived processes affect turnover. P10 identified being moved into a vacated leadership position once

vacated because they were the only applicant (Participant Interview, 2023). However, if there were additional applicants, the hiring process would need to be followed entirely without a guarantee of being hired for the position. All applicants identified that, in some capacity, it takes a more extended adjustment from hiring those unfamiliar with the department and organization or maybe from a completely private sector (zero public health experience). P5, P6, and P12 identified the long training period and still having to learn things once that training is “complete.”

Conceptual Framework

This study assessed the concept of the current practices, internal barriers, and employee outcomes through interviews conducted with current leaders within the health departments of East Tennessee. By understanding how these variables impact the outcomes, leaders can adopt a formalized approach that can present current leaders with the hope for the cultivation of future leaders. The interview questions allowed the participant to talk about these aspects of the conceptual framework in detail and provide supporting stories of their perceptions.

Anticipated Themes

My expectation was that trends would occur among the different locations that participated in this study. Several local health departments have self-implemented succession plans in place. This plan reemerged as a theme. Local health departments have different practices to prepare staff to cover workforce turnover and absences. A primary identified method of compensating for absences among all health departments is cross-training. Cross-training allows interim employees to fill four positions until human resources hire a permanent employee. The local and regional health departments, all sharing the same parent organization, face the same barriers. Some will face individual obstacles based on the size or location of the health

department, in addition to local government rules in their respective counties. While the previous two statements seem true for the local health departments, most respondents focus on the hiring process and lag time for jobs. These jobs need approval from human resources to fill. The interview process, the background check, and the final hiring process are part of the process. The State of Tennessee has no formalized succession plan that is constant amongst all health departments. This statement was found to be true among all respondents. Some respondents were unfamiliar with the idea of succession planning at all. Some respondents felt that the approach was more cross-training than actual succession planning. Although localized succession plans may be in place, hiring a candidate is not a guaranteed hire for the job. This problem is commonly identified in some health departments, while others have not experienced this to be the truth. Some health department personnel progress naturally through the different levels of management. Other personnel have expressed frustration with managers passing over them for promotional job openings.

The Literature

The literature review assisted in determining the definitions of overall processes as well as individual inputs and their impacts. Once these determinants were defined, it aided in determining the importance of succession planning on determinants within East Tennessee health departments and its impact on predetermined variants relating to employee behavior and productivity. Concerning the literature review, certain aspects were found to match up with those supported by previous literary findings.

Succession Planning Defined

Succession planning is a process involving top-level management regularly to review employees at a specified level within the department that may portray leadership and other traits

with plans of developing these for potential future leadership (Coronado & Beck et al., 2018; Harper et al., 2018; Leider et al., 2016; Spector, 2013). In response to the first question interview question, some of the participants were unfamiliar with succession planning. Other participants were familiar with succession planning and provided their own definitions. The definitions centered around providing current staff to take care of tasks in the absence of specific positions. Stringent guidelines placed on the civil service system cause leaders within these federal agencies to not center activities around succession planning (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). This statement proves true when looking at interview responses.

Hiring processes and training do not fall into the definition of succession planning. Guidelines stress that employees must have the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to get promoted to a position with higher responsibilities; often, hiring must ensure that employees compete for positions and are proficient in their jobs and responsibilities (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). Succession planning can include various human resource functions within the organization to ensure a smooth transition of leadership (Kim, 2010). While this can be part of succession planning, the definitions provided by interviewees did not mention entirely preparing and reviewing staff to take over as future leaders. Phillips (2020) defined the act of succession planning as the proactive strategy used by a business to continually identify qualified candidates. The process ensures availability when vacancies occur to identify qualified candidates to ensure availability when vacancies occur continually. Although leaders may not find the process is not difficult or complicated, a straightforward process involves time to complete the goal (Cavanaugh, 2017; Lancaster et al., 2020;). A potential succession plan may include strategic job shadowing, job rotation, and leadership courses. While cross-training fits into some of these categories, deliberate acts of leadership development allow potential successors to learn the

different aspects and tasks of the position while having a solid support system (Cavanaugh, 2017). The interview participants often refer to cross-training when preparing for future gaps.

Succession planning can become a proactive tool that can save valuable dollars and time in training new employees to take over leadership roles as planned and unplanned departures occur (Harper et al., 2018). By identifying, encouraging, and developing that talent, a company can have a surplus of talent ready to fill leadership roles or engage in roles as necessary (Phillips, 2020). Different levels of management within the interviewees identified that this practice is falling short in the health departments. The barriers within the hiring process cause personnel to not identify those high performers and develop them for future vacancies in leadership roles. LinkedIn Learning of educational opportunities for all employees, as well as Edison training as a source for educational opportunities for all employees as well as Edison training for state employees. The training includes no requirement or recommended tiers of training for leadership or potential leaders. Personnel should not limit succession planning to only those top management positions, they can also address the need for critical job backups in any category (Rothwell, 1994). A specific goal of succession planning includes matching the organization's current talent (those that are available) with potential future talent needs to have leaders in the right place at the right time to do the right things (Rothwell, 1994). The participants indicated that the current hiring process can hinder those interested in management positions from being hired into positions that they may be qualified for.

Preparing For Future Gaps

When looking at potential onboarding tactics or evaluating future positions during strategic planning, it is essential to note the type of employees the organization seeks to recruit. Mello (2015) proposes that organizations need to manage human assets as an investment of the

company to increase their value and commitment to the organization. Companies can look at succession planning as a type of roadmap that tells employees which direction they need to succeed and thrive in the organization (Carr, 2004). The participant indicated that the hiring process itself identified as the main barrier to filling positions, the organization must seek the correct type of recruit from the start. In addition, the participants identified the long training time as a barrier. Once human resources define these requirements, they can screen candidates to determine their skill levels in needed areas to find the best fit for that job vacancy (Spector, 2013). The participants indicated that the current hiring process includes an application screened for minimum qualifications followed by a set of second-round interview questions. This approach can save the company resources in various ways by finding the right employee to fill the proper role within the organization.

When employees are fitted to the correct position, they are happier in their role and more likely to stay and want to grow in the organization. Retaining a qualified pool of employees who possess skills and abilities for future organizational needs and leadership can add value to the organization's strategic plan and employee commitment and reduce future onboarding costs of hiring new employees (Baker, 2017). When an organization is at risk of losing its most skilled and experienced employees, succession planning will limit their exit's impact and help ensure the stability and long-term continuity of achieving the organization's goals (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). The slightest stress possible will result in the best outcome, and planning will eliminate stress. Retaining employees, especially in the public health sectors, can offer continuity of services and limitation of gaps in services. This process can provide more seamless care for those who utilize services and outreach opportunities. The participants indicated while cross-training can help prepare the workplace to pick up job tasks temporarily, it does not prepare for

leadership roles in its entirety. Firm leaders find themselves in highly competitive, rapidly changing environments where knowledge can be the only source of sustained competitive advantage (Liu et al., 2021).

The participants identified the process for new positions as being vacated first, having to be approved to fill, and completing the process for a new hire. The current process does not allow for a crossover of training before someone takes over a vacated position, limiting organizational knowledge transfer. The best way to accelerate people with high potential for senior leadership positions is to place them in new assignments that present increasing levels of challenge. Stretching assignments may include working in a different office, leading a specific project team, and exposing the employee to situations involving company resources, markets, and key products (Wojcik, 2014). Placing employees in challenging situations and allowing them to stretch beyond their current capabilities helps bridge a gap between current skills and skills required for the task (Preenen et al., 2011). All participants agreed that Stretch assignments were identified as a practice implemented within some of the local health departments to help prepare staff for potential promotional openings. that although these approaches vary in approach and style a common theme emerges amongst them.

Human resources can view each technique as a mechanism for evaluating a candidate's viability for appointment to the senior executive team (Richards, 2008). When these succession planning practices are in place, the leaders can evaluate, plan, and provide further teaching for potential future leaders. Succession planning and transfer of knowledge can directly impact leadership development needs in the organization. The needs of the organization and retiring employees, incentives to the individual, implementation, and supervision of the program determine the success of leadership development programs for specific organizations (Clark,

2020). According to Chambers (2013-2015), local health departments require leadership development on a local level. Supervisors must complete individual training courses designed specifically for leadership and management skills (TDOH). On a local level, employees must take available courses. The participants indicated that courses are not outside of annual regulations outside of annual training.

Job Satisfaction and Productivity

Satisfaction within the workplace is often directly linked with behavior and productivity in daily job duties (Spector, 2013). Satisfaction can relate to a worker's sense of accomplishment and success while on the job, along with rewards that associates with doing a job well done (Spector, 2013). Participants identified that they do not always feel valued, even at a high-performer level. P5 stated,

I feel like, even when I do a good job. I create something. I make something more efficient. I do something to make the life of a patient better. I don't see that reflected in my evaluations like I think they should. No one cares that I did that. I care, but no one else does

. Employees want to work where they enjoy doing the job, feel they do well and are rewarded for their effort (Aziri, 2011). Job satisfaction is the key ingredient that leads to feelings of fulfillment by receiving recognition, earning income, possibilities of promotion, and achieving goals (Kaliski, 2007). The importance of job satisfaction can boil down to happy employees being productive employees. Unhappy employees have higher absenteeism, lack of loyalty, and a lack of enthusiasm to become as productive as possible in the workplace (Spector, 2013). Higher levels of employee satisfaction may serve as an indicator of employee productivity (Aziri, 2011). The behaviors of workers are dependent on their level of satisfaction and can impact productivity

and other actions related to the business of the organization (Spector, 1997). People generally tend to need and like jobs that use knowledge and abilities (Walker, 2020). Employees who perform tasks that have a greater level of skill, job significance, feedback, and ability to make decisions are more satisfied than employees who perform tasks with fewer of those attributes (Walker, 2020). Leadership can positively impact employee satisfaction and job productivity. Participants identified the probability that employees work harder if they feel they receive recognition or reward for working hard (Participant Interview, 2022-2023). The interviewees outlined that high performers tend to seek other employment, some indicated that while leaders considered them high performers, they were actively seeking out other employment. P5 stated, “I don’t want to work for a place that doesn’t make me feel valued. It makes me want to seek employment elsewhere. And, I have. I’ve looked. I always seem to talk myself out of it,”. Many individuals draw to public service to satisfy their beliefs and desires to serve the public and the community's needs (Leider et al., 2016).

Participant 3 identified those who are in the job not for the money but are working in public health to satisfy something deeper within themselves. Individuals receive satisfaction with their jobs if they perceive that their jobs contribute to the organization’s overall mission (Ting, 1997). “The State [of Tennessee] has started to step up on recruiting new nurses. The recruitment process doesn’t does not do much for those of us who are already here or aren’t nurses. P7 stated we don’t get much of anything for being here so long. We get the same raises as the new ones, but we aren’t getting the added benefits they are”. High employee turnover led to a loss of expertise and institutional knowledge, high costs to the organization, and a decrease in organizational performance (Leider et al., 2016). Participants identified that those high performers seek outside employment because of a lack of recognition. While some recognized

the state's 'Pay for Performance' program as incentivizing high-performing individuals to stay, it was identified that this program only applies to some employees, not all. P8 stated, "Sometimes we get left out. It's nice for those that do get the money and do get the raises, but it doesn't go to everybody. Then, those that don't get it aren't happy. It can be a problem,".

Challenges and Length of Recovery

When an employee leaves an organization, their costs are associated with the new vacancy. These costs can occur in recruiting, hiring, training, and a general loss of production from the vacant position (Leider et al., 2016). Participants identified the hiring process as too lengthy and leaving open positions vacant for too long often creates a burden for the remaining staff. All participants indicated that the costs of posting open positions, hiring, training, and travel are a part of each new hire. A decrease in the workforce can mean gaps in critical areas of the organization (Addison, 2020). This research demonstrates the potential gap that can occur when a vacancy in a leadership position occurs. When a new replacement comes in, the hiring and training can become tedious and lead to critical gaps in leadership positions. Although these positions may be filled in the interim with temporary replacements, the replacement may not always provide the same amount of time as an official replacement. A shift in generations in the workforce well also includes a shift in job loyalty, with the new generation being more likely to job-hop than climb the corporate ladder (Sabina & Colwell, 2018). When facing external competition, internal candidates may increase productivity (Sabina & Colwell, 2018). P8 stated, "If the employee knows that they are being groomed to succeed for a higher position, they want to learn more. They wanna do more, and they value their job more,". When only facing internal recruitment, middle-line managers may not demonstrate as much productivity if there are no external pressures (Sabina & Colwell, 2018). Participants identified that there is sometimes a

difference in the reception of new hires. If human resources select an internal candidate, it can depend on how the candidate was perceived amongst peers before hire as to how they will be received in their new role. However, the participants felt that the internal candidate could do the job “better” since they already contained organizational knowledge and how the clinic may function. External hires can take longer to acclimatize computer systems, program requirements, and clinic flows. New external management may not always receive support from existing management, making it challenging to implement processes and ideas (Mason, 1992). Although a hiring committee may feel like they get to know an external candidate to some degree before hiring, it is not easy to get a proper handle on job performance until they are functioning in the position (Mason, 1992). P1 stated,

It can be a morale booster anytime we can develop our employees, you know, even if they don't necessarily have any kind of interest in maybe assuming a leadership position. But, there are still things that we can do to help them be better employees,.

Current Succession Planning Practices

Although the private sector is more known for studying and implementing succession planning activities, succession planning receives minimal attention in the public health sector (Darnell & Campbell, 2015). Outside of studies completed in Ohio, Wyoming, and Washington, little is known about succession planning in health departments (Darnell & Campbell). Succession planning is essential in both sectors since both have an aging workforce (Darnell & Campbell). In addition, increasing demand for services from the health department against a backdrop of chronic budgetary pressure means that they need to generate operational efficiencies and improve inefficiencies (Darnell & Campbell). Succession planning can play a massive factor

with benefits including efficiencies such as improved operational continuity. In addition, organizational stability, systematic development of leadership competencies, preservation of institutional knowledge, and financial stability benefits. Succession planning includes increased innovation and decreased recruitment and orientation costs (Darnell & Campbell). Assessing health departments in succession planning practices and seeing the benefits of addressing workforce challenges is essential (Darnell & Campbell).

Leaders within these federal agencies do not often center activities around succession planning because of strict guidelines placed on the civil service system, (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). Guidelines stress that employees must have the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to get a promotion to a position with higher responsibilities; often, hiring must ensure that employees are competing for positions where they are proficient in their jobs and responsibilities (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). Leaders need to see innovative ways to incorporate ways to address developmental challenges within planning (Jarrell & Pewitt, 2007). According to *the Agency Guide to Workforce/Succession Planning - tn.gov* (2019), The Tennessee WFP Process results from a benchmark study of states with strength in workforce planning. Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin were studied via selected interviews, analysis of documentation, and website reviews. The following is a list of critical aspects as determined by the Tennessee Department of Health: (a) It is important to focus on critical business priorities facing an agency; otherwise, the work loses urgency and support; (b) Voluntary use of the process is preferred over mandatory or forced compliance. The process must adapt to the agency's needs and priorities; (a) The process takes time and depends on the agency's culture; (b) Adequate resources must be ensured from the outset. In addition, (a) Small initial steps should be taken; (b) The process should not be overly paperbound, and (c) important

of the document and act on feedback throughout the process. The process includes (a) accountability and communication are important; (b) Expectations and responsibilities should be clearly defined; (c) Commitment from the bottom and the top is needed if the process is to work; and (d) It is important to have a strong shared responsibility between management. HR, and performance-based budgeting/strategic planning staff when doing Workforce Planning; (a) HR cannot lead or dictate the process rather, it needs agency executive leadership and broad-based agency involvement; and, (b) The project team responsible for generating and implementing an agency's Workforce Plan should be carefully selected to ensure an agency's needs are adequately represented and reported regularly to the Agency Appointing Authority (Tennessee Department of Health's Agency Workforce Planning Guide, 2019)

The Problem

Senior leaders in nonprofits and government agencies face the challenge of working through succession planning; because of hierarchical tiers and budget limitations, it can be difficult to offer incentives for employee development. Top leaders in government sectors without succession plans face higher turnover rates of employees and less consistency overall (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). The general problem addressed was the lack of a formalized leadership succession planning process within the Department of Health, resulting in decreased job satisfaction and an increased risk of losing high-performing individuals to other agencies. Despite the expected retirement of many nonprofit executives over the next several years, few nonprofits have a formal succession plan (*Study shows lack of mission statements to guide giving* 2015). The lack of succession planning and the turnover of employees causes strain and unstable situations within an organization, which often leads to decreased productivity (Cao et al., 2006). The interview questions helped to identify if this was the case with local agencies. Participants

identified that employees want to feel valued. In an organization that may not be monetarily incentivized, other means, such as promotion, may lead to a decrease in turnover and retain those high-performing employees. Several of those interviewed named the state's loan repayment program as an incentive to hire nursing staff. However, other positions do not offer this option.

Summary of the Findings

This study showed a lack of formalized succession planning within the Department of Health in East Tennessee. With interview questions designed to determine what current practices are in place and identify barriers, applicants were able to express their perspectives. Some local health departments have placed informal practices in place to develop employees and help them grow. In doing so, they hope to move those employees into leadership-type positions. In this scenario, the hiring process is still a barrier to moving trained individuals into these positions. A requirement of posting and interviewing applicants exists. These barriers in the hiring process can be a deterrent for those who are interested in those positions. Employees also must be proactive in finding open positions. Opening positions are posted on hiring websites and are not targeted for all employees to be aware of promotional vacancies. Satisfaction within the workplace is often directly linked with behavior and productivity in daily job duties (Spector, 2013). Satisfaction can relate to a worker's sense of accomplishment and success while on the job, along with rewards that are associated with doing a job well (Spector, 2013).

The overall benefits of employee job satisfaction are numerous, including positive impacts on productivity, morale of the workplace, a more robust corporate culture, and longevity. The research showed that participants indicated high performers in the organization are seeking employment either in promotional positions or outside employers. The participants noted that while the organization is shown to offer some

incentives to new hires and pay-for-performance raises, it may not be enough to keep employees satisfied in their job roles. The participants indicated that vacated Positions in the different health departments, whether promotional to a higher office or outside companies, must start over in the cumbersome hiring process. The hiring process and training periods lead to gaps in positions that those in similar roles need to be covered in the interim. A formalized succession plan could help alleviate some gaps in positions and shorten training periods for staff transitioning into roles they would be better prepared to fill.

Overview of the Study

In this qualitative case study, I sought to examine succession planning efforts in public health departments across East Tennessee. Senior leaders in nonprofits and government agencies face the challenge of working through succession planning; because of hierarchical tiers and budget limitations, it can be difficult to offer incentives for employee development. Top leaders in government sectors without succession plans face higher turnover rates of employees and less consistency overall (Ballaro & Polk, 2017). Harrell (2016) stated that a lack of preparedness is only part of the problem. The board of directors' neglects to find the right man or woman for the job. Effective succession planning at the local level of government or nonprofits can lead to the continued operation of essential government functions. The negative impact on government efficiency demonstrated a need for succession planning to impact local communities better (Ballaro & Polk, 2017).

Researchers suggest that up to 40% of new CEOs fail to meet performance expectations in the first 18 months of working at the organization (Harrell, 2016). Succession planning can set the stage for employee retention and potentially increase organizational performance (Baker,

2017). Having formalized hiring strategies and succession processes works better to manage current employee expectations and ensure that a talent pool of qualified individuals exists within an organization (Sederstrom, 2018). In public health and civil service organizations, gaps in employment competencies can hinder the government from serving the public and the community (Addison, 2020).

Literature detailing relationships between succession planning in both private and public sectors exist; however, not much relating to health department operations specifically exists. A void in the literature relating to succession planning practices in health departments in East Tennessee and the impact on employee morale and productivity exists. In this study, I sought to fill that gap by asking current leaders of local health departments what practices were in place locally and on the level of the parent organization, which holds the power to create and implement processes. Leaders within the health departments included the county director, nursing supervisor, and office supervisor.

The research questions for this project included determining current succession planning practices and how they relate to employee productivity and turnover. To answer these questions, awards I selected members of the leadership team members from those health departments that had applied and received a level 2 or higher award from TNCPE. I had to obtain the State of Tennessee Department of Health's permission to interview the selected staff. Once consent was obtained from all parties involved, meetings were set up with identified participants. The participants were asked 15 questions (see Appendix A) that highlighted succession planning practices while staying within the conceptual framework. During the interviews, the participants were asked open-ended questions and encouraged to respond with personal observances or interactions. The individual's responses included first-hand experience with practices and

happenings in the workplace centered around the hiring process. To protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms replaced files with initials only. Participants were then assigned a participant number to identify the researcher within the research text. After each recorded interview, I transcribed and shared it with the participants. The participants receive the recorded interviews for review. In addition, I used bracketing to refrain from personal bias. Bracketing can refer to refraining from judgment or staying away from the everyday, commonplace way of seeing things (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). Bracketing is for the researcher to separate their experiences from research (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). Many aspects of bracketing practice, such as personal reflection, journal writing, and extensive literature review, are almost universal habits among learners and researchers alike (Weatherford & Maitra, 2019). I used personal reflection throughout the responses and aggregation of themes to reduce personal bias. I reviewed and aggregated commonalities and themes.

Application to Professional Practice

This research is meaningful and applicable to the professional practice of business. The following paragraphs provide a detailed discussion of how the findings apply to the Department of Health leaders and how applying a strategic succession plan can increase employee job satisfaction and productivity and decrease turnover. Additional information will describe how the findings relate to the general field of leadership. Finally, the findings will link a biblical perspective to determining the best fit for leadership roles.

Improving General Business Practice

By aligning an employee's workplace growth and identification of leadership abilities with the organization's goals through succession planning approaches, one can ensure that an employee will achieve goals that also matter to the organization. Most participants in this study

stated that there was no clear definition of succession planning or succession planning practices or goals within the organization. Some health departments attempt to act on the local level, but they are still bound by the confines of hiring policies determined by the State of Tennessee. Strong leaders can also inspire trust. The leader can inspire trust or doubt based on actions and communications. How they interact with employees can determine a level of trust within the organization. The leader's behavior is deemed most important in determining trust within the organization (Joseph & Winston, 2005). As new leadership comes in, it takes time to adjust to the new expectations from the parent organization and the local clinic. The new leader must learn the protocols and running of the clinic. With a government agency that has a parent organization, it is essential the new leader knows the working of the parent organization as well as their local office. A new nursing position requires orientation time periods. Other positions have set guidelines and training needs as well. Although the organization sometimes provides an interim in vacated leadership positions, this person is often a leader from another health department or holds another role in the organization in addition to the one they are serving as an interim. This means they cannot fully devote their time and efforts to the additional role to ensure the local health department thrives. Without trust in relationships, they cannot develop, and community engagement will not occur. Individuals in a group will not encourage one another to accomplish an assigned task if they do not trust each other (Blanchard et al.,2016).

Employees that enjoy their work are more confident in their work. Their confidence leads to higher levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction (Haldoraiet al., 2020). By developing systems that are in place with an organization's overall goals, mission, and values, there is a greater chance of success for the systems. Employees that feel connected to work and an overall goal are more likely to perform better and less likely to actively look for other

employment because of a sense of loyalty to the organization (Haldorai, et. al, 2020). For those employees who seek to make a difference, they may stay without money being a driving force. However, seeking new ways or roles within the organization to continue to provide and develop new ideas may entice the workforce to continue providing quality service to make a difference for those receiving those services. High performers are not sought out for positions higher than the local levels. Advancing internally has added benefits of increasing morale, easing role transitions, and enhancing engagement by having someone already familiar with the workplace culture in the role (Baker, 2017).

Findings showed that this is true amongst employees who may not feel valued when performing at their best because of a lack of promotional opportunities. The overall benefits of employee job satisfaction are numerous, including positive impacts on productivity, morale of the workplace, a more robust corporate culture, and longevity. Findings demonstrated that participants felt that employees would do better work if they felt the organization was noticing their performance. The lack of a formalized succession plan left some participants feeling frustrated and unhappy with their organization overall. They feel it is unfair to have performed well or consistently exceeded expected performance but still must compete with those not in their organization to move up in their career. Bringing in outside hires caused employees to seek other employment opportunities outside their organization.

Potential Application Strategies

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine succession planning efforts in public health departments across East Tennessee. This study included succession planning practices currently utilized within four local health departments, two large and two small, in East

Tennessee to identify barriers and opportunities for improvements. By recognizing different efforts utilized within the sample organizations, potential challenges and obstacles existed for successful implementation. The findings from this study can help to develop a model for a formalized process implemented within the Department of Health. The predominant theme of the findings was the lack of a fully defined process for the department. A formalized succession plan utilizes a process that human resources can implement repetitively to recognize and train leaders to succeed in vacated positions. The company is in a better position to achieve organizational objectives and goals without a long lapse while extensive training occurs for new leaders. An additional recurring theme was the amount of time it takes to find a replacement for a vacated position and the amount of training and orientation it takes roles to know the job functions and roles. Succession planning can shorten the training time and allow a more seamless transition to new leadership. Knowing the functions and roles of the department can greatly cut the time needed to learn the goals of the organization and the functions of the job role.

The best use of this study is for executive leaders within the Department of Health since the sample size consisted of leadership within the health departments in East Tennessee. I specifically focused on Department of Health functions and practices in current hiring processes and training requirements. However, since the study demonstrated the relationship between succession planning, employee productivity, and turnover, the implications could apply to general business practices that may govern parent organizations with overarching policies and protocols. The study can also apply to those in general practice that identify how the relationships exist within their organization. The activities, guidelines, and responses provided by study participants are based on lived experiences and narratives from within local health departments. Leaders can view this study within the organization that may be able to drive

organizational change. Communication amongst different organizational causes at any level of leadership may inspire the start of change. The findings and correlations between the different study areas can demonstrate how these same relationships can appear in different fields or programs. The leaders who work under a parent organization with overarching policies and procedures can see how the autonomy of individual offices can vary or be similar in certain aspects.

I will provide the organization that supported this study with information about the findings. I will provide a copy of the complete study of leadership within the organization. Presenting the topic and findings at specific conferences and events to discuss different practices currently used by offices as well as identify opportunities for improvement is a consideration. Each year, the Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence holds conferences that offer seminars and workshops for professional development. These seminars directly correlate with the study. I can present the findings and processes of this study at conferences to share knowledge of the correlation of data. I can seek to publish in government journals or scholarly journals. In addition, speaking informally to individual offices that may have questions about processes is in my plans. This practice may benefit offices that are not very familiar with succession planning overall or that want more information on impacts before developing their own plan. researchers could present at any sort of leadership training or meetings to spread knowledge of findings.

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

Most participants in this study stated that there was no clear definition of succession planning or succession planning practices or goals within the organization. Some health departments attempt to act at the local level, but they are still bound by the confines of hiring

policies determined by the State of Tennessee. Strong leaders can also inspire trust. The results of the study show that a defined succession plan can help increase employee morale and job satisfaction. The study shows that the lack of a succession plan can make employees feel underappreciated. I will share the study with colleagues and professional peers to demonstrate the importance of succession planning.

Recommendations for Further Study

The findings of this study recommend further study on the time it takes to approve and fill a state job posting. The excess amount of time between a vacated position and when the approval process and filling the position. The participants mentioned this process almost consistently. Certain state policies denote hiring processes. This process may warrant further study into the benefits of the current processes and changes that could decrease the time for vacancies in positions. Further studies could also include different state organizations. The study could help determine which succession planning practices, if any, are being carried out in other government organizations within the state. The study could help identify the different processes utilized in the hiring policies and how they may apply to the Department of Health.

Finally, additional studies could include succession planning practices within health departments in other states. While the State of Tennessee must act within the confines of a defined set of hiring policies, other states may not have the same limitations and confines. As with other areas of study, this study could seek to identify other practices currently utilized and how they may adapt to fit the State of Tennessee.

Reflections

This research study was a challenging experience. I learned new things about the organization and what the local offices are doing to encourage high performers. The findings were somewhat expected, but some were also surprising.

Personal and Professional Growth

Doing a study in an organization where you are currently a leader can inadvertently lead to bias. I put several safeguards in place to intentionally avoid personal bias. I asked the same of each participant, no matter which answers were given. The questions were not built based on the answers. In addition, I did not know all participants on a personal and professional level, the topic area had not been previously discussed. The responses were not always what was expected or the same as what I had experienced previously. Participants had the chance to review interviews and transcriptions for any discrepancies before I began looking for commonalities and themes. This stressed the importance of valuing the perception of other employees with different experiences.

The original intent of this study was to establish if there is a relationship and connection between succession planning and employee outcomes (productivity, satisfaction, and turnover). While some levels of management are familiar with succession planning, many of the local management teams dealing with staff were unfamiliar. Since starting the study, processes have shifted slightly in response to different processes the state is beginning to do for retention and recruitment. While the hiring process is still a barrier for interview participants, they also identified that the state is looking to provide more incentives for recruitment and monetary incentives for current employees. This study allowed for a better insight into staff from other offices and how they view current practices. Many offered innovative ideas on how they are trying to encourage and incentivize staff into seeking promotional positions. Although the

participants cannot guarantee they will hire someone for any specific position, they hinted that employees are receptive to the appreciation of their abilities and the potential to grow with the organization.

Biblical Perspective

God designed man to work before, even in the womb, therefore being predestined to His chosen path. “He chose us in him before the world's creation to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, under his pleasure and will” (Ephesians 1:4-5). Working lives can have a direct correlation with how we function within society. Self-esteem and a sense of identity and purpose can also be wrapped up in one’s job (Hardy, 1990). Work has a way of pushing to discover specific talents and abilities and integrate them into one’s place in society (Hardy, 1990). Though some view work as tedious, dull, or monotonous, many are challenged by their jobs. Work provides an outlet to exceed, grow, and potentially find the good in things. Work also gives an opportunity to spread God’s word to those who may not have heard it or been exposed to it otherwise. Acts 20:28 states, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” Succession planning can allow an organization to keep up to date with the latest expertise. Individuals can be taught to ask questions to further understand, which can help connect people and allow them to perceive the emotions of others (Weinstein et al., 2009). By aligning an employee’s workplace growth and identifying leadership abilities with the organization's goals through succession planning approaches, humans can ensure that an employee will be on target to achieve goals that also matter to the organization. Strong leaders can inspire trust. The leader can inspire trust or doubt based on actions and communications. How they interact with employees can determine a

level of trust within the organization. The leader's behavior is the most important in determining organizational trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Without trust in relationships, they cannot develop a community. Individuals in a group will not encourage one another to accomplish an assigned task if they do not trust each other (Blanchard et al., 2016).

Employees that enjoy their work are more confident in their work. This leads to higher levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction (Haldorai et al., 2020). By developing systems that are in place with an organization's overall goals, mission, and values, there is a greater chance of success for the systems. Employees who feel connected to work and an overall goal are more likely to perform better and less likely to actively look for other employment due to a sense of loyalty to the organization (Haldorai et al., 2020). By developing an employee's strength and developing their gift from God in the way of work, an employee can become more committed and loyal to the organization. Succession planning and leadership development can provide the opportunity, time, and place for potential leaders and high-potential leaders to improve their leadership and interpersonal skills. With clear expectations and defined processes, there can be positive outcomes for individuals and the organization together. According to Romans 8:28, those who are called to God's purpose work together using the gifts He gave to work together for good. Some paths may seem the clear, obvious choice, but do not function in a Christ-centered environment. It is important to seek His guidance to lead the organization down the path of God's will. Working through struggles does not take away from the Lord's blessings; the blessing can give the means to overpower and come through the hurdle (Proverbs 10:22). The Bible addresses the importance of continuity in Numbers 27:17 (KJV), the congregation of the Lord will not be as sheep without a shepherd- those that have gone before them may go them and lead. Building a sustainable organization (or tribe in this verse concerning Moses and Joshua)

requires orderly transfers of authority. When continuity is broken, those that are following may become confused and lose focus which can cause work structures to weaken and potentially fall apart. It is important for the current leader to show support of the new leader to demonstrate confidence in their abilities to the flock they will be leading.

Summary of Reflections

Although this study was challenging, the research improved my confidence in my ability to produce a lengthy piece of work. I avoided bias by implementing intentional safeguards while completing and aggregating narrative data. The finding demonstrates biblical connections through scripture relating to God's work and continuity of tasks.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine succession planning efforts in public health departments across East Tennessee. This study included a review of succession planning practices currently improvements utilized within four local health departments, two large and two small, in East Tennessee and identified barriers and opportunities for improvements. By recognizing different efforts currently being utilized within the sample organizations, potential challenges and obstacles to successful implementation were identified. These findings could further be utilized to develop a model for implementing a formalized process within the Department of Health. The literature review assisted in determining definitions of overall processes as well as individual inputs and the impacts of those inputs. Once these determinants were defined, it aided in determining the importance of succession planning on determinants within East Tennessee health departments and the impact on predetermined variants relating to employee behavior and productivity. In this qualitative case study, I sought to examine succession planning efforts in public health departments across East Tennessee. Senior

leaders in nonprofits and government agencies face the challenge of working through succession planning; because of hierarchical tiers and budget limitations, it can be difficult to offer incentives for employee development. I interviewed selected participants through virtual conferences or phone calls at the participant's preference. This process included asking multi-level research questions to encourage dialogue with open-ended questions. Interviews included open-ended questions to understand the types of programs these organizations have developed, how they identify and nurture talent, lessons learned, and any personal anecdotes they wish to share. The evaluation of the interviews was for commonalities in barriers, current practices, and best practices as evidenced by outcomes. The data collected using the flexible, case-study methodology allowed me to gain a well-rounded picture for data collection. The staff provided first-hand knowledge and interaction with current practices. They provided valuable input into the questions asked. Some participants needed clarifying questions, leading me to believe that some staff, although directly involved in the organization's process, did not fully understand how organizational leaders perform specific practices. Employees crave the buy-in from their employer to provide that feeling of being valued and making a difference. The findings demonstrate what I was looking for to close the gap in the literature. The resulting work should prove valuable to the leaders in the Department of Health in studying succession planning practices and the impact on employee turnover and productivity.

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Appendix A: Title of Appendix A

Interview Questions

- 1) What is succession planning to you?**
- 2) How does your organization prepare for future gaps in employment?**
- 3) How does your organization hire or seek talent for leadership positions?**
- 4) How do you retain high-performing individuals in your organization?**
- 5) What steps does your organization take to avoid gaps in leadership in the event of a vacancy (either planned or unplanned)?**
- 6) What practices has your organization adopted to allow for continuity of services when a leadership position is vacated?**
- 7) What happens to productivity or numbers when there is a position vacated?**
- 8) How long does it take to recover any losses from a vacated position?**
- 9) What is the response of employees when a new hire takes place?**
 - a. Does this change from an internal hire to an external hire?**
- 10) Do you feel that high performers in your organization seek outside employment often? (Turnover)**
- 11) What are some challenges in the organization that prevent certain succession planning practices?**
- 12) What are some practices that your organization has utilized to promote succession planning practices (If any)?**
- 13) What do you feel is the one thing the department of health could improve upon in relation to succession planning?**

- 14) How do you feel succession planning impacts employee morale in the workplace (including employee value)?**
- 15) How do you feel succession planning impacts productivity and employees' outlook toward work?**