

Succession Planning for Sports Clubs



Section 1: What's this section all about?

Now, more than ever, there is a need for sports clubs and community organisations to consider their futures. Where will they be in five or ten years' time? Where will their volunteers be? As baby boomers approach their retirement age and as rural and regional communities continue to face processes of rural decline with services and families retreating back to cities or regional centres, many clubs may be faced with the threat of extinction. Clubs must ask themselves: what if key volunteers leave? Will all their knowledge and experience go with them? Who will carry the club into the future? Who will take on the key roles to ensure that the club survives and continues to grow? How will this process of change and handover happen?

This chapter offers guidance in how clubs can address these questions and make a plan for the future: a succession plan.

Section 2: Introduction to Succession Planning

What is succession planning?

When we think of 'succession planning', most people think of a family business. We often hear about families trying to decide 'who gets what' or who will take over when the parents die or retire. However succession planning is much more than this. If your club is serious about succession planning, you need to disregard this common perception and think about succession planning in a broader way.

Succession planning is about looking at where your club has come from, where it is now, where it needs to go and what your club can do to get it there. Ultimately, succession planning should help you achieve the club's objectives over the next five, 10 or 15 years by ensuring that your club has the right volunteers with the right skills in the right positions at the right time.

It is about putting a system in place to ensure that when someone leaves (such as the club president, a coach or the canteen manager) the club is not left with a massive black hole of knowledge and expertise and that there is someone in the wings ready to step up into that role. It is not just about replacing the missing volunteer however. (In the business world this would be called simply 'replacement management'.) There is more to it than that. It is about knowing what skills or expertise are needed to fill key roles within the club, now and in the future, and making sure that others within the club possess these skills and knowledge so there is someone to fill the void if that key member has to retire. It is about identifying, recruiting, retaining, valuing, developing and preparing volunteers so that the club has a depth of knowledge and a pool of ready and able volunteers. In doing this, the club ensures that transitions are smooth as people come and go and it can continue to meet its strategic objectives into the future.

The succession planning process can be broken down into five key steps.

They are:

1. Examine your club's position (current needs, critical roles and expected vacancies)
2. Identify skills required to fill critical roles in your club;
3. Assess the skills gap in your club and identify potential successors;
4. Develop and prepare potential successors; and
5. Evaluate your succession plan.

Why is this important for your club?

It is important for your club to succession plan because it:

- Enables your club to share the load among volunteers and avoid volunteer burnout;
- Allows a smoother handover of key positions;
- Improves your volunteer 'bench strength'
- Creates a more appealing environment for volunteers; and
- Allows your club to deliver better services, improving the club culture.

In most small communities across NSW, there are club presidents, secretaries or board members who find they have to stay in the role much longer than they wanted because there is simply no one to take over from them. These volunteers are often doing far too much work for one person for far too long. They become the lynchpin in the club – they hold all the vital knowledge and don't feel they have anyone to share the load. This can sometimes lead to these volunteers becoming exhausted and resentful. When it comes time for them to leave, it can mean the club simply collapses because there is no one prepared to step up to the role. Even though there may be someone willing to take over, the task of taking over is often too great and their lack of skills or knowledge prevents them from doing so.

As we know, sports clubs play a vital role in rural communities and it is in everyone's interest if these clubs can survive and thrive in to the future. In order for this to happen, clubs need a strong depth of capable volunteers. This does not just happen. Clubs need to be proactive and plan for it, instead of waiting for that lynchpin to leave and only then doing something about it. It is a little like that expression 'a team is only as good as its bench'. If a team plays in a grand final match and one of their star players goes down with a major injury, it is vital that there is someone on the bench that can easily run onto the field and fill the gap. They need to know what is required of them in that position. They need to have had training there and they need to be able to fit in well with the players around them so that the combinations are effective. Without this, your team is not entirely whole and often will not stack up against the opposition. Succession planning is ultimately the process of improving your 'bench strength'.

There is another key reason that clubs should begin succession planning. As it becomes harder and harder to attract and maintain volunteers, succession planning can help clubs to be a more appealing and rewarding environment for volunteers. Succession planning encourages targeted recruitment of volunteers, investment in developing volunteers' skills and valuing their contribution. It also allows volunteers to see a clear path for progression through the club. This is beneficial as it avoids them getting bored in their roles, allows them to gain a broad experience of the club and encourages a more diverse group of volunteers. It can also avoid the senior club members being in the same role forever which potentially creates a stagnant, rigid and unappealing club culture for volunteers (especially young volunteers).

Finally, succession planning is important because it can help sports clubs to better achieve their strategic goals. Skilled, capable and prepared volunteers help the club to deliver better services to its members, ultimately creating a more positive club culture.

What are the benefits of a succession plan?

Some of the benefits of club succession planning are that

It provides:

- Continuity for the club at times of volunteer turnover and minimises disturbance to club activities;
- Recognition and reward for long serving volunteers as they become mentors to new volunteers and can share their knowledge; and
- A clear plan for volunteer progression and replacement so that clubs do not have to do it in the middle of a crisis.

It encourages:

- Clubs to identify critical roles within the club, skills required to carry out these roles and potential volunteers who possess these skills;
- Clubs to think about what skills/knowledge/volunteers they may need in the future and to begin planning for this;
- Clubs to assess what knowledge, skill and expertise gaps exist within the club;
- Clubs to examine and assess the current makeup of their volunteers which leads to more thoughtful recruitment and can create a more diverse volunteer base;
- The development and retention of talented volunteers in the long-term;
- Information sharing and record keeping which avoids the loss of critical information (such as member databases, club networks, event timetables etc) when key volunteers move on; and
- Ongoing review and evaluation which ultimately improves the overall management of the club.

It Improves:

- The recruitment process for key positions which could lead to volunteers being more engaged in their roles because they are more appropriately suited to the position;

- Volunteer access to training and development opportunity;
- The leadership qualities of volunteers; and
- The morale and commitment of volunteers.

It also:

- Minimises volunteer burnout because volunteers are not 'stuck' in the same role forever without anyone to take over from them;
- Motivates volunteers because they can see a pathway of development and progression and they feel more nurtured; and
- Creates opportunity for young people to get more involved in decision-making, take on more responsibility and become more connected to their club; and

What are some challenges your club might face?

There are a number of pitfalls when trying to develop a succession plan. Most can be avoided easily. These challenges will vary depending on your community and the specific needs and characteristics of your club and its members. Below is a list of common obstacles organisations face:

Your club might face difficulty in succession planning if:

1. Your succession plan involves too much administration and creates too much work for volunteers;
2. Club managers get stuck on traditional views about who can hold key leadership positions in the club and don't consider alternatives (for example, young people);
3. Not all Board/Committee members are committed to the idea of succession planning and don't understand the benefits, which leads to a superficial approach;
4. Recruitment and appointment of volunteers to key positions is not transparent (i.e. clearly outlined/documentated and communicated to club members) and therefore becomes political;

5. Personalities, egos or individual needs get in the way of decision-making;
6. The club has poor record keeping, resulting in a succession plan that is not clear or well documented and that volunteers don't know exists;
7. Volunteer promotions are based on tenure instead of competency, skill or talent. Often volunteers who have been in the club a long time take on key positions without having the skill or knowledge to carry out the role successfully because committees feel they 'deserve a go'.
8. Club members and/or the board are fearful of change;
9. People are underestimated or left out because they do not fit club culture;
10. The club fails to provide adequate training and development for volunteers;
11. The club has a limited volunteer base;
12. The club has limited access to resources to invest in the succession planning process;
13. The committee or board feel the need to succession plan is not immediate, leading to lots of talk and not a lot of action;
14. You fail to continually review and improve the succession plan; and/or
15. The club adopts a rigid and inflexible approach that is not tailored to specific needs of the club and individuals within it.

Not all of these challenges will be relevant to your club. However, think about which challenges or obstacles your club may face and discuss strategies to minimise – or where possible, eliminate - the impact of these obstacles before starting on your succession plan. Use the *Possible Challenges for Succession Planning Table* to record these ideas.

Section 3: The Succession Planning Process

Now that you know a little more about the nature of succession planning, its benefits and potential pitfalls, you are ready to begin the five step process to creating your plan. As you go, you may like to complete the *Succession Plan Template*. At the end of each step, there will be a reminder for you to revisit the template and add the new information to your plan. It is best if you complete the template and worksheets in each section and then use that information to complete the Success Plan Template. Please note, the template is intended as a guide only and should be adjusted or changed to suit the needs of your club where necessary.

Step 1: Examine your club's position (current needs, critical roles and expected vacancies)

To commence succession planning it is vital for you to understand exactly why your club needs a plan for the future and what you hope to get out of it. This involves clarifying your club's current position to identify its needs for the future. More specifically, there are three stages to this first step. The first is to establish the club's position and current needs, the second is to identify critical roles within the club that help the club address these needs and the third is to assess whether there any expected departures or vacancies in these roles.

A) Identify your club's current and future needs

Consider your club in its current form. Think about the following three areas: club management (the decision-making and administrative processes in your club), club activity and club people. To help you assess your club's position in each category, download the *Club*

Management, Club Activity and Club People Questions from the website:

Some clubs may have already thought about these three areas and detailed their needs and objectives in a club strategic plan or discussed these questions at an AGM. If this is the case with your club, you should refer to your strategic plan to help you complete this first step.

For each club area (management, activity and people), answer the following three questions:

1. What does your club do well?
2. What have you realised your club needs?
3. What changes do you want to see happen in the next five-10 years?

With these responses, complete the *Club Position Worksheet*.

Thinking about this helps you to understand your club's current position and why you are beginning to make a plan for succession. Succession planning is really about what you need to do now to ensure that your club meets its objectives in the future. This could involve making sure you continue to do the things you do well or deciding that you need to make changes.

If you would like to begin developing your succession plan, you can now complete the Club Position section of the Succession Plan Template.

B) Identify critical roles within your club:

Once you have identified your club's current position and needs, it is essential to identify the key roles within the club that will serve to address these needs now and into the future. That is, what do you see as the vital roles to your club's success in the future?

Firstly, refer to your response for ‘what does your club do well?’ Who are the people in your club who contribute to this? What roles do they currently hold? Make a list of:

1. Roles in the club that contribute to the current success of your club. (Try to focus on the role/position and not the individual people in those positions).

Secondly, you must think about your response when you asked yourselves ‘what have you realised your club needs?’ Did you identify a need for greater membership numbers? Did you identify a need for better resources? Does your club need more money to function well? Do you have enough members but not enough volunteers? Think about the positions within your club at the moment that are responsible for addressing some of these needs. For example, perhaps your sponsorship coordinator is responsible for attracting more money to the club and could therefore address the need for more money coming in to the club. Make a list of the following:

2. Roles in the club that could address some of the things your club doesn’t have but needs.

Thirdly, you asked yourselves ‘what changes do you want to see happen in the next five-10 years?’ Perhaps you want to involve more young people. Consider which position in your club is responsible for youth engagement. Is it currently anybody’s responsibility or do you need to create a new position that addresses youth engagement? Make a list of the following:

3. Roles in the club that you might need in the future but don’t currently have.

Finally, think about whether there are any roles you have not covered but you think are critical to your club's future. Make a list of the following:

4. Roles in the club that you just can't do without.

It is important to realise that key positions in the club do not just mean the Club President or Treasurer. It could be the Volunteer Coordinator because recruiting, retaining and recognising volunteers are important to your club. It could be the Canteen Manager because increasing club revenue will be important over the next few years owing to higher costs of insurance. It could be an experienced referee, because they are ensuring a high level of adjudication which means games are more enjoyable for members. The point is to think broadly about what makes your club a success or what you could be doing better and need to work on. To record this information use, the *Critical Position Worksheet*.

You are now able to complete the Critical Roles/Positions in the Club section of your Succession Plan.

C) What vacancies are expected in these positions?

Once you have established the critical positions within the club, you need to assess (to the best of your ability) the risk of turnover in these positions in the near future. Who is retiring? Who is moving away? Who has been in the role too long and may be getting sick of the role? Make a list and rank the expected departure/vacancy of key positions as either 'immediate', 'short term' (in the next 12 months to two years) or 'long term' (in two years' time and beyond).

The more you know about the timing of handover, the more prepared you can be to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible and that

you have someone waiting in the wings to step into the role. To record this information, use the Expected Vacancy Worksheet.

Once you have gone through the three stages of Step 1 you should have recorded the following information:

- a) What your club does well, what your club needs to do better and what changes you would like to make in the future;
- b) The critical roles within your club that contribute to your club's success now or in the future; and
- c) When you expect these key roles to become vacant.

You are now ready to complete the Expected Vacancies in Critical Roles section of your Succession Plan.

Step 2: Identify skills required to fill critical roles in your club

The second step in succession planning is to break down the roles, responsibilities and required knowledge for the critical roles you identified in Step 1. It might be a good idea to begin with the roles you marked as 'immediate' expected vacancy, then move on to 'short term' and finally 'long term'.

For each position, ask the person who is currently in the role to answer the following questions and discuss it with the board. The board should also make adjustments or additions to these as they see fit to ensure the responses reflect the feelings of the board as a whole and not just the individual who is currently in the role. For the positions that do not currently exist or are vacant, the board or relevant committee should answer the questions collectively.

- Why is this position so important?
- What are the three main objectives of this position?
- Which skills are required to carry out this position?
- Is there any previous experience that would help to carry out this role?
- What knowledge is required?
- Is there any other expertise/personal quality or characteristic that would help someone to carry out this role successfully?

Now devise a position description for each critical role using the *Position Description Template*. By completing a position description you are achieving two things. Firstly, you are clearly recording what skills and experience are required for key positions which will help the club board in the future. Often the person in the role is the only person who knows exactly what is required of them so when they leave that information goes with them and their replacement has to 'learn as they go'. If a position description exists, it provides a level of continuity in that position as the new volunteer continues in the role knowing exactly what is required of them and what the position is all

about. Secondly, a position description outlines exactly what you are looking for when you start to recruit volunteers to fill the position. It is very important that you revisit these position descriptions regularly and make appropriate updates.

You should now be able to complete the Skills and Knowledge Required to Fill Critical Roles section of the Succession Plan template.

Step 3: Assess the skills gap in your club and identify potential successors

You should now have a good idea what positions you see as vital for the future success of your club and what skills and expertise are required to fill these positions. Now, it is essential to identify whether your current volunteers possess these skills and expertise or whether skills gaps exist; in which case you will need to train and develop certain club volunteers to allow them to step in to the role or alternatively recruit new volunteers with the appropriate expertise. Whether they are existing volunteers or whether you have to recruit new volunteers, the club must begin to identify individuals who could step in to the roles when current volunteers leave.

a) Assess existing volunteers' skills

The first step is figuring out what skills, experience or relevant qualities existing volunteers might have. Think about your current volunteers. Even though you may not have considered someone a good fit for the Treasurer role because they have always been involved on the coaching side of things, perhaps they run a small business and would have great skills to manage the club's financial needs. Or perhaps another volunteer who has always been team manager is very well organised, particularly good with young people and well liked by many club members. This could translate in to having the right skills to be the Volunteer Coordinator or Youth Coordinator. The point is that you need to identify the expertise and valuable qualities of your existing volunteers in case this fits well with one of your critical roles identified in Step 1. If you are not aware of your volunteer's skills and experience, why not ask them to complete the *Volunteer Skill Audit*. This may identify expertise you didn't know they had.

b) Identify Potential Successors

Refer to the position descriptions you created in Step 2. Try to match the skills, characteristics and expertise of volunteers or members of your club with those outlined in the position descriptions of your club's critical roles. Use the *Volunteer Skills Table* tool to identify potential successors.

Once you have identified which volunteers match up with which positions, it is also necessary to think about the following:

- Who has done good work in the past?
- Who has the qualities that fit well within our club?
- Who is a fast learner and easily adaptable to change?
- Who do you see as the leaders of the future in your club?
- How can we create a diverse volunteer base?
- Which volunteers have received positive feedback in the past?

These questions will help you distinguish between two potential successors with the same skill level or perhaps justify the placement of a volunteer who may not currently have the skills but demonstrates the potential to learn the skills quickly.

Now you should have an idea of whether you can fill the critical roles with existing club volunteers. You may also have identified some skills or knowledge gaps where your current volunteers simply do not have the right skills, knowledge or qualities that are required of particular critical roles. If this is the case you may need to think about recruiting new volunteers to step into the roles.

You are now able to complete the Proposed Successors for Critical Roles section of the Succession Plan template.

c) External recruitment of potential successors

As you may have already seen, this website deals with recruitment in a couple of sections. For detailed information, useful links and helpful tools about recruiting volunteers check out the Finding New Staff section or the Recruit Young People section of the website.

However there are a couple of new points to be made when we are talking about recruitment for the purpose of succession planning. Good recruitment practice is a vital aspect of effective succession planning. The quality of volunteers needs to be high if your club is going to continue to grow and thrive in the future. It is not as simple as finding someone who wants to help and then throwing them in to a position. Clubs need to think more strategically than that. Your club needs to be recruiting volunteers who will help you achieve your club's objectives now and over the next five years.

The main aim of recruitment should be about engaging volunteers with the right qualities, skills, experience or knowledge to fill some of the gaps you have identified. In order to do this the recruitment process should be targeted and systematic. Clubs need to devise a plan for finding, screening and inducting potential successors.

Firstly, the club needs to *actually find* potential volunteers. Consider the following:

- Where could we find people in our community who possess the relevant skills?
- Where do the best volunteers come from? How can we reach them?

- Are there people who have said 'no' to volunteering in the past because they were too busy but may be available now?
- What kind of volunteers will we need in the next five -10 years?
- Are there promising young people whom we could engage?
- Are we searching broadly enough or are we being too exclusive?
- Can we be more inclusive?
- Should we be implementing fixed terms for key positions and a limit on successive terms (for example two year term as Club President with a limit of two successive terms) to avoid burnout, make the position more appealing and safeguard the club against poor volunteers being in positions for long periods?

Secondly, once you have identified avenues of recruitment or individuals you would like to engage, it is a good idea to set out a screening process to make sure the people you are recruiting are right for your club. Some organisations achieve this through forming a Recruitment Committee that works together to recruit, screen and induct new volunteers. The Committee as a whole decides whether the individual is suited to the particular position within the club. This can avoid the issue of personal friendships and relationships influencing the appointment of volunteers in to key positions. It also means that it is not the responsibility of just one person to find new volunteers. In order to screen new volunteers committees could use the following methods, depending on time and available resources:

- Assessing written applications;
- Formal Interviews;
- Informal chats;
- Checking references; and
- Assigning 'trial periods' for new volunteers.

Finally it is important to comprehensively induct new volunteers to make sure they understand exactly how their role fits within the 'big picture' of the club. To find out more about induction, check out the Induction and Inducting Young Volunteers sections of the website.

You are now ready to complete the Recruitment of Successors section of the Succession Plan template.

Step 4: Develop and prepare potential successors

Although sometimes you may be able to find perfect volunteers with exactly the right skills to fill your critical positions, chances are most people will not possess *all* the skills or *all* the knowledge required of them. As a result it is crucial to continually invest in the development of your volunteers and take time to prepare them for roles in the future. By doing this, your club will be creating a greater depth of capability in your volunteer base, making it much easier to find suitable successors in the future. Sometimes providing training and development options is expensive or time consuming. Each club will have different limitations on what they can and can't afford. However, before you decide you cannot afford it or you do not have the time, think about the outcome of having highly qualified volunteers for your club. You must try to do everything to get the best out of your people and to educate them so they can contribute to club success in the long term.

While all volunteers should have access to training and development, it is especially important for those volunteers whom you have identified as your potential successors. Training and development should aim to arm volunteers with the expertise required to take on critical roles when the positions become vacant. It should also contribute to creating a clear path of progression for volunteers. That is, they know exactly what is required to move in to a position and what training/experience they need to gain to take on the role.

Training and development practices could include:

- Formal training courses;
- Informal training provided by club members;
- Shadowing (the successor would follow the volunteer currently in the role to get an idea of what is involved and to familiarise themselves with the work);

- Special assignments or projects (for example, planning a fundraising event);
- Committee or job rotation;
- Systematic knowledge-sharing among board or committee members so volunteers are familiar with what each committee member is responsible for;
- Team building or leadership exercises; and/or
- Mentoring and coaching.

Read through the *Training and Development Table* for more specific details about these training practices. Also, for more information about investing in your volunteers' development, have a look at the Training Staff page or the Investing in Young Volunteers page of the website.

The best way to ensure your potential successors are prepared and have carried out the necessary training and develop activities is by devising individual development plans. That is, each successor has a plan that outlines the training, coaching, mentoring or work experience activities that they will engage in over a certain time period. This document does not need to be lengthy and complicated. See the *Sample Volunteer Development Targets* form as an example. Your club can customise this as you wish.

Once you have viewed the Training and Development Table and the Sample Volunteer Development Targets form, you are ready to complete the Development of Successors section of your succession plan.

Step 5: Evaluate your succession plan

The final step in developing a succession plan is to evaluate and review how it has worked and what (if any) adjustments need to be made. Evaluation of your club's succession plan needs to be ongoing. It is about constantly monitoring movements within your club and making sure that you are prepared for what is to come. A succession plan is not something that you complete and then don't look at for a few years. It should be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis to make sure it is keeping up with the changes within your club.

There are two aspects of evaluation; reviewing how the plan itself is working and reviewing movements or changes within your organisation that could influence the plan.

First and foremost, it is vital that you know whether the plan itself is actually having a positive impact on your club. In order to gauge this, your succession planning performance needs to be measurable. Your club needs to decide on clear indicators that measure the effectiveness and success of your plan. Just like in a business, someone (or a group) should be accountable for the performance of the plan. In most clubs, this would usually be the chairman of the board or the board as a whole. Making someone accountable for the plan should ensure a better level of commitment from them and encourage them to invest time and energy in to making the plan effective. This means that if your measured outcomes show no positive improvement, then it is the responsibility of this person or this group to do something about it. If no one is accountable then no one will feel responsible for ensuring the plan actually works.

Your club should choose measurable indicators that reflect your main priorities for the plan. Some may be measured purely with numbers but other

indicators might require you to use surveys, informal chats or conduct interviews with volunteers. Some indicators could be:

- Volunteer turnover (that is, how frequently your volunteers come and go);
- The number of existing volunteers who have stepped into new roles when a position has become vacant versus the number of new volunteers you have had to recruit to fill positions;
- The time it has taken to fill vacant positions;
- Feedback (from members, volunteers, board members, new recruits);
- Retention rates of volunteers (how long are they staying in your club?)
- Volunteer satisfaction (are they bored or overworked?)
- Reasons given for volunteer departure;
- The nature of role transitions (has it been smooth when someone has left and another person takes over or has there been a lot of disruption?)

For an explanation of these indicators and suggestions for how to measure them, refer to the *Performance Indicators Table*.

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other factors you use to measure the success of your plan. It is best if you decide right from the start exactly which indicators you will be using so you can record the information as you go. Again, you should not make this too difficult and it should not add a whole new workload to already busy volunteers.

Secondly, evaluation is also about 'keeping your finger on the pulse'. By consistently reviewing how things are going and taking notice of movements within your club, you can better predict what is likely to happen in the near future and prepare for it. Apart from the performance indicators, your club also needs to be keeping track of things like:

- Who might be approaching retirement or leaving the club?
- Who is ready to step in to other roles or take on more responsibility?
- Which volunteers have valuable skills or expertise that your club needs?
- What needs/challenges could arise in the near future and what skills/expertise will you need to address this?
- Do the position descriptions still fit the roles or do they need to be updated?
- Are there any major changes in our community that could impact on our club and volunteer numbers?

You may like to use the *Agenda Template* which includes succession planning discussion points. This will present an opportunity for you to discuss any changes at your board meetings. By monitoring performance and being aware of changes happening within your club as they happen, your succession plan will be more effective, more relevant and much more valuable to your club. The evaluation process is a crucial step to ensuring future growth of your club. While it is listed as Step 5 in the succession planning process, in some ways the evaluation process starts right at the beginning. From the start, your club needs to be observing, reviewing and recording information so you can properly evaluate the plan's performance and know what changes need to be made.

Section 4: Crucial Ingredients for Steps 1-5

Record Keeping and Information Sharing

One key thing your club can do to make Steps 1-5 easier and more effective is to keep good records so that sharing information among club members is a lot easier.

As mentioned, one of the major challenges clubs face is the loss of important information and knowledge when key members or volunteers leave. Loss of knowledge can cause major disruptions and set your club back a long way. Often whoever takes over from a departing volunteer needs to 'start from scratch' and begin gathering the information all over again. Whatever progress was made in that role previously is forgotten and not pursued any further. The main cause of this problem is not really the departure of a volunteer, it is the fact that no one else in the club has access to the information they learned in the role.

The solution is for volunteers in critical positions to record the things they learn and the progress they make as they go and regularly share that information with other club volunteers. This process of record keeping and information sharing should be an integral element of your club's activities. Examples of how your club can avoid the loss of knowledge when a key volunteer leaves are:

- Writing detailed position descriptions that outline the key responsibilities and tasks of each role;
- Documenting policies and plans and making them easily accessible to your club members and volunteers. (This could mean writing them in easy-to-understand language, publishing them on your website, having them on display etc.)

- Writing agendas and taking minutes at meetings. For more information refer to the Running Meetings page of the website or download the *Meeting Agenda Template* or *Meeting Minutes Template*. You might also like to view the *Minute Taking Help Sheet*.
- Documenting details about partnerships, sponsors and key contacts;
- Creating volunteer manuals that outline key club information for new volunteers. For an outline of what to include in a volunteer manual view the *Volunteer Manual Outline*. Conducting regular information audits;
- Carrying out evaluation sessions after big events and at the end of each season. For convenience, download the *Activity Evaluation template* which can be distributed to participants/attendees at events or the *Evaluation Form for Organisers* for club volunteers to complete following an event or at the wrap up of a season;
- Updating club contact lists, databases, event schedules etc. regularly;
- Promoting open communication among the board and other club members;
- Distributing club newsletters;
- Mentoring and coaching (to find out more about mentoring refer to the Step 9: Mentor Your Young Volunteers in the Getting Young People Involved section of the website).
- Job rotations; and/or
- Assigning time to 'knowledge sharing' at each club meeting (you can use the *Knowledge Sharing Template* as a guide).

Without effective record keeping and information being shared among your volunteers, your succession plan is at risk of failing. Potential successors need to be educated about what is happening in all areas of the club. A good flow of information among club volunteers will inevitably allow smoother and less disruptive transitions when key volunteers leave but may also contribute

to the club's effectiveness in the meantime. Sharing ideas and skills when taking on a challenge in your club means that you are accessing a much broader range of experience and may be able to tackle the challenge in new and innovative ways.

Engaging Young People

If your club is planning for the future and developing a succession plan, you need to seriously consider engaging young people in the management and day-to-day operations of your club. Young people can bring new energy, creativity, enthusiasm and a fresh set of eyes to your club. They are also typically more flexible and willing to adjust to change. If your club is wondering who will carry it in to the future, the reality is that it will probably be your young members. Your club needs to think about getting these young people involved behind the scenes now so that they can begin absorbing the information necessary to take up the reigns in the future. When identifying your potential successors, do not rule people out just because they are too young. If you do, you may be missing an excellent opportunity. Instead, think about which young members could be the leaders of your club in the future. By nurturing and developing their skills, you may be securing your club's longevity.

There are many benefits of including young people in your club's decision-making. For more information on how you can do this effectively, refer to the Getting Young People Involved section of the website.