



Succession Planning

What is succession planning?

Succession planning is about looking at where your club has come from, where it is now, where it needs to be and what your club can do to get it there.

Ultimately, succession planning should help you achieve the club's objectives over the next 5 or 10 years by ensuring your club has the right volunteers, with the right skills, in the most suitable role at the right time. You also want to ensure that when a volunteer leaves (such as the competitions secretary or treasurer) the club is not left with a void of knowledge and experience.

What are the benefits of succession planning?

- It allows your club to share the workload among volunteers and helps avoid burnout
- It allows for continuity and a smoother handover of key positions – for example: chairperson, secretary, treasurer
- Experienced volunteers can become mentors for new recruits, providing a gradual step back system in the club
- If a volunteer leaves the club suddenly there is a clear support system in place to avoid any breakdowns in club management
- The club increases your pool of volunteers to call on and makes it more appealing for volunteers to get involved
- Sharing of information and records is encouraged, which avoids the loss of critical information, when volunteers move on
- Succession planning allows your club to develop and grow

Challenges to succession planning

- Not all committee members are committed to the idea of succession planning and don't understand the benefits
- Recruitment and appointment of volunteers to key positions is not transparent and can cause conflict within the club
- Club/ committee members are fearful of a new approach
- The club has a limited volunteer base
- The committee feel the need for succession planning is not immediate so it is postponed when brought up at meetings
- Perception of a closed shop environment within the committee
- Not all club members are willing to volunteer



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How to best undertake succession planning

To undertake successful succession planning in your club the following points should be considered:

1. Know what roles you need to fill now and in the future

- There are mandatory roles within a Swim Ireland club that must be filled – Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Club Children’s Officer (general clubs (U18) only), Head Coach and 4 other committee positions. Ensure all committee members have an appointed role. Refer and use Swim Ireland roles and responsibility guidelines to identify the suitable roles for your club

2. Identify potential volunteers with the skills required

- Some roles may require a specific skillset, e.g. financial background for Treasurers. A skills matrix can be useful for recruiting members within a club. This can be included in your membership pack when new members join or at the start of the new season. (Template available from Swim Ireland).

3. Provide training and mentoring for new volunteers

- While you may find a volunteer who has all the skills required for a particular role there will still be training required to ensure they are knowledgeable in how the club is run and where to find support if required.

Recommended training for volunteers

- Swim Ireland courses/workshops – Safeguarding young people course (3 hours) for all volunteer roles (mandatory in general/U18 clubs). Club development days and other Swim Ireland workshops.
- Induction training in club – Introduce the club policies, procedures and other appropriate documents i.e. annual plan. There should also be training specific to the role the volunteer is taking on.
- Mentoring and 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. A comprehensive handover should then be completed on conclusion of this

4. Record keeping and information sharing

To make steps 1-3 easier and more effective is to keep good records so that sharing information among club members is a lot easier.

Examples of how your club can avoid the loss of knowledge when a key volunteer leaves are:

- Adopt Swim Ireland role descriptions that outline key responsibilities of each role
- Document policies and development plans, and make them easily accessible to your club members and volunteers.
- Keep accurate and concise minutes of committee and club meetings
- Embark on the Club Mark journey which will assist you to put succession planning and information sharing procedures in place.