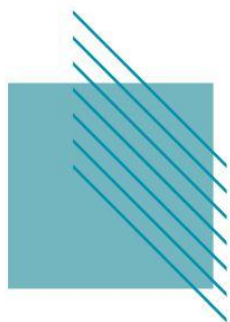# KNOWLEDGE PACKAGE FOR SUCCESSION PLANNING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

VOLUME 3: PROSPECTIVE TOOLKIT

September 2025

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The Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) is an intergovernmental organisation for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning, and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. As such, it helps governments in the region develop better public administration, public services, and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses. It helps prepare them for membership and integration into the European Union (EU). The ReSPA members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, while Kosovo[1] is a beneficiary.

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[1]*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence*

About this Knowledge Package

This publication is part of a three-volume **Knowledge Package on Succession Planning in the Western Balkans. Volumes 1 and 2** were refined from materials produced during the 2025 ReSPA Seasonal School on Succession Planning. **Volume 3 (this Toolkit)** was developed **separately** to operationalise the package; it draws directly on the **regional analysis and recommendations** in **Volume 1** and the **conceptual foundations and implementation pathways** in **Volume 2**.

The Three Volumes

*Volume 1 — Succession Planning in the Western Balkans Public Administrations: Analysis and Recommendations (hereafter: **Analysis and Recommendations**).* Regional diagnosis, EU cases, and the policy-level roadmap.

*Volume 2 — Strategic Framework for Succession Planning in Public Administration (hereafter: **Strategic Framework**).* Principles, conceptual foundations, and **implementation pathways**.

*Volume 3 — Prospective Succession Planning Toolkit for the Western Balkans Administrations (hereafter: **Toolkit**).* Hands-on methodology, tools, and templates (developed independently, **informed by** Volumes 1 and 2).

How to read this package. This volume (**Toolkit**) provides the **how-to instruments**—ready-to-use templates, scoring grids, and worked examples. For the **regional why/what**, see **Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations**. For **conceptual foundations and implementation pathways**, see **Volume 2 – Strategic Framework**.

Using this Toolkit. Each template indicates the **relevant pathway** in **Volume 2** (e.g., critical positions, talent maps, onboarding, knowledge transfer) so practitioners can move directly from concept to application. For context on prioritising roles and sequencing reforms, refer to the **Roadmap** in **Volume 1**.

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administrations across the Western Balkans face a growing need to ensure leadership continuity, retain institutional knowledge, and effectively develop internal talent. In an environment shaped by political transitions, EU integration pressures, and complex reform agendas, the ability of institutions to function effectively during leadership changes is critical. However, many public institutions in the region remain vulnerable to the sudden loss of experienced staff, particularly in strategic and senior positions. The consequences of such gaps include policy discontinuity, loss of know-how, and delays in meeting internal priorities and international obligations. Succession planning offers a structured solution to these challenges. At its core, succession planning is a proactive process for identifying and developing potential future leaders and key staff to fill critical roles. It is not simply about replacing one individual with another – it is about ensuring that the organisation maintains the skills, knowledge, and leadership capacity it needs to deliver on its mission, now and in the future.

This Toolkit has been developed specifically to support public administrations in the Western Balkans in designing and implementing a practical, context-sensitive succession planning process. While many administrations in the region already use established competency frameworks and talent development programs, succession planning remains underused as a strategic HR tool. This Toolkit addresses that gap by translating international good practices into a tailored, step-by-step approach suited to the realities of the Western Balkans' civil service systems. It aims to help administrations identify which positions are most critical for organisational success, assess and prepare internal talent to take on these roles in the future, and ensure the transfer of institutional memory. The Toolkit emphasises a straightforward and practical approach, prioritising real development opportunities for civil servants over purely formal assessments or static planning.

Intended users of this Toolkit include HR professionals, public sector managers, leadership development practitioners, and civil service reform coordinators. It can be applied within ministries, agencies, and other government institutions seeking to strengthen their internal capacity and long-term performance. It is also relevant for public administration academies, regional training institutions, and international partners supporting capacity development in the region. The Toolkit is structured to provide both conceptual guidance and ready-to-use tools. It begins by outlining the key preconditions for effective implementation, followed by guiding principles tailored to the region. It then presents a clear methodology, aligned with the specific needs of public institutions, and offers practical tools to support each step. The final section provides suggestions for next steps, including institutionalisation and scaling within broader HR management strategies.

Through the application of this Toolkit, public administrations in the Western Balkans can take a significant step toward building a more capable, resilient, and future-ready civil service – one that is prepared to meet the challenges of reform, innovation, and public service delivery in the years to come.

2. PRECONDITIONS FOR TOOLKIT USE

Effective succession planning requires more than technical tools or templates – it depends on certain **organisational conditions, cultural readiness, and policy alignment**. Before launching the process described in this toolkit, public administrations in the Western Balkans should reflect on several key preconditions and practical factors that will influence success.

- **Leadership Commitment and Strategic Alignment.** For succession planning to gain traction, visible support from senior leadership is essential. Ministers, secretaries-general, agency heads, and senior civil service leaders need to understand that succession planning is not about favouritism or automatic promotion, but about safeguarding organisational continuity and building internal capacity. Linking succession planning to broader public administration reforms – such as professionalisation, EU accession readiness, or digital transformation – increases its strategic relevance and political legitimacy. Without high-level backing, efforts may remain ad hoc or be perceived as optional, reducing long-term sustainability. Ideally, succession planning should be embedded in the institution's overall **human resource management strategy** or public administration reform framework.
- **A Functioning HRM System and Data Availability.** While this toolkit is designed to be practical and adaptable to various levels of HR system maturity, certain **basic HRM foundations** must be in place to implement succession planning effectively. These include:
    - Up-to-date organisational structure and job descriptions;
    - A functioning performance appraisal system;
    - Reliable data on staff competencies, career histories, and retirement forecasts;
    - A competency framework (even if it needs refinement or adaptation).

Institutions that lack these elements may need to invest first in strengthening their core HR processes before fully applying the toolkit.

- **Managerial Engagement and Line Responsibility.** Succession planning is not solely the responsibility of HR departments. Line managers play a central role in identifying potential successors, assessing readiness, and supporting development. Their buy-in is crucial for ensuring the process is realistic, fair, and grounded in day-to-day work realities. However, in many public institutions, line managers have limited capacity or confidence to engage in people management. A clear definition of roles and responsibilities, combined with practical guidance and support from HR units, is essential to make managerial engagement feasible and meaningful.
- **Transparent and Merit-Based Culture.** Succession planning will not function effectively in environments where merit is not respected or career progression is perceived as arbitrary or politically driven. For the process to be credible, it must be grounded in **clear criteria**, **objective assessments**, and **open communication** about purpose and outcomes. Potential successors should understand that inclusion in the process is a development opportunity, not a guarantee of promotion. In contexts where trust in HR processes is low, institutions may need to invest time in **communicating the purpose and benefits** of succession planning and ensuring early steps are inclusive, transparent, and seen as fair.
- **Capacity for Implementation and Follow-Through.** Even well-designed succession plans can fail if they are not implemented consistently or monitored over time. Institutions

must assess whether they have the **capacity and resources** to support implementation, including staff time, data systems, and development opportunities. This includes:

- Designating staff to coordinate the process;
- Providing training to managers and HR personnel;
- Ensuring development actions (e.g. mentoring, secondments) are available and supported;
- Setting up regular review and follow-up mechanisms.

Piloting the toolkit on a small scale before broader rollout can help identify capacity gaps and adjust the approach accordingly.

In the Western Balkans, public administrations are at different stages of civil service reform. Some have well-established performance management and competency frameworks; others are in earlier stages of HR modernisation. Political dynamics, frequent turnover, and fragmentation of responsibilities can also complicate implementation.

Therefore, this toolkit is designed to be **modular and scalable**. It can be introduced gradually, starting with a single ministry or agency, focusing first on the most strategic roles, and building from there. Adaptation to each administration's legal, institutional, and political context is encouraged. Moreover, regional cooperation – through institutions such as **ReSPA, SIGMA**, or **civil service training institutions** in respective administrations – can support mutual learning, benchmarking, and gradual harmonisation of good practices.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Succession planning is a strategic process that touches on leadership development, organisational culture, and human resource management. To maximise its impact and sustainability in the Western Balkans public sector, the following guiding principles should inform its design and implementation:

- **Strategic Focus on Critical Roles.** Succession planning should prioritise positions that are most critical to organisational success and reform agendas. These include senior leadership roles, key managerial posts, and specialised technical positions essential for policy implementation. By concentrating resources on roles that carry the highest risk if left vacant, administrations can ensure that continuity and capacity are maintained where it matters most.
- **Transparency and Fairness.** To build trust and legitimacy, the process must be grounded in transparent criteria and merit-based assessments. Clear communication about the purpose of succession planning, how candidates are identified and assessed, and what development opportunities are available will encourage broader acceptance. This openness reduces perceptions of favouritism or political bias, which can undermine the process.
- **Integration with Existing HR Systems and Reform Initiatives.** Succession planning should not be a standalone activity but integrated with existing human resource management systems, including performance management, training, and talent development frameworks. Additionally, it must align with ongoing civil service reform efforts, including those related to digital transformation, EU integration, and administrative modernisation. Such integration facilitates efficiency, coherence, and strategic impact.
- **Practicality and Adaptability.** Given the varying capacities and contexts across the Western Balkan administrations, the succession planning approach must be practical and adaptable. It should avoid unnecessary complexity while providing clear, actionable steps and tools. Flexibility to tailor the process to organisational size, legal frameworks, and institutional culture will enhance feasibility and uptake.
- **Emphasis on Development, Not Just Replacement.** Succession planning is fundamentally about preparing individuals to succeed in future roles through targeted development, not merely identifying backups for vacancies. This principle shifts the focus to growth, learning, and readiness, helping create a motivated and capable workforce ready to meet evolving challenges.
- **Preservation and Transfer of Institutional Memory.** Effective succession planning includes deliberate efforts to capture and transfer institutional knowledge. This ensures that successors benefit from the experience, context, and informal networks that current role holders possess, reducing disruption and accelerating learning curves.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Improvement.** Succession planning is an ongoing process that requires regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation. Tracking progress, updating development plans, and reviewing the effectiveness of the overall system enable administrations to respond to changing needs and improve over time.

By adhering to these guiding principles, public administrations in the Western Balkans can build succession planning processes that are credible, sustainable, and impactful, contributing to a stronger, more resilient civil service capable of delivering high-quality public services and advancing reform objectives.

4. METHODOLOGY

Implementing succession planning in public administration requires a structured yet adaptable approach that guides institutions step-by-step through the process of identifying, developing, and preparing talent for critical roles. The methodology outlined in this toolkit is designed to be practical and scalable, enabling Western Balkan public administrations to apply it according to their size, maturity, and specific context.
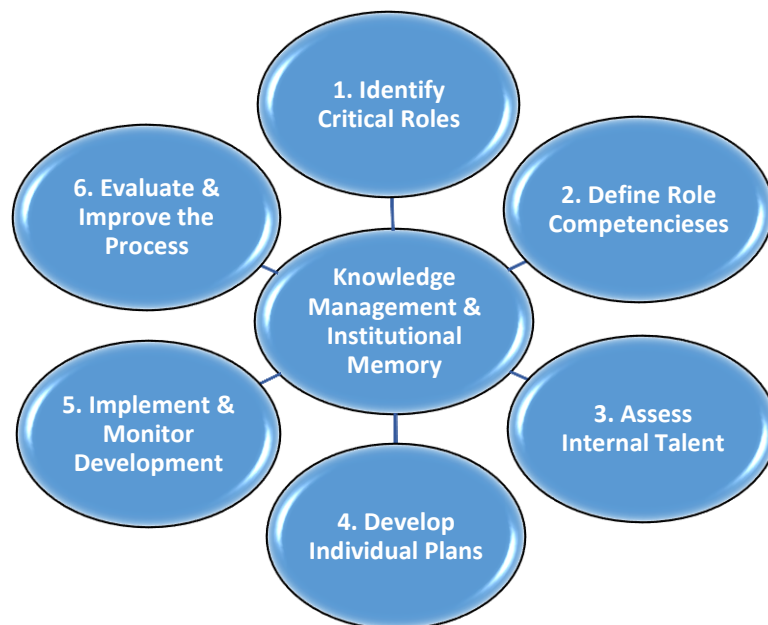
Diagram 1 - Succession Planning Methodology

The first stage involves **identifying critical positions** within the organisation. This is achieved through a comprehensive review of the organisational structure, focusing on roles that are essential for delivering the institution's mission and advancing key reform priorities. Criteria such as strategic importance, decision-making authority, the potential impact on service delivery, and the difficulty of replacement are used to prioritise these positions. The result is a focused list of roles whose vacancy would significantly disrupt organisational effectiveness.

Following this, the next step is to **analyse these roles in detail and define their competency requirements.** Through job analysis methods, including interviews, document review, and task mapping, institutions can articulate the key responsibilities and expectations tied to each critical role. These insights form the basis for developing a competency framework that incorporates technical skills and leadership qualities, with clearly defined proficiency levels tailored to the complexity of each position. This framework serves as a benchmark for assessing current and future incumbents.

Once the competency profiles are established, the process moves to **identifying and assessing potential successors** within the organisation. Line managers, supported by HR specialists, play a central role in nominating candidates based on performance, potential, and career aspirations. Assessment methods may include self-assessments, managerial evaluations, and competency gap analyses, which together provide a comprehensive picture of each candidate's strengths and development needs. Importantly, candidates are evaluated not only for their current readiness to assume the role but also for their medium- and long-

term potential, enabling institutions to plan for immediate vacancies as well as future transitions.

With potential successors identified and assessed, the focus shifts to creating **Individual Development Plans (IDPs).** These plans are tailored to address the specific competency gaps identified during the assessment phase and encompass a blend of development activities. Recognising that learning occurs in many forms, the toolkit emphasises the 70 – 20 – 10 development model, combining on-the-job experiences, mentoring and coaching, and formal training programs. Additionally, IDPs incorporate institutional knowledge transfer activities to ensure that successors receive the contextual understanding and insights necessary for effective performance. Each plan sets clear objectives, timelines, and responsibilities to facilitate monitoring and accountability.

The subsequent phase involves **implementing the development plans and monitoring progress** over time. Institutions are encouraged to provide adequate resources and support to enable successors to engage fully in their development activities. Regular check-ins between successors, line managers, and HR teams help to track progress, address challenges, and adapt development plans as needed. This dynamic approach ensures that the succession planning process remains responsive to changing individual and organisational needs.

Finally, the methodology includes **periodic evaluation and continuous improvement** of the succession planning process. By analysing outcomes such as promotion rates of successors, the time critical roles remain vacant, and feedback from participants, institutions can identify successes and areas for refinement. This commitment to ongoing learning and adaptation strengthens the institutionalisation and sustainability of succession planning.

A critical cross-cutting element throughout all stages is the deliberate focus on **institutional memory and knowledge transfer.** Successors benefit significantly from structured opportunities to learn from current role holders through handover meetings, mentoring relationships, and documented knowledge assets. This reduces disruption during transitions and accelerates the successor's ability to perform effectively.

To facilitate practical implementation, the methodology encourages institutions to begin with pilots in selected ministries or agencies, focusing on a limited number of critical roles. Early engagement and visible commitment from senior leadership are crucial to building momentum and credibility. Training and capacity building for managers and HR personnel underpin successful execution. Leveraging existing digital HR systems can enhance data management and progress tracking, while a long-term vision supports embedding succession planning into the broader human resource and organisational development frameworks.

In summary, this methodology offers a clear and actionable roadmap for Western Balkan public administrations seeking to develop resilient leadership pipelines and strengthen organisational capacity. It balances rigour with flexibility, ensuring that succession planning becomes an integral and sustainable part of public sector reform efforts.

Cross-reference: This tool is designed to be used together with *Volume 2 – Strategic Framework* (for **conceptual foundations and pathways**) and *Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations* (for **regional context and roadmap**).

5. PRACTICAL TOOLS

To translate the succession planning methodology into action, this toolkit provides a set of practical tools designed to guide public administrations in the Western Balkans through each stage of the process. These tools have been crafted to be user-friendly, adaptable, and applicable in diverse institutional contexts. They serve not only to streamline tasks but also to promote transparency, consistency, and accountability.

1. Critical Position Identification Template. This tool helps institutions systematically document and prioritise critical roles. It includes predefined criteria such as strategic importance, organisational impact, and replacement difficulty, allowing HR teams and managers to evaluate and agree on which positions require focused succession efforts.

2. Job Analysis and Competency Profile Template. This template supports detailed role analysis by capturing key responsibilities, tasks, and required competencies. It facilitates the development or refinement of competency profiles with proficiency levels aligned to each critical position, ensuring clarity on the expectations for successors.

3. Potential Successor Assessment Questionnaire. To assess candidates objectively, this questionnaire outlines key competencies with behavioural indicators and proficiency levels. It enables candidates to perform self-assessments, which are then validated through managerial feedback. This combined input forms the basis for identifying skill gaps and readiness levels.

4. Individual Development Plan (IDP) Template. The IDP template guides the creation of personalised development plans addressing competency gaps. It encourages various development activities, including mentoring, coaching, on-the-job learning, and formal training. It also integrates knowledge transfer actions to preserve institutional memory.

5. Progress Monitoring and Review Form. This form assists managers and HR practitioners in tracking the implementation of development plans. It provides space to record progress, challenges, and adjustments, fostering ongoing dialogue and accountability in the development process.

6. Succession Planning Process Evaluation Framework. To ensure continuous improvement, this framework offers criteria and indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of succession planning initiatives. It guides periodic reviews and supports the identification of lessons learned and best practices for future cycles.

These tools are intended to be flexible and scalable. Institutions may adapt them to local terminology, legal frameworks, and organisational cultures. They can be implemented manually or integrated into existing digital HR platforms where available. To maximise impact, it is recommended that the rollout of these tools be accompanied by training sessions for HR teams and line managers, clarifying their purpose and proper use.

The toolkit includes templates, accompanied by detailed instructions and sample completed forms. These templates provide practical starting points that institutions can customise and deploy immediately.

By leveraging these practical tools, Western Balkan public administrations can operationalise succession planning effectively, moving from abstract concepts to tangible actions that develop and secure leadership capacity for the future.

Cross-reference: The tools described in this chapter are derived from the operational pathways in *Volume 2 – Strategic Framework* (see in particular sections 4.7–4.12). For reform priorities and sequencing, consult the *Roadmap in Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations*.

6. NEXT STEPS

Succession planning is a strategic investment in the future of public administration, requiring deliberate action and long-term commitment. Following the implementation of this toolkit, Western Balkan public administrations are encouraged to consider the following steps to ensure effective institutionalisation and continuous improvement of succession planning.

1. Pilot Implementation and Learning. Begin with pilot projects in selected ministries or agencies, focusing on a manageable number of critical roles. Piloting allows testing the toolkit's methodology and tools in a real-world setting, generating practical insights and identifying challenges early. It also helps build champions within the institution who can advocate for broader adoption.

2. Capacity Building. Invest in targeted capacity building for HR professionals, line managers, and current leaders. Training should cover the principles of succession planning, the use of assessment tools, and the design of development plans. Strengthening managerial competencies in talent identification and development is crucial for sustained success.

3. Integrate Succession Planning into HR and Strategic Frameworks. Succession planning should be embedded into existing human resource management strategies, civil service regulations, and organisational development plans to ensure continuity and alignment. This institutional integration legitimises the process, allocates necessary resources, and supports regular updating of plans.

4. Establish Governance and Coordination Mechanisms. Define clear roles and responsibilities for succession planning at different organisational levels. Establish coordination bodies or working groups to oversee the process, monitor progress, and address challenges. Regular reporting to senior leadership reinforces accountability and strategic oversight.

5. Leverage Technology and Data Systems. Where feasible, use digital HR information systems to collect, store, and analyse data related to critical positions, potential successors, competency assessments, and development progress. Technology enhances efficiency, transparency, and data-driven decision-making.

6. Promote a Culture of Continuous Development. Encourage a workplace culture that values ongoing learning, career development, and knowledge sharing. Recognise and reward efforts by managers and employees who actively participate in succession planning initiatives. This cultural foundation fosters motivation and engagement.

7. Foster Regional Cooperation and Peer Learning. Engage with regional institutions such as ReSPA, SIGMA, and civil service academies to share experiences, benchmark practices, and access technical assistance. Collaborative learning enhances capacity and contributes to harmonised public administration standards across the Western Balkans.

Following these steps, public administrations can transition succession planning from a project-based activity into a fully institutionalised practice supporting sustainable leadership development and organisational resilience. The long-term benefits include improved public service continuity, enhanced employee motivation, and stronger alignment with reform and development goals. This toolkit is intended as a living resource. Feedback and lessons from implementation will be invaluable for future updates, ensuring it remains relevant and effective for the evolving needs of the Western Balkans public sector.

Cross-reference: For guidance on sequencing reforms and prioritising institutions for pilots, see the *Roadmap in Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations*.

7. TEMPLATES

This chapter provides a suite of practical templates designed to support the implementation of succession planning in public administrations across the Western Balkans. These templates are directly aligned with the methodology and tools described in previous chapters and serve as operational instruments to translate the succession planning process into actionable steps.

How to use these templates. Each template links to the relevant implementation pathway in **Volume 2** so you can move directly from concept to application; consult **Volume 1** for the regional roadmap and reform sequencing.

As highlighted throughout this toolkit, succession planning is not a one-time event, but a structured and ongoing process that requires clarity, consistency, and collaboration across HR teams, line managers, and institutional leadership. These templates aim to make that process manageable and transparent by offering standardised formats that guide users through each key stage - from identifying critical positions to monitoring the development of potential successors.

Each template is accompanied by guidance notes and can be tailored to reflect the legal, institutional, and cultural contexts of individual administrations. Designed to be flexible and scalable, the templates can be introduced gradually, piloted in selected institutions, and adapted to different levels of HRM system maturity.

Specifically, this chapter includes templates for:

- **Identifying critical positions**, supported by objective criteria and prioritisation tools;
- **Analysing job roles and defining competency profiles**, ensuring clarity on expectations;
- **Assessing potential successors**, using a combination of self-assessment and managerial input;
- **Developing individual development plans (IDPs)**, based on identified competency gaps and growth opportunities;
- **Monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes**, to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

In addition to the templates themselves, the chapter also includes a **Definitions of Criteria and Scoring Grid**, which accompanies the Critical Position Identification process. While not a template in the strict sense, this reference tool provides essential guidance for applying objective criteria and assigning scores in a consistent manner across institutions.

Finally, the **Monitoring and Evaluation of Progress Template** is structured to support both **Methodological Step 5: Progress Monitoring and Review Form** and **Step 6: Succession Planning Process Evaluation Framework**. It enables institutions to track implementation progress at the individual level and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the succession planning process at the system level.

Used effectively, the templates and accompanying tools in this chapter will help public administrations in the Western Balkans move from intention to implementation, building a more capable, transparent, and future-ready civil service.

Note: Each template in this chapter is linked to the relevant pathways in **Volume 2** – Strategic Framework and to the regional context and roadmap in **Volume 1** – Analysis and Recommendations. For a consolidated overview of all cross-references, see **Annexe – Cross-Reference Table for Toolkit Templates.**

7.1. Critical Position Template

This template is designed to help identify and prioritise critical roles within the organisation. It provides a clear framework for evaluating positions based on several key criteria. This ensures that succession planning efforts focus on the positions that are most vital to the organisation's long-term success.

CRITERIA DEFINITIONS AND SCORING GRID

1. Strategic Importance - The role's significance to the achievement of the organisation's long-term goals and strategic objectives. A position with high strategic importance influences the direction, vision, and sustainability of the organisation.

Definition	Score
The role has a direct and substantial influence on the strategic goals and direction of the organisation. Decisions made in this role are key to achieving the long-term success of the organisation.	*5*
The role contributes to the organisation's strategy but has a more indirect impact. Its decisions influence outcomes but are not central to the organisation's vision.	*3*
The role has minimal influence on strategic direction or long-term goals. Its impact is mostly operational or tactical, with limited strategic contribution.	*1*

2. Decision-Making Authority - The extent of authority the position holder has over decisions that impact the organisation. High decision-making authority typically means the individual has control over critical decisions, resource allocation, or organisational direction.

Definition	Score
The position has significant decision-making power over major organisational decisions, policies, and resource allocation. The role directly affects the organisation's strategic, financial, and operational success.	*5*
The position involves moderate decision-making authority, with influence over specific projects or departments. The individual in this role may make decisions within a defined scope but does not control high-level strategy.	*3*

The role has minimal decision-making authority and mostly involves carrying out tasks as directed by higher management. Decisions are either predetermined or made by others in higher positions.	1

3. Expertise and Knowledge Depth - The level of specialised knowledge, skills, and experience required for the role. Positions that require rare or highly technical expertise are often more difficult to fill and are critical to the organisation's operations.

Definition	Score
The role requires deep, specialised expertise that is rare and difficult to replace. Individuals in this position are recognised as subject-matter experts and possess advanced, unique knowledge.	*5*
The role requires significant expertise, but there are some individuals with the necessary skills available in the talent pool. The position may require professional qualifications or experience, but it is not as specialised as a high-priority role.	*3*
The role requires basic or widely available skills and knowledge that can be easily replaced by other employees or new hires.	*1*

4. Service Delivery Impact - The role's impact on the quality, timeliness, and effectiveness of services provided by the organisation. This is particularly important in public sector roles where service delivery is central to organisational success.

Definition	Score
The role has a direct and critical impact on the delivery of key services. If the position is vacated or poorly managed, it would cause significant disruption or loss of service quality.	*5*
The role contributes to service delivery, but its absence or underperformance would only moderately affect service quality. The impact is noticeable but not catastrophic.	*3*
The role has little to no impact on service delivery. If the position is vacant or ineffective, the organisation can continue to function without significant disruption to services.	*1*

5. Dependency/Organisational Resilience - The degree to which the organisation depends on this position to maintain resilience and continuity. A position with high dependency is essential for ensuring the organisation can withstand challenges and adapt to changes.

Definition	Score
The role is essential for organisational resilience and continuity. The organisation relies heavily on this position for business continuity, risk management, and the ability to respond to crises.	5
The role contributes to organisational resilience but is not a sole point of failure. The organisation could manage some level of disruption, but would face challenges without it.	3
The role is not critical for the organisation's resilience. Its absence would have minimal impact on the organisation's ability to handle crises or disruptions.	1

6. External Relations - The role's importance in maintaining and managing key external relations, such as with government agencies, international bodies, clients, stakeholders, or the public. These relations can have strategic implications for the organisation.

Definition	Score
The position is critical in managing external relations that are essential for the organisation's success. These relations are high-stakes and have a direct impact on the organisation's reputation, funding, and partnerships.	*5*
The role involves managing important external relations, which are not central to the organisation's long-term success. The absence of this position would cause disruption, but it is not catastrophic.	*3*
The role has little or no involvement with external stakeholders. The organisation can function effectively without managing or maintaining these relations.	*1*

7. Replacement Difficulty - The ease or difficulty with which a suitable replacement can be found for the position. This depends on the level of expertise, training, and availability of talent in the job market.

Definition	Score
The position is very difficult to replace. It requires highly specialised skills, knowledge, or experience that are rare in the labour market. A prolonged vacancy could severely impact the organisation.	*5*
The role is moderately difficult to replace. While the position may require specific expertise or experience, a reasonable number of candidates are available who could be trained or developed for the role.	*3*
The position is easy to replace, with many candidates available in the job market with the necessary skills and experience. There is little risk of prolonged vacancies.	*1*

Critical Position Scoring Table								
Position Title/Organisational Unit	**Strategic Importance**	**Decision-Making Authority**	**Expertise and Knowledge Depth**	**Service Delivery Impact**	**Dependency/ Organisational Resilience**	**External Relationships**	**Replacement Difficulty**	**Total Score**
Position 1	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*7-35*
Position 2	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*7-35*
Position 3	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*1-3-5*	*7-35*

Instructions: *Score each position based on the seven criteria using the scale: 1 = Low, 3 = Moderate, 5 = High. Add scores across all criteria to get a Total Score (range: 7–35). Higher scores indicate positions that are more critical for succession planning.*

Priority Level Range	
High Priority **30 – 35 points**	*These positions are critical to institutional success and stability. They require immediate and proactive succession planning, including identifying successors, developing targeted Individual Development Plans (IDPs), and integrating knowledge transfer mechanisms. Ideally, at least one successor should be actively prepared.*
Moderate Priority **22 – 29 points**	*These roles are important but moderately vulnerable. Succession planning should be integrated into routine HR planning, with identified development paths for potential successors. Consider monitoring for emerging gaps.*
Lower Priority **7 – 21 points**	*These roles have lower strategic or operational criticality or are easier to replace. No immediate succession planning is required, though positions may still benefit from career development planning. Focus resources on more critical roles.*

Instructions: Use the Total Score from the Critical Position Scoring Table to classify each role into one of the three priority levels. This helps determine the urgency and depth of succession planning actions required. Focus resources first on high-priority roles, while maintaining awareness of potential gaps in moderate and lower-priority positions.

Cross-reference: For the conceptual foundation on identifying critical positions, see Volume 2 – Strategic Framework, section 4.7 (Critical Positions and Knowledge). For regional rationale and risks, consult Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations, section 1.6 (Tools and Monitoring).

7.2. Job and Competency Profiling Template

This template provides tools to capture detailed job information and translate it into competency requirements, including proficiency levels. This is essential for defining the ideal profile of candidates for critical positions and establishing clear benchmarks for assessment and development.

Job Analysis Template Structure		
Section	**Field**	**Description**
1. Position Information	*Position Title*	*Title of the critical position*
	Department/Unit	*The organisational unit the position belongs to*
	Reports To	*Title of the direct supervisor*
	Supervises	*Titles of positions directly supervised (if applicable)*
	Job Purpose	*Brief description of the role's primary purpose and contribution to the organisation*
2. Key Responsibilities	*Responsibility*	*Broad areas of responsibility (e.g., "Financial Oversight")*

3. Key Tasks	Task	Specific tasks under each responsibility (e.g., "Approve quarterly budget allocations")
4. Required Competencies	Competency	Core skill or knowledge domain (e.g., "Strategic Thinking")
	Definition	Clear description of what the competency entails
	Proficiency Level Required	Level of expertise required: Basic / Intermediate / Advanced / Expert (definitions below)
	Behavioural Indicators	Observable behaviours that demonstrate the competency at the required level
5. Additional Requirements	Education/Certification	Degrees, licenses, or other credentials
	Experience	Years and type of professional experience required
	Language/IT Skills	Relevant language fluency or software proficiency
	Other	Any additional qualifications specific to the role

Instructions: *Complete each section through interviews, document reviews, and observation.*

Competency Profiling Template			
Competency	**Definition**	**Proficiency Level Required**	**Behavioural Indicators at this Level**
Example: Strategic Thinking	*Ability to understand long-term goals and align resources accordingly*	*Level 3*	*Anticipates future trends* *Develops plans aligned with strategy*
Example: Communication	*Conveys ideas clearly and effectively, tailored to the audience.*	*Level 3*	*Engages stakeholders; facilitates complex discussions.*
Example: Decision-Making	*Makes sound, timely decisions using available information.*	*Level 3*	*Evaluates strategic risks; makes complex decisions with confidence.*

Instructions: *List key competencies with clear definitions. For each, specify the proficiency level required for the position (see below for proficiency levels). Include specific behavioural indicators that demonstrate mastery at that level.*

Proficiency Level Definitions

Basic	Understands fundamental concepts and performs routine tasks under guidance.
Intermediate	Applies skills independently in most situations; can solve standard problems.
Advanced	Expert in the area; solves complex problems, trains others, innovates in their field.
Expert	Recognised authority; leads institutional thinking and practice in this area.

Instructions: Define proficiency levels relevant to your context. Use this scale consistently when profiling competencies.

Cross-reference: For guidance on competency frameworks and role analysis, see Volume 2 – Strategic Framework, sections 4.3 (Knowledge Management) and 4.7 (Critical Positions and Knowledge). For regional context, see Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations, section 1.4 (Leadership Development).

7.3. Successor Assessment Template

This template provides tools to help systematically identify potential successors and assess their competencies relative to the requirements of critical positions. The goal is to objectively evaluate readiness and development to inform succession decisions and plans.

Successor Nomination				
Candidate Name	**Current Position/Unit**	**Nominated for Position**	**Nominator (Manager)**	**Date**

Instructions: Line managers or HR staff should nominate potential successors for each critical position. Enter the candidate's current role, the position they are being nominated for, and the nominator's details. This forms the starting point for assessment and development planning.

Competency Self-Assessment Questionnaire			
Competency	**Behavioural Indicators**	**Proficiency Level (1-4)**	**Self-Assessment Comments**
Example: Leadership	*Inspires and motivates others; leads by example* *Demonstrates accountability and decisiveness*	*Intermediate*	

Instructions: Candidates rate themselves against key competencies and provide examples/comments. Use the agreed proficiency scale.

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Managerial Assessment Form			
Competency	**Behavioural Indicators**	**Proficiency Level (1-4)**	**Manager's Comments**
Example: Communication	*Clearly conveys ideas; listens actively* *Adapts communication style to the audience*	*Intermediate*	

Instructions: *Managers assess candidates' proficiency and provide observations.*

Successor Assessment					
Competency	**Required Level**	**Candidate Self-Assessment**	**Manager Assessment**	**Gap**	**Comments**
Strategic Thinking	*Advanced*	*Intermediate*	*Advanced*	*Yes*	*The candidate needs exposure to strategic planning*
Communication	*Intermediate*	*Intermediate*	*Intermediate*	*No*	*Solid communicator across teams*
Decision-Making	*Advanced*	*Advanced*	*Intermediate*	*No*	*Could benefit from risk-based decision-making experience*

Instructions: *For each key competency, compare the required proficiency level with both the candidate's self-assessment and the manager's assessment. Indicate whether a development gap exists, and provide relevant comments to guide individual development planning.*

Cross-reference: For pathways on talent assessment and mapping, see Volume 2 – Strategic Framework, section 4.8 (Talent Maps). For policy-level insights on meritocracy and fairness, consult Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations, section 2 (Findings and Recommendations).

7.4. Individual Development Plan (IDP) Template

This template provides structured tools to help design and manage personalised development plans for potential successors. These plans are based on the competency gaps identified during assessment and aim to support successors in achieving the proficiency required for critical roles.

Individual Development Plan (IDP) Template				
Candidate Name	**Current Position**	**Target Position**	**Manager/ Supervisor**	**Date of Plan**

Instructions: Complete this section to document the basic details of the development plan. Include the candidate's current and target positions, their manager or supervisor, and the date the plan is initiated. This provides a foundation for tracking progress and accountability.

Development Needs Overview			
Competency			
Required Level	**Current Level**	**Gap**	**Priority (H/M/L)**

Instructions: List all key competencies, compare required vs. current levels (based on assessment), and set a priority for development.

Development Activities Plan						
Competency	**Development Activity**	**Type of Activity**	**Planned Start Date**	**Expected Completion Date**	**Support Needed**	**Success Criteria**

Instructions: For each gap, define specific actions to improve proficiency. Use a mix of development methods (70/20/10 approach):

- *70% learning from experience (projects, assignments)*
- *20% learning from others (mentoring, feedback)*
- *10% formal learning (courses, seminars)*

Knowledge Transfer and Institutional Memory Actions				
Topic/Process	**Current Role Holder**	**Planned Activity**	**Planned Date(s)**	**Status**

Instructions: Include knowledge handover actions from current job holders, especially for highly specialised or strategic roles.

IDP Review and Monitoring Record				
Review Date	Reviewed By	Progress Summary	Adjustments Made (if any)	Next Steps

Instructions: *Use this section to document regular progress reviews of the Individual Development Plan (IDP). Record the date, reviewer, a brief summary of progress, any adjustments to the plan, and agreed next steps to support continued development.*

Cross-reference: For implementation guidance on development planning and succession onboarding, see Volume 2 – Strategic Framework, sections 4.9 (Succession and Onboarding) and 4.10 (Knowledge Transfer Strategy). For regional lessons on leadership development, see Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations, section 1.4 (Leadership Development).

7.5. Monitoring and Evaluation Template

This template covers methodological step **5. Progress Monitoring and Review Form** and step **6. Succession Planning Process Evaluation Framework.** It provides tools to track the progress of individual development plans systematically and to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the succession planning process. Regular monitoring ensures accountability, allows for timely adjustments, and supports data-driven decision-making.

Development Plan Progress Tracker	
Candidate Name	
Target Position	
Competency	
Planned Development Activity	
Start Date	
Status (Not started/In Progress/Completed)	
Progress Summary	
Comments/Adjustments	

Instructions: *HR units or managers update this tracker regularly to monitor the implementation of development activities and identify delays or challenges.*

Readiness Assessment Form (Follow-up Evaluation)	
Candidate Name	

Target Position	
Competency	
Required Proficiency	
Current Proficiency (Updated)	
Gap Status (Closed/Reduced/Unchanged)	
Comments	

Instructions: Conduct this reassessment 6 – 12 months after the development plan begins. Use updated evaluations from managers and/or learning activities.

Succession Planning Dashboard (Organisational Level)				
Metric	**Target**	**Actual**	**Status**	**Comments**
% of critical positions with identified successors	*100%*			
% of successors with active IDPs	*90%*			
% of IDPs fully implemented on schedule	*85%*			
% of successors assessed as "ready now"	*70%*			
Number of successors promoted into critical roles	*N/A*			
Overall satisfaction (based on participant feedback)	*N/A*			

Instructions: This dashboard provides an overview for HR departments and leadership to evaluate how well the process is functioning.

Feedback Collection Form (Successor and Manager Perspectives)				
Name	**Role**	**Feedback Area**	**Rating (1 – 5)**	
		Clarity of IDP		
		Support from Manager		
		Relevance of Activities		
		Overall Satisfaction		

Instructions: This feedback form gathers insights from participants and helps improve future cycles of succession planning.

Cross-reference: For conceptual pathways on monitoring succession planning, see Volume 2 – Strategic Framework, section 4.12 (Farewell Practices) and the conclusion (Chapter 5).

For regional recommendations on monitoring and accountability, see Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations, section 1.6 (Tools and Monitoring).

ANNEXE – CROSS-REFERENCE TABLE FOR TOOLKIT TEMPLATES

This annexe has been included to help readers navigate seamlessly across the three volumes of the Succession Planning Knowledge Package. It shows how each toolkit template in Volume 3 is directly linked to the conceptual pathways presented in *Volume 2 – Strategic Framework* and to the regional context and reform roadmap presented in *Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations*. The aim is to support practitioners in connecting analysis, framework, and practical application in a coherent way.

Toolkit Template (Vol. 3, Ch. 7)	Related Pathway in Volume 2 – Strategic Framework	Related Context in Volume 1 – Analysis and Recommendations
7.1 Critical Position Template	Section 4.7 – *Critical Positions and Knowledge*	Section 1.6 – *Tools and Monitoring*
7.2 Job and Competency Profiling Template	Sections 4.3 – *Knowledge Management*; 4.7 – *Critical Positions and Knowledge*	Section 1.4 – *Leadership Development*
7.3 Successor Assessment Template	Section 4.8 – *Talent Maps*	Section 2 – *Findings and Recommendations*
7.4 Individual Development Plan (IDP) Template	Sections 4.9 – *Succession and Onboarding*; 4.10 – *Knowledge Transfer Strategy*	Section 1.4 – *Leadership Development*
7.5 Monitoring and Evaluation Template	Section 4.12 – *Farewell Practices*; Chapter 5 – *Conclusion*	Section 1.6 – *Tools and Monitoring*

8. CONCLUSION

This Toolkit was designed as a practical companion for Western Balkan administrations that wish to make succession planning an operational reality. By providing ready-to-use templates, questionnaires, and monitoring forms, it enables practitioners to move directly from the "why" and "what" of succession planning (outlined in Volumes 1 and 2) to the "how."

The tools here are simple, modular, and adaptable. They encourage institutions to begin with small pilots, focus on critical positions, and progressively build maturity and confidence in their succession systems. More than a technical exercise, the Toolkit emphasises development, transparency, and institutional memory—ensuring that successors are not just identified but also prepared to thrive.

For governments of the Western Balkans, succession planning is both a necessity and a lever of reform. Applied consistently, the Toolkit can help administrations safeguard continuity,

strengthen leadership capacity, and embed a culture of merit-based development. It is an investment in resilience: an assurance that institutions will continue to serve effectively through transitions, reforms, and integration into the European Union.

This Toolkit should therefore be read not as the end of the journey but as a starting point. Its impact depends on leadership commitment, HR capacity, and organisational culture. Used alongside the analytical roadmap in *Volume 1 – Analysis & Recommendations* and the strategic framework in *Volume 2 – Strategic Framework*, it provides administrations with the complete package needed to plan for the future—today. **For ease of navigation, Annexe in this volume presents a consolidated cross-reference table that links each Toolkit template to the relevant sections of Volumes 1 and 2, enabling readers to connect analysis, framework, and practice at a glance.**

9. LITERATURE

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