

Phase I Succession Project Report

OVERVIEW:

*Note: The CADA Structural Change Grant has shifted to now be called the Future Focus Granting Program. It has also been adjusted to a two phase structure and we have consequently adapted this project to work within their guidelines. Therefore, this project has now joined together phases II (Experience) and III (Execution) into a single phase, *Implementation*.

Phase I - *Exploration* (January - October 2022):

Phase one saw the completion of the *Exploration* stage of the project. This included general research surrounding organizational succession for Alberta non-profits arts organizations, which was conducted through both a general survey and individual member conversations/interviews. In addition to research, AMAAS conducted the first board and staff project session on October 2, 2022.

Phase II - *Implementation* (Jan 2023 - May 2024):

In the second and final phase, *Implementation*, AMAAS will, over the course of 17 months (January 2023 to May 2024), see the departure of Sharon Stevens as Executive Director (employed with AMAAS since July 1, 2014), the hiring of new staff(s) in a leadership position, and will ensure that EDIA is the guiding principle as well as the actionable process. This work will include the review and implementation of a Past-President role for the volunteer Board leadership succession. See more info [below](#).

A Note on Shifting Directions:

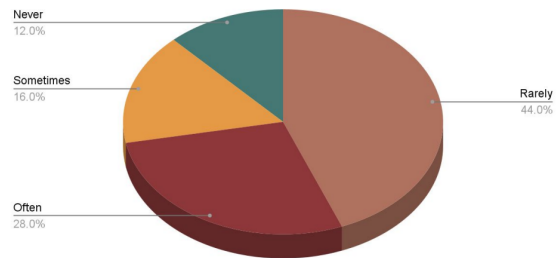
As part of this project, AMAAS is keen to support our membership by sharing our expertise, experience, as well as a toolkit of relevant resources and tools/templates on succession planning. However, at the same time, we want to focus our services on what will be most relevant to our members. Through conversations with member organizations as well as AMAAS' national counterpart, IMAA/AAMI, we have decided that a divergent approach from the traditional "toolkit" is also necessary to support members. In some cases, even if toolkits are available to an organization, due to a lack of infrastructure, they may not have the capacity to put those resources to use. Because of this, AMAAS will also continue to support members on a case by case basis and not only focus on a "one size fits all" approach, which ultimately does not pay enough attention to individual differences between organizations.

Phase One, Exploration

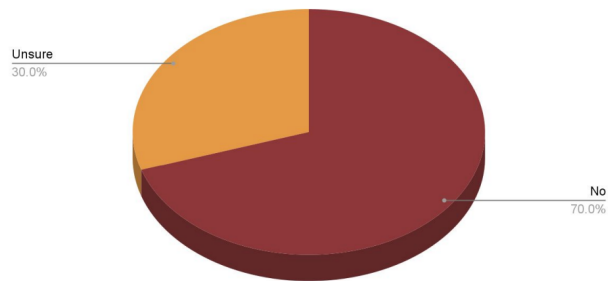
Key takeaways from AMAAS research:

Survey:

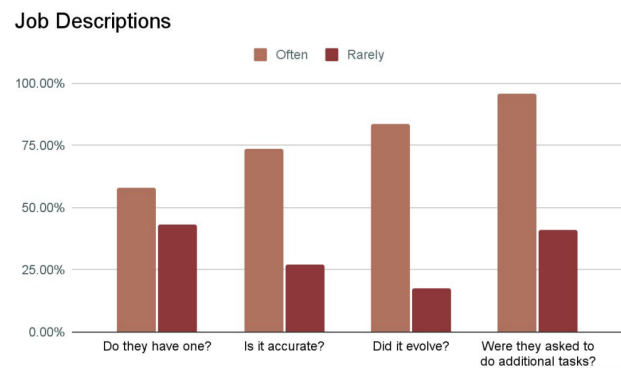
→ Succession is a topic that is most often not adequately addressed until the necessity arises in an organization



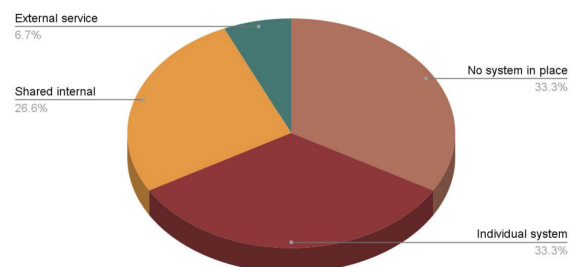
→ The vast majority of responses stated that no transition and/or recruitment plan is in place should an individual need to leave their organization



→ Job descriptions evolve as an employee grows with an organization and very often additional tasks are accumulated. These added tasks are often not documented.



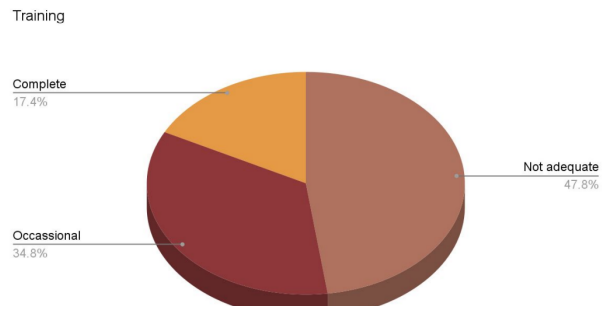
→ Password management and digital succession is commonly managed individually or without a specific organizational system in place



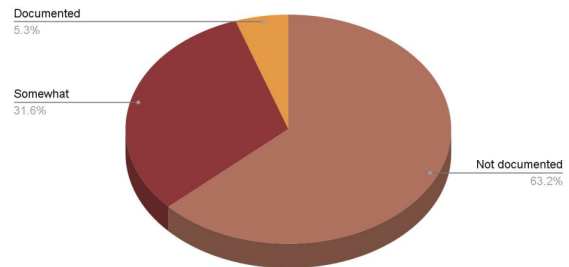
→ Although the majority of respondents stated they had been given adequate

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opportunity for professional development, the majority of individuals claimed they had not, or only occasionally, been given training in organizational policies



→ The majority of respondents do not have documentation in place for their day-to-day tasks should future employees move into their role.



Member interviews:

Networking is used as an important tool in regards to succession planning. It is often difficult for a small organization to fund or plan for adequate training for new hires, especially regarding Executive/Artistic Director positions. Many employees stated that they ended up reaching out to their network and community of arts administrators to seek advice and training.

Most organizations have difficulties developing and funding Human Resources guidelines and activities.

Small organizations tend to have employees shape their job descriptions according to their own interests, which can be very positive for the employee and organization because employees can delegate tasks based on skill sets and interests. However, often these changes to daily tasks and order of operations are not documented should a new hire need to take over the role.

Some organizations have tried setting up “test absences,” which is setting up temporary absences of key persons to ensure that their existing succession plans are withstanding the current test.

Although organizations may have questions about succession planning for their funders, they often feel that it is hard to reach out to funders with certain questions because they do not want to show signs of incompetence and potentially lose funding.

Review of AMAAS Board and Staff Session October 2, 2022:

The purpose of the session on October 2 shifted from developing an action plan and future task list to a Board and Staff development session that focused on exploring how moving forward AMAAS succession can be infused and centered around EDIA. This was a shift from the colonial construct of the original

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session agenda to become an educational session and an opportunity for the AMAAS Board (with three new members in 2022) to get to know one another and learn together.

This session included:

- Community building and group development.
- Establishing a common understanding of the work ahead.
- Establishing an EDIA foundation for the project: Led by consultant, Jordan Baylon
- Environmental scan: AMAAS research findings, including an overview of succession and human resource practices in AB arts organizations.
- Taking stock: An overview of AMAAS' current succession timelines, gaps, and processes.
- Responses and curiosities: Led by external facilitator, Erin McFarlane.

Phase II and III will be implemented from January 2023 to May 2024 - we will distribute more information as the project progresses.