

WHAT IS A PARTNERSHIP SUCCESSION PLAN and WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A smooth transition between current agency leadership, the groups they have been working with, and the leadership with whom these groups rely on, is especially important. Our ability to solve natural and cultural resource related problems over the long run depends on the quality of our long-term relationships. A succession plan, the “Handover Memo,” is a tool for establishing and maintaining community relationships associated with ongoing partnerships and collaborative work. The “Handover Memo” is designed to contain information about relationships with partners, collaborative efforts underway, commitments that have been made, and any work agreements or procedures that partnerships are using with the agency/unit. The “Handover Memo” is completed by the outgoing leader prior to their departure and addressed to the incoming leader. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list of activities and/or projects. (Refer to Appendix 8: Transition Management of Agency Personnel – the “Handover Memo.”)

APPENDIX 8: TRANSITION MANAGEMENT OF AGENCY PERSONNEL

“Handover Memo”

Purpose- Today, communities of place, local governments and other groups are increasingly convening and facilitating collaborative efforts that directly involve federal agencies. In turn, agencies are recognizing the need for improved transitions between outgoing leaders and incoming leaders who will assume the responsibility for working directly with the public and partners. Good transition management between the agency leader these groups have been working with, and the leader they will now rely on, is especially important. Our ability to solve natural resource related problems over the long run depends on the quality of long-term relationships between agencies, other organizations and the public. Often, what makes collaboration work is a combination of formal and informal working agreements and commitments between various participants.

The purpose of this “Handover Memo” is to help communicate these agreements and commitments, not only between the departing leader and the new leader, but also to inform and involve agency staff and superiors who will continue to support such cooperative efforts in the interim and into the future. The very act of writing or finalizing this memo will emphasize the importance of, and pass along a better understanding of the relationships and cooperative efforts you have helped develop, so they can continue to grow and evolve.

Template

To: Address memo to the new agency unit leader and any interim leaders.

From: Completed by you as the outgoing leader prior to your departure. At a minimum, the memo should be developed with the participation of your primary staff. At your discretion, you may find it useful to also have others review it prior to finalization.

cc: At a minimum, the memo should be copied to your primary staff and supervisor. At your discretion, you may want to copy others as well to better meet the purposes of this memo.

The memorandum should cover the following four areas:

- **Describe the current partnership and collaborative efforts underway on your unit**

Briefly describe any specific projects or programs that each partnership or collaborative effort is currently engaged in. This memorandum should largely focus on describing key aspects of ongoing partnerships and collaborative relationships that may not have any formal, written agreements that are readily available for your successor to review. Partnerships and collaborative efforts that do have formal agreements (e.g., Memorandums of Understanding, Cooperative Agreements) can simply be referenced with a description of the activities, projects or goals that are currently underway. Some basic information about the length of time a partner or collaborative effort has been underway may also be useful. Some relationships will be in their infancy while others may have evolved over a period of time. Where possible, consider having your key partners assist with crafting this section and include their signatures on the memo.

- **Commitments or schedules associated with current partnership and collaborative efforts**

For each of the above relationships, describe any formal or informal commitments you have made to key partners or groups leading or engaged in collaborative efforts with you or your unit. Be sure to include any shared understandings about specific schedules for accomplishing joint projects or implementing shared programs. Commitments may include but are not limited to time agreements, financial arrangements, accomplishments or personnel commitments. These commitments may or may not need to be renegotiated with your departure. However, the current state of any agreement is key information to pass on to your successor, supervisor and staff. Again, where possible, consider having your key partners jointly craft this section and include their signatures.

- **Current working agreements or procedures**

Describe any local communication norms or procedural agreements that help keep relationships active and well functioning. This may include information about regular meetings, formal and informal expectations or working agreements that partners and the agency have developed during your tenure. This may include but are not limited to information about communication frequency, timing, particular subjects or issues of interest and key contacts etc.

Because this memo will function in concert with other transition activities and an on-site visit with your successor, this memorandum can be reasonably brief and focused on factual information about current partnerships and collaborative efforts that are active and underway during the transition period.

- **Strategy for meeting and getting to know your community**

Describe a potential strategy for incoming staff to foster and maintain relationships within the surrounding community. Include information on potential venues, regularly scheduled events (if there are any), community social gatherings, and contacts for each. Where possible, engage your key partners in development of this section.

This memo is intended to focus on establishing and maintaining community relationships associated with ongoing partnerships and collaborative work. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list of activities and/or projects. Partnership and collaborative efforts that have formal agreements in place should be referenced with a brief description of the activity to date.

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