

Cultural Stewardship Succession Planning Initiative

Small Museum Association Conference 2024



INSTITUTE *of*
Museum and **Library**
SERVICES



Project Recap

- The Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) and Lyrasis are serving the country's museums, historic sites, archives, libraries and arts organizations by creating a **suite of resources** focused on succession planning for collections care staff and arts administrators.
- CCAHA and Lyrasis will also offer educational programs to present “**good practice**” strategies to prepare for inevitable staffing and volunteer transitions in the area of arts administration and collections care.
- Work completed includes **listening sessions** and a **project survey** to learn about the nuances of succession planning strategies that have—and have not—achieved positive results at arts and cultural institutions.
- A **National Advisory Panel** has supported the project team. **Reviewer volunteers** are testing the draft resources.

Results So Far

- “By popular demand,” 16 listening sessions held (six were planned); 269 listening session attendees vs. original estimate of 50 attendees.
- Virtual and in-person listening sessions held for Culture and Arts Associations and organizations.
- Survey attracted 156 participants; information gained supported and went beyond the findings of the listening sessions.
- Many organizations that hosted listening sessions in 2023 have invited us back to talk about findings and test resources at their 2024 conferences (from Small Museum Association to Chorus America)

Key Findings from the Listening Sessions

- Majority of participants/organizations had little experience with formal succession planning; lack of time seen as biggest barrier
- Succession Planning is a low priority at many organizations, but a high priority personally for employees. Many also say Board is not concerned
- Need to recognize differences between Standard and Emergency Succession Planning
- Documentation on Succession Planning Needed, but many respondents said that basic collection and operating policies also necessary
- Utilizing a “knowledge transfer process” for employee work experiences is key; there are opportunities presented by new technology to do this

More Listening Session Key Findings

- Issues of reduction in workforces and volunteer groups due to early retirement and COVID have caused succession problems at organizations
- Part-time staff & volunteer retention a concern; strong communications needed
- Many cultural and arts organizations are focusing on DEIA issues, and an important aspect of these discussions in compensation and pay equity
- Emotional support for staff at organizations where succession has taken place should be provided
- Maintaining relations with partner organizations and the community important
- Shift succession planning from a finite task to a way of operating – many benefits seen

Timeline/Workplan

- ❖ February-October 2023: listening sessions
- ❖ September 2023: Survey distributed throughout the field to collect data on current succession planning practices
- ❖ November 2023: Survey and listening session analysis
- ❖ Fall 2023/Winter 2024: Resource development & testing
- ❖ 2024: Webinars and conference presentations to disseminate results and resources
- ❖ 2024: Website devoted to the project launched

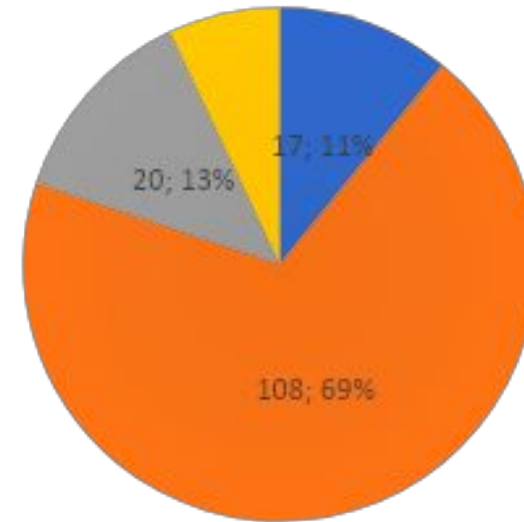
Tangible Outcomes

- ❖ Resources focused on succession planning for collections care and arts management staff positions and volunteers
 - Technical bulletins
 - Resource lists
 - **Checklists**
 - Fact sheets
 - **Templates**
 - Infographics
 - Bibliographies
 - Videos
 - Webinars
- ❖ Education programs presenting strategies to prepare for transitions in arts and collections care positions

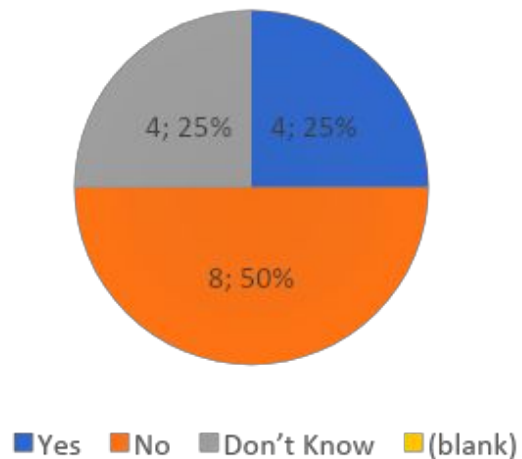
Survey Findings

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION CURRENTLY HAVE ANY
TYPE OF SUCCESSION PLANNING PROCESS OR
POLICY IN PLACE?

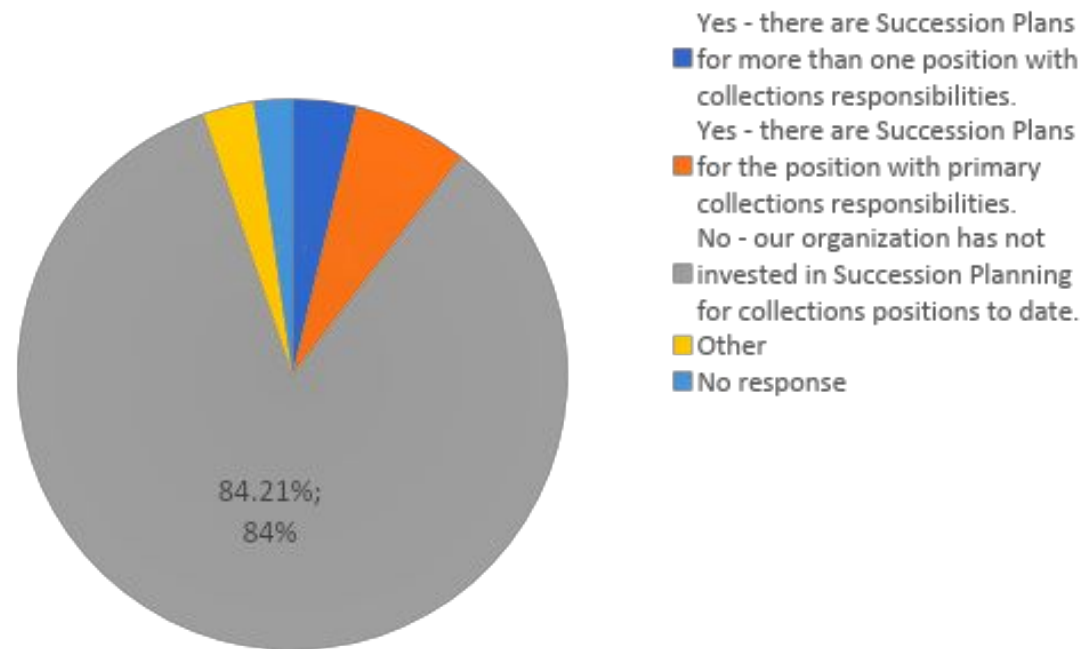
■ Yes ■ No ■ In Process ■ Don't Know



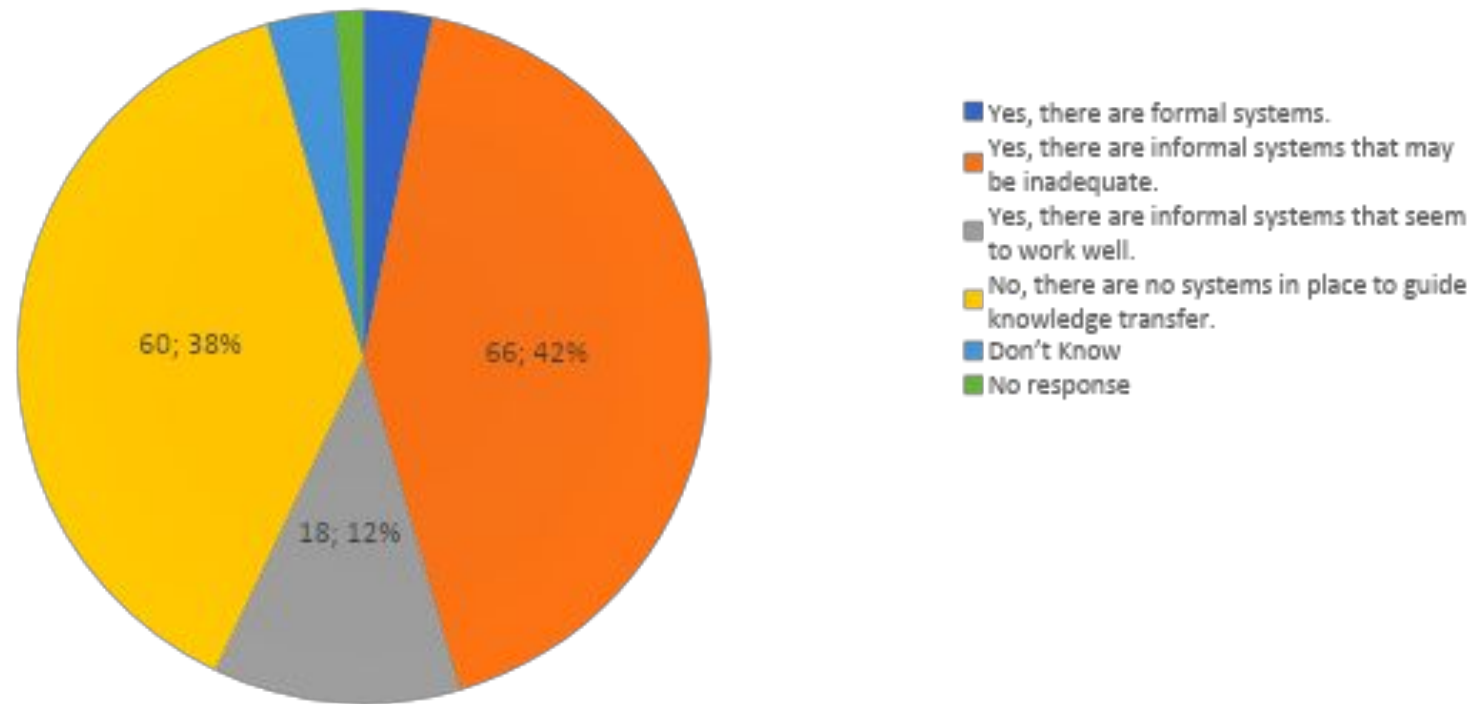
DOES THE SUCCESSION PLANNING AT YOUR ORGANIZATION ADDRESS DIFFERENT PROCESSES FOR EMERGENCY (SUDDEN NEED) VS. STANDARD SUCCESSION?



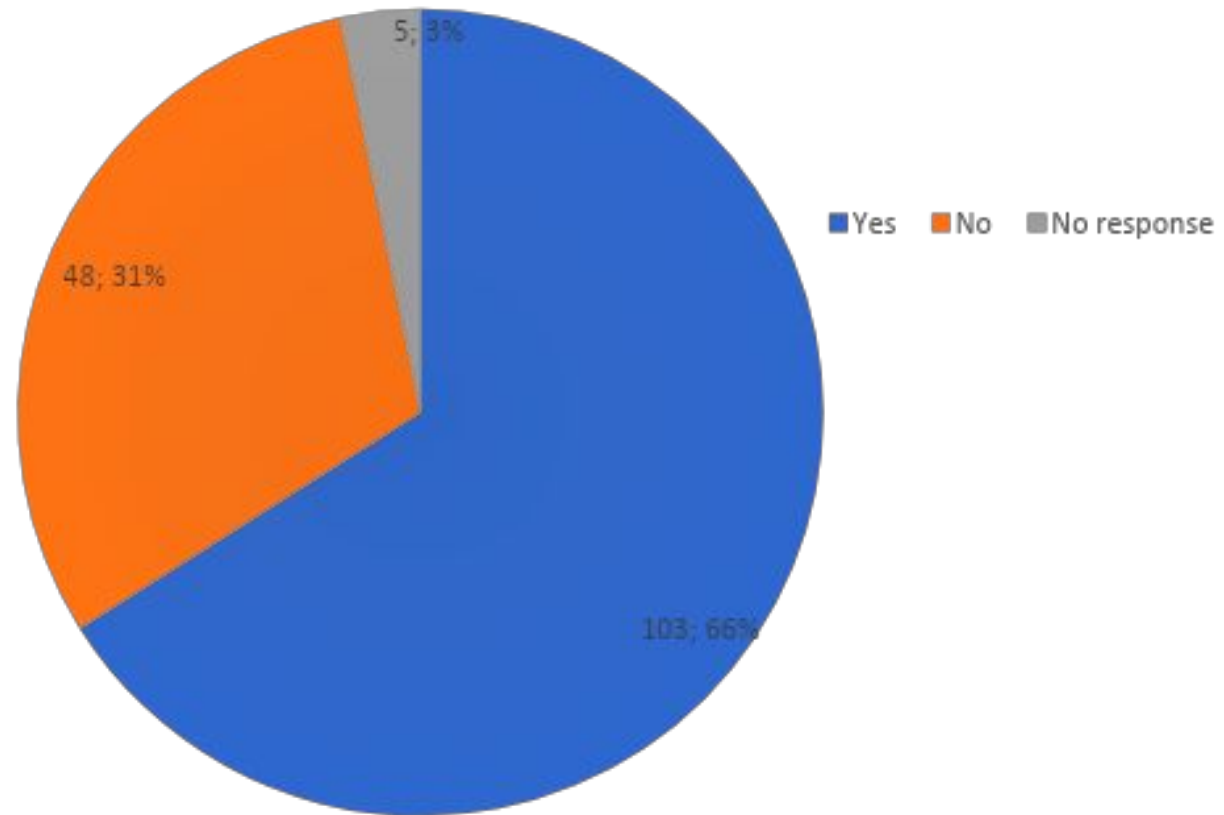
AT YOUR ORGANIZATION, DO SUCCESSION PLANS EXIST FOR ANY POSITIONS WITH PRIMARY COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES?



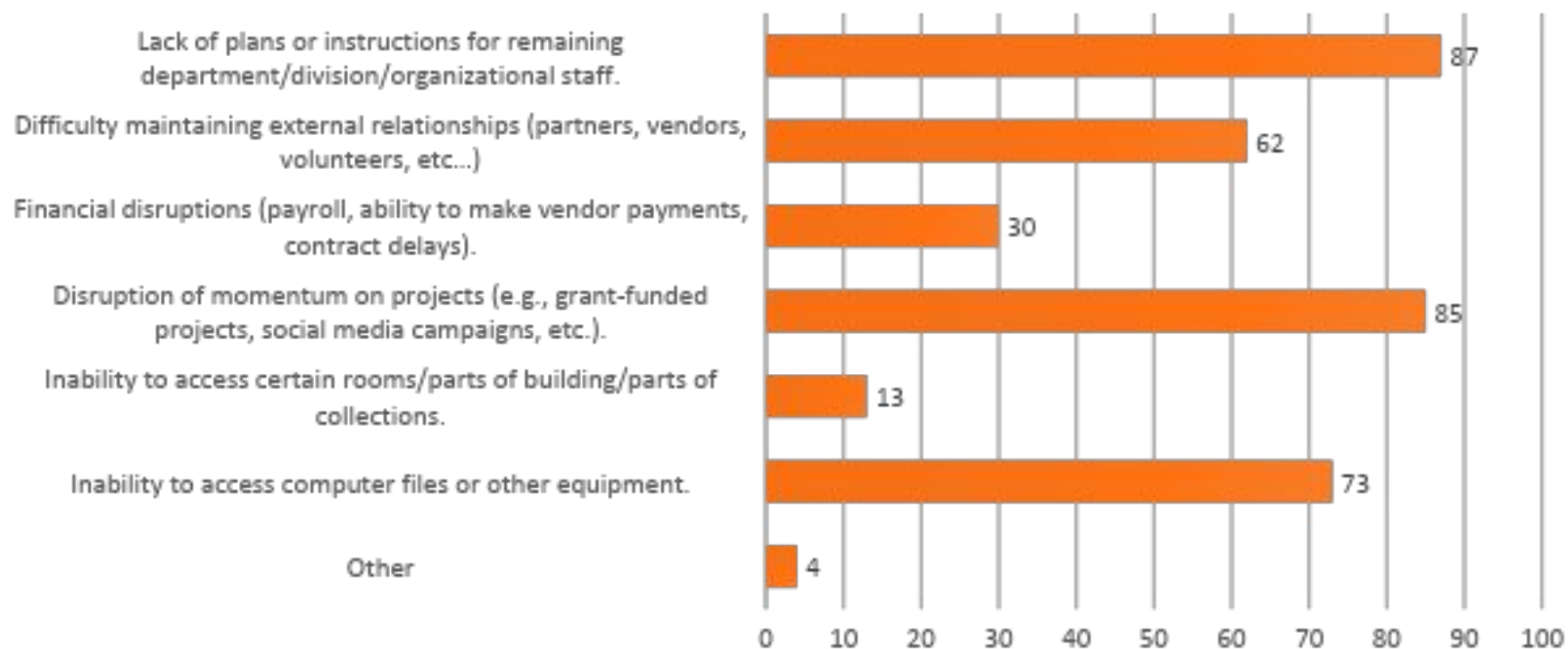
HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED ANY SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT A "KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PROCESS" TO ENSURE THE SMOOTH TRANSFER OF INFORMATION CRITICAL FOR MAINTAINING CONTINUITY OF PROJECTS AND PRACTICES?



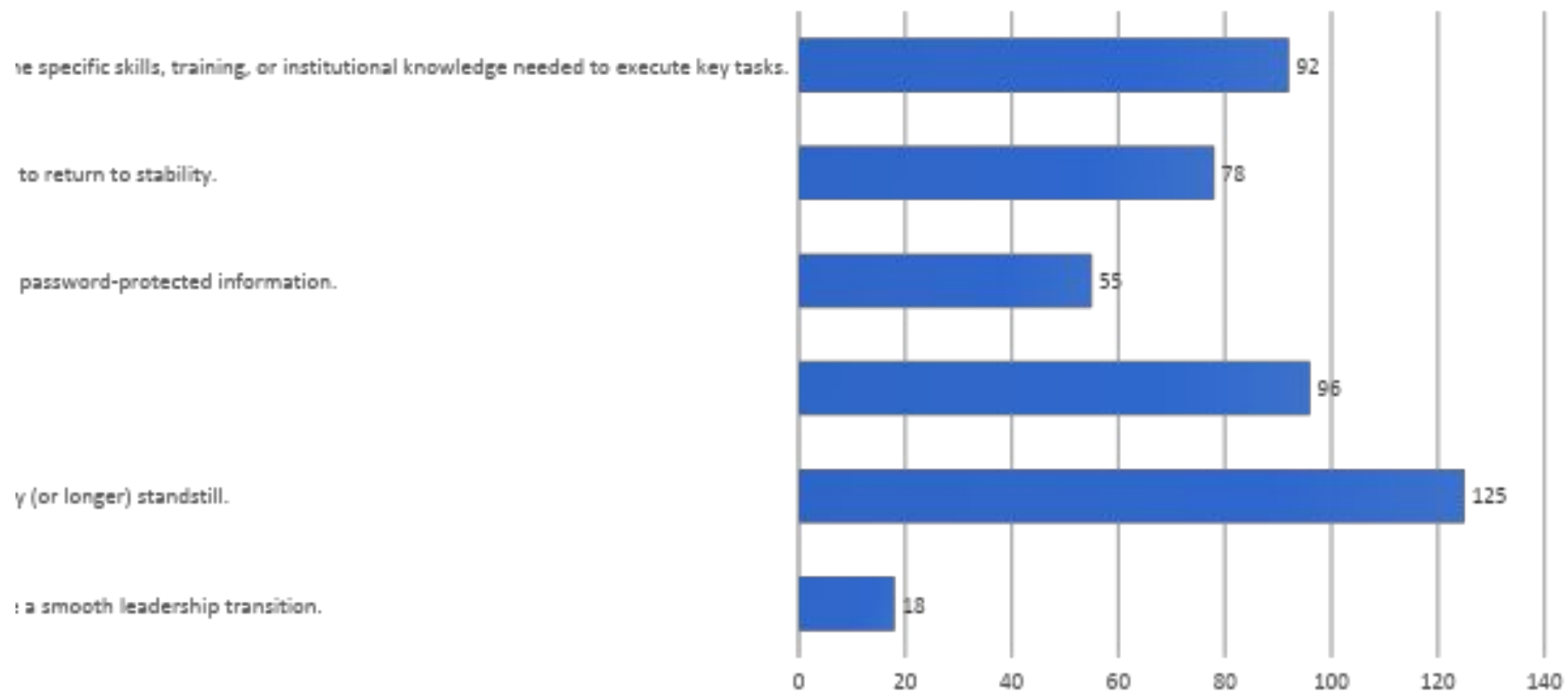
HAVE YOU WORKED AT AN ORGANIZATION OR IN A DEPARTMENT THAT EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS ARISING FROM A LACK OF SUCCESSION PLANNING?



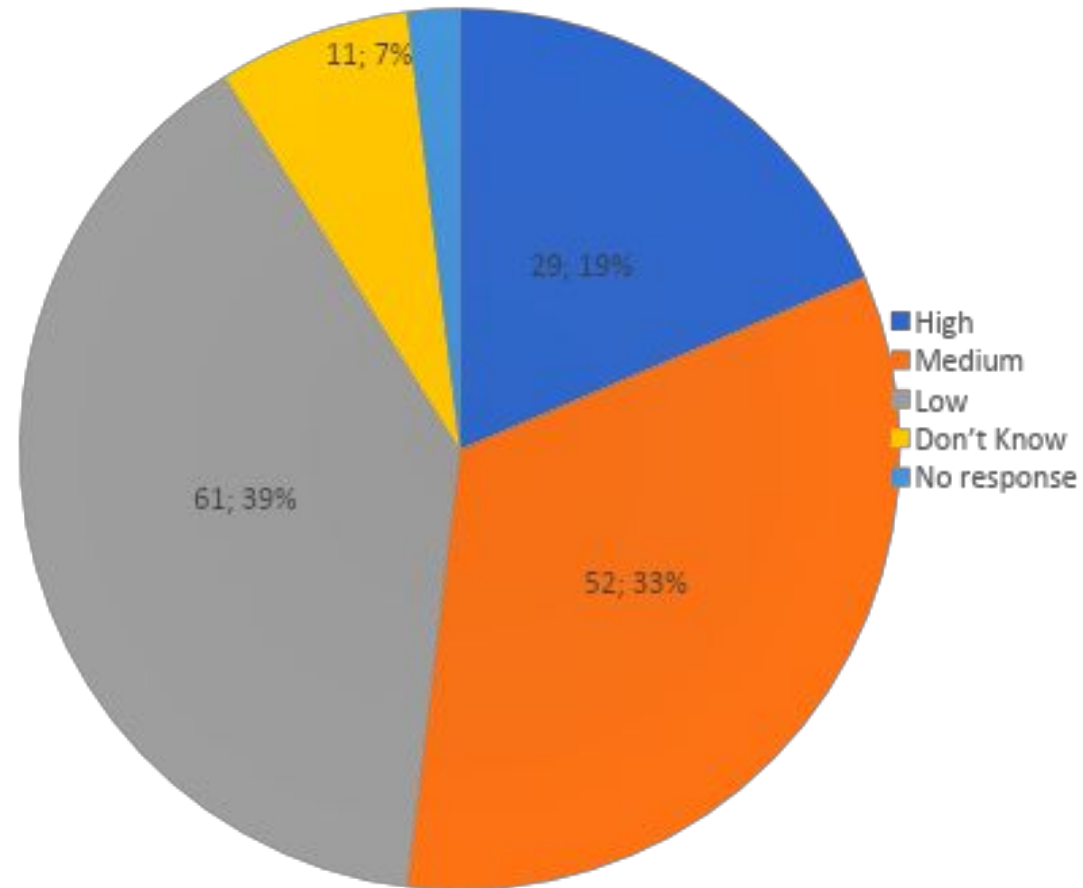
WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED OR WITNESSED THAT AROSE FROM A LACK OF SUCCESSION PLANNING?



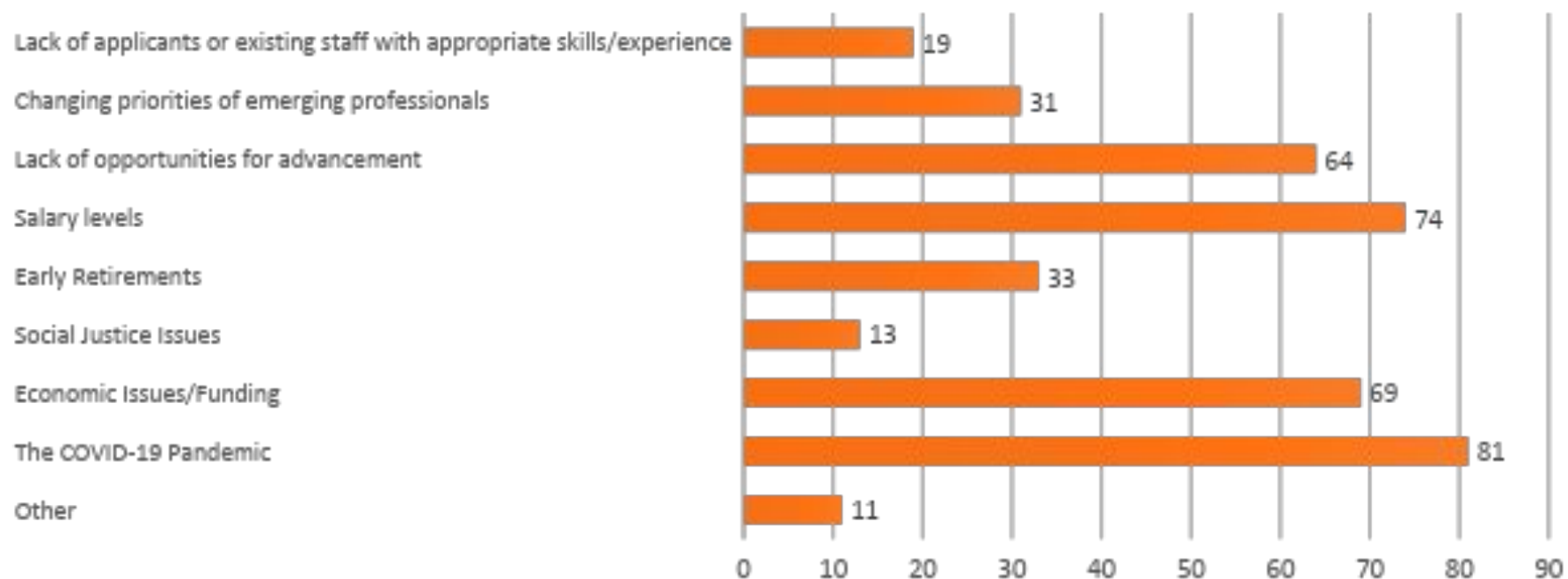
WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF YOU ABRUPTLY LEFT YOUR ORGANIZATION?



DO YOU CONSIDER SUCCESSION PLANNING A HIGH OR LOW PRIORITY AT YOUR ORGANIZATION, IN COMPARISON TO FINANCIAL, FACILITIES, COLLECTION STEWARDSHIP, AND PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES?

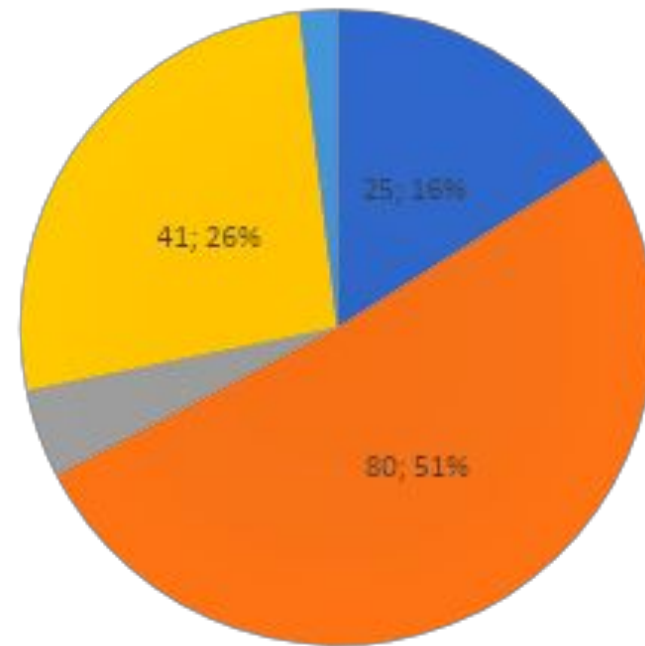


DID ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES EXACERBATE STAFFING AND SUCCESSION PLANNING ISSUES WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION IN THE PAST THREE YEARS?



**DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS PRESENTED YOU WITH
A CLEAR CAREER/ADVANCEMENT PATH?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know
- Not Applicable
- No response



**WHAT BARRIERS DO YOU SEE TO AN INCREASED
COMMITMENT TO SUCCESSION PLANNING AT YOUR
ORGANIZATION?**



Survey Responses

Q: How Can Organizations Improve their Ability to Encourage Career Advancement/ Planning?

- “Leadership that understands the importance of cultural resources but more so an organization that differentiates and attends to managing people vs managing collections. Those two jobs have been combined and unqualified/unrespected employees are put into positions of management where the importance of people skills is assumed to be present but is neglected and absent. Leadership and delegation skills are key to letting specialists do their work.” - **Preservation & Collections Specialist, Government Archives**
- “Beyond increasing staffing to include more paraprofessional positions with room for advancement (not likely), gradations within a position could be helpful, e.g. a senior or advanced level that could be achievable with increasing responsibility.”
- **Collections Archivist, College or University library, archives, and/or special collections**
- “When I worked in the private sector, there were clear paths for career advancement that were communicated with employees which were subject to negotiation. Any additional responsibility was requested along with an adequate pay raise to take on the additional work if it was being requested between fiscal years. I found this system to be much more respectful than the way I have experienced compensation discussions in the museum field.” - **Collections Manager, Historical society, historic house, or historic site**
- “Our organization seems to have insufficient staff to ensure career/advancement planning.”
- **University Archivist, College or University library, archives, and/or special collections**

Survey Voices

- “I feel that **visual models and representations** can be very helpful for passing on and documenting information for future employees.” - **Museum employee**
- “There are some **software barriers** to succession planning--for example, when a person leaves, documents created by them and stored in individual data storage spaces disappear within days of their departure--there should be a longer period of time and/or a way to identify which documents are tied to an individual so that when they leave, that documentation doesn't go away.”
- **Director, Preservation Services, College or University library, archives, and/or special collections**
- “Occasional or cyclical **budgetary constraints** need to be addressed in every succession plan and put into place a limited time frame/target date to move forward - even if endowments or ‘rainy day’ funds need to be used. Continuity of the collections stewardship functions within the organization needs to be maintained without the loss of standards and day-to-day practices and activities.”
- **Retired, formerly Museum employee**
- “I have presented Succession Planning guidelines at two regional archival organizations. These stress basics like written policies, making sure collections and materials are documented and labelled, organization, etc. The issue basically is that **too many archives have too few staff to create a succession structure.**”
- **University Archivist, College or University library, archives, and/or special collections**

Survey Voices

- “Part of succession planning needs to include **fair compensation** for those who take on succession execution.” - **Senior Museum Scientist, College or University library, archives, and/or special collections**
- “Convince higher ups that some of the people who take care of collections need **skill sets** that aren't just found among anyone with a degree in anything. Otherwise, they won't see a need for succession planning.” - **Historian, Government archives**
- “We have written policies and procedures that provide for continuation of operations. When our processing archivist retired, our biggest problem was locating collections on the shelves. When she ran out of room, she put newly processed collections or additions to established collections wherever she could find shelf space. She knew where she put it, but no one else did. She did not keep a map or shelf list. Since she left, we spend a lot of time trying to **locate collections** or parts of collections not shelved with the original accession.”
- **Archivist, College or University library, archives, and/or special collections**
- “In a small institution where everyone is already doing more than what their job title is, it is very hard to find the time and resources to do this kind of planning. What doesn't get done in order to do large scale planning? This is what small institutions need help with.” - **Special Collections Librarian, Museum**

Resources to Test Today

- ❖ Top 10 Things You Can Do Now
- ❖ Top 5 Questions Board Members Should Ask
- ❖ Risk Assessment Matrix
- ❖ Job Analysis Template / Responsibility Assignment Matrix
- ❖ Oral History Guide

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