

Strengthening Rhode Island's One Water Workforce

Part 1: Retaining Talent and Preparing for Workforce Transitions

Thursday, August 20, 2026





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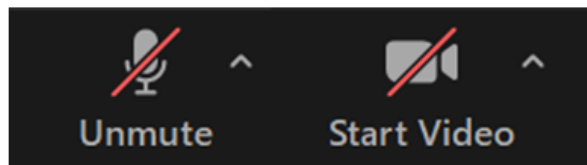
Zoom Logistics

Asking a Question

Audio/Webcam Settings

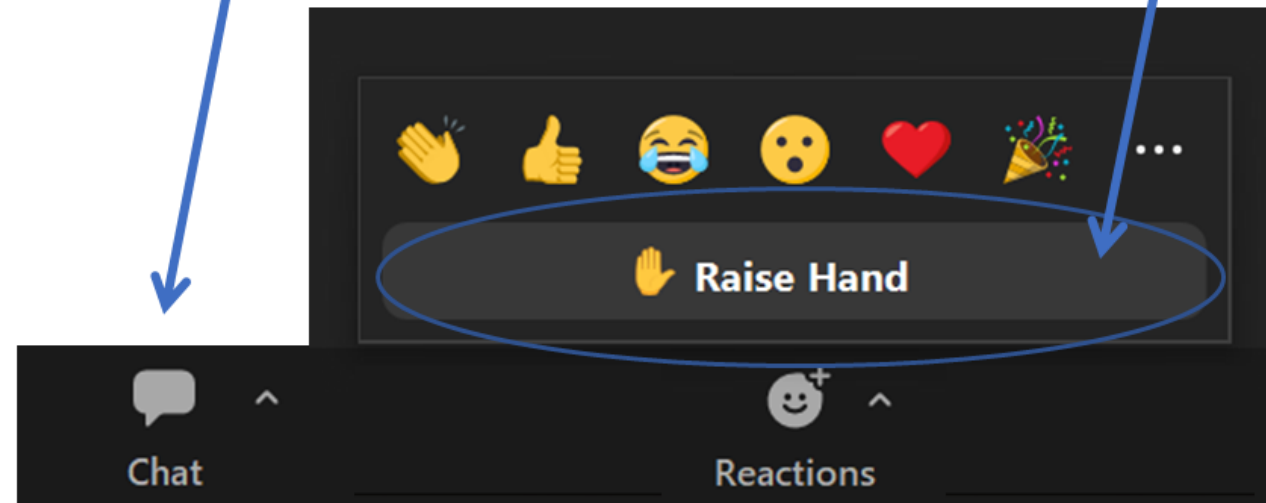
Mute, Unmute, select your audio source, or test audio settings.

Turn webcam on or off



Type questions into the chat box any time throughout the session

If you would like to **unmute** to ask a question, please **raise your hand** under the **Reactions** tab.



Continuing Education Credits

This training is approved for:

2.0 Drinking Water and Wastewater training credit hours
(TCH) by the RI DOH and RI DEM



To receive credit and/or a certificate:

- You must attend the **entire session**
- You must register and attend using your real name and unique email address - **group viewing credit will not be acceptable**
- Certificates will be sent via email within 30 days



*If you have questions
or need assistance,
please contact
smallsystems@syr.edu*

About the EFCN

The **Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN)** is a university- and non-profit-based organization creating innovative solutions to the difficult how-to-pay issues of environmental protection and water infrastructure.

The EFCN works collectively and as individual centers to address these issues across the entire U.S, including the 5 territories and the Navajo Nation. The EFCN aims to assist public and private sectors through training, direct professional assistance, production of durable resources, and innovative policy ideas.



Meet Our Partners:



Meet Our Partners:

New England
neefc
Environmental Finance Center



neefc.org

SNEP

NETWORK



snepnetwork.org

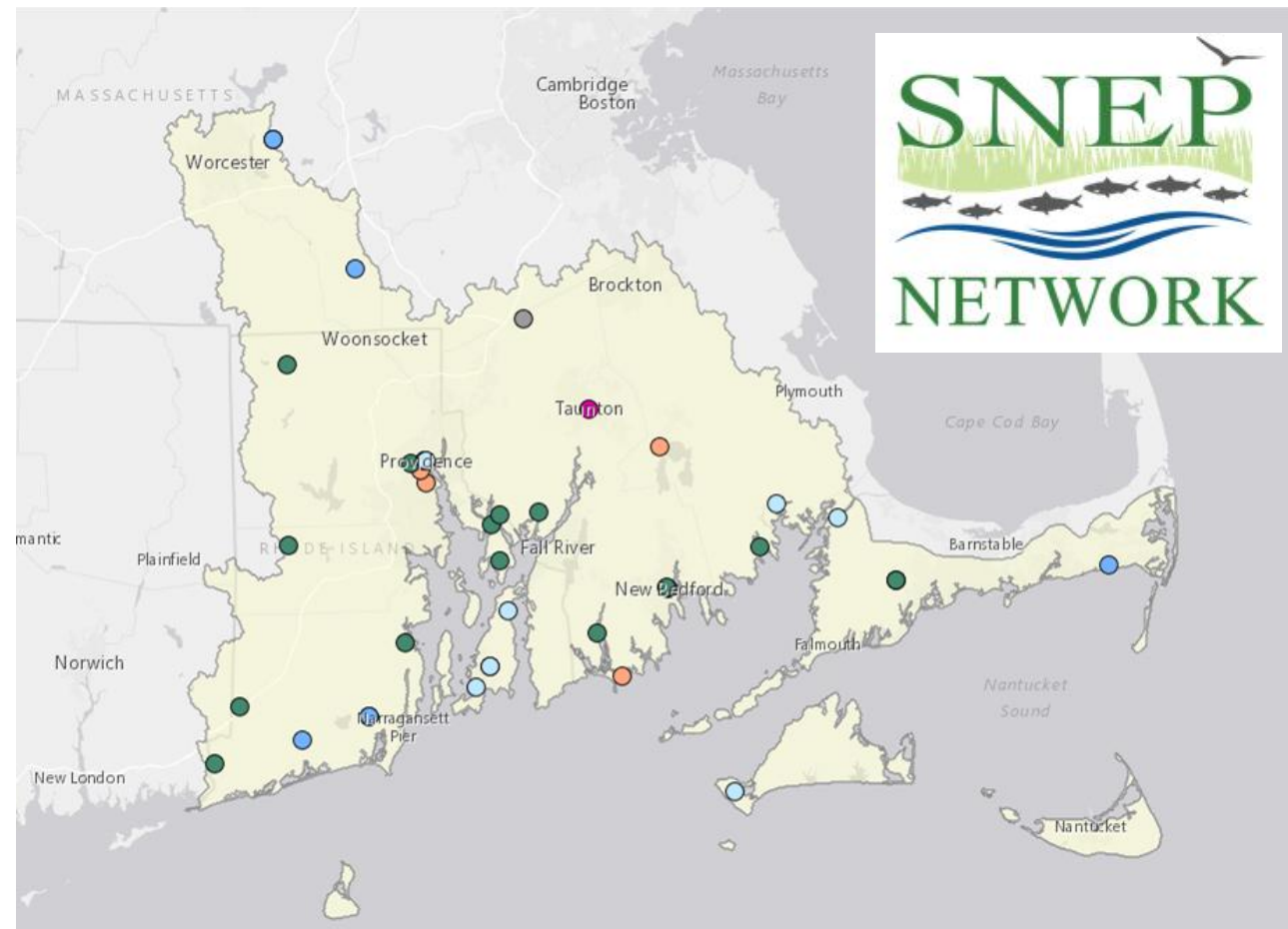
Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Network

*A network of **16+ local and regional experts** with expertise in **stormwater and watershed management, sustainable financing, ecological restoration, and climate resilience***

Offerings

Access **free training, tools, and technical/financial assistance** for municipalities and tribes, helping **build local capacity and advance projects** from planning to implementation.

Empowering communities to achieve healthy watersheds, sustainable financing, and long-term climate resilience through management of stormwater and restoration projects.



Map of the SNEP Region and SNEP Network Assistance Projects from 2019-2024

Join us next week for Part 2:

Messaging for Workforce Recruitment and Leadership Support

Thursday, August 27, 2026

*Also pre-approved for 2.0 Drinking Water and
Wastewater TCH by RI DOH and RI DEM*

<https://efcnetwork.org/event/ri-online-training-strengthening-rhode-islands-one-water-workforce-part-2-messaging-for-workforce-recruitment-and-leadership-support/>

efc.syr.edu

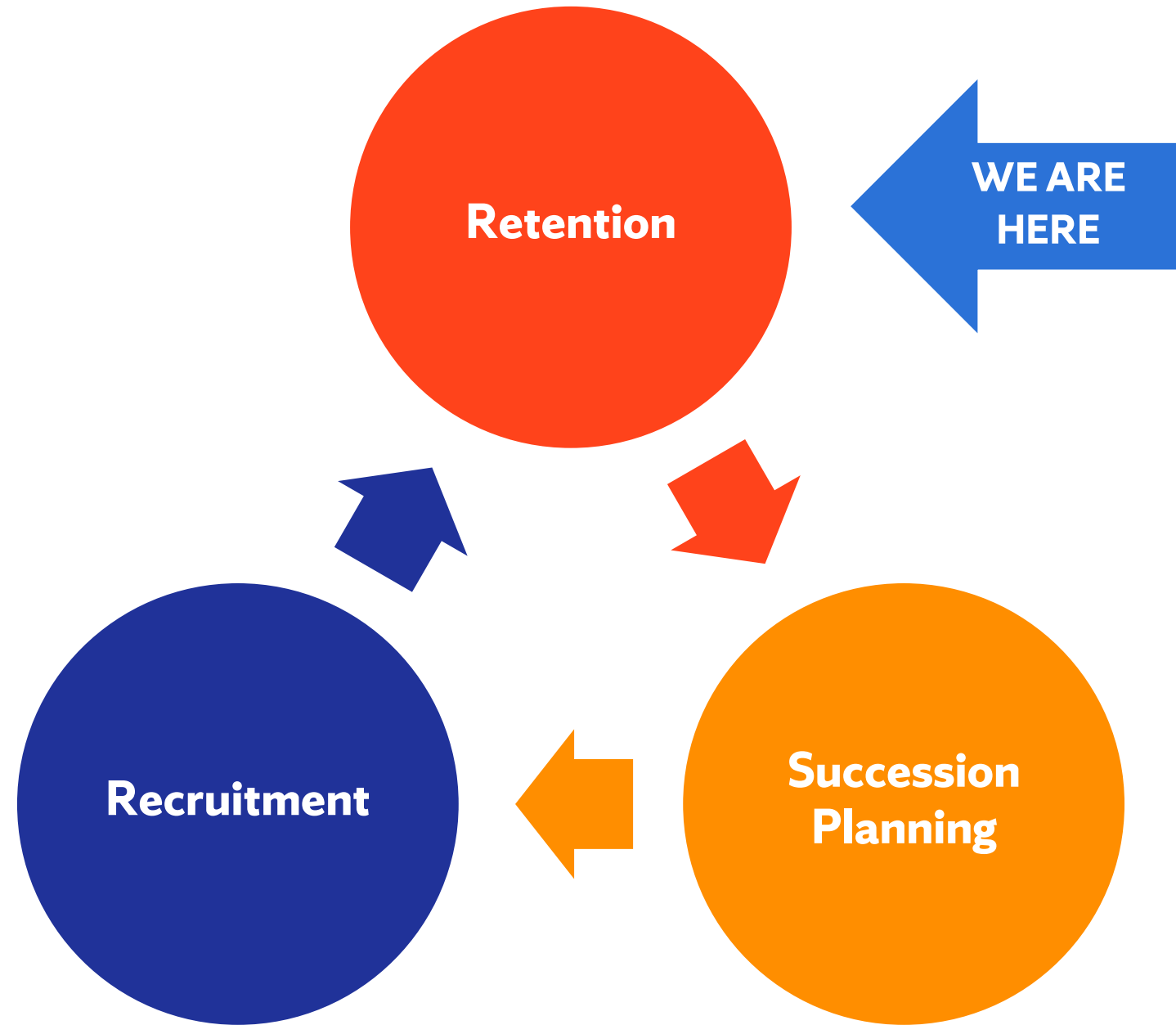
Session Overview



**Green
infrastructure
workforce
development in
action!**

1. Strategies for Retaining Talent
2. Understanding Workplace Personalities
3. **Guest Speaker: Stephanie Moniz from Groundwork RI**
4. Succession Planning & Preparing for Workforce Transitions
5. Knowledge Transfer
6. Q&A

Workforce Planning



Retention Agenda

1. What is Retention?
2. Core Retention Factors
3. Understanding Workplace Personalities



What is “Workforce Retention”?

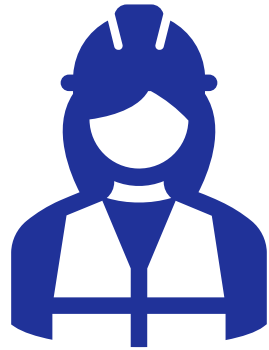
“An organization’s ability to prevent **employee turnover**, or the number of people who leave their job in a certain period, either voluntarily or involuntarily.”

Source: [netsuite.com](https://www.netsuite.com)



An aerial photograph of a wastewater treatment plant, featuring several large circular aeration tanks with radial walkways. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue filter. Centered over the image is the text "The Why" in a large, white, sans-serif font.

The Why



**42% of workplace
turnover is preventable**

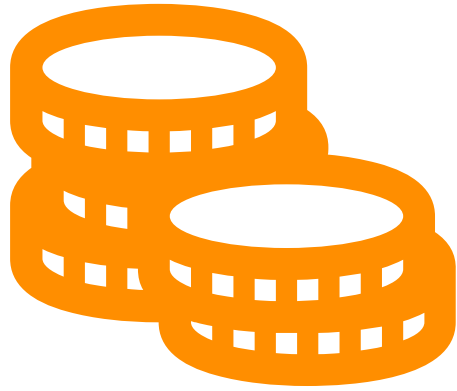
The Exit Journey: What Did the Organization Do to Intervene?

In the three months before leaving, did your manager or another leader talk to you about **any** of the following topics?

■ % Selected



WF Q4 2023, U.S. Employees MOE: ± 6 points. Results are among U.S. employees who had voluntarily changed their job in the past year.



**Retaining your current staff
will always be less costly
than hiring new ones**

An aerial photograph of a wastewater treatment plant, featuring several large circular aeration tanks with radial internal structures. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

**How do you know if
you're doing well?**



Try this easy formula:

(# of employees at the **end** of a set time period / # of employees at the **start** of a set time period)

x 100 = retention rate %

Retention Rates Example

(# of employees at the end of a set time period / # of employees at the start of a set time period) x 100 = retention rate percentage

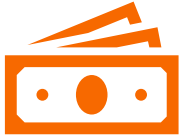
Formula Step	Output
Total number of employees at the beginning of the calendar year.	30
Total number of those same employees who remain at your organization at the end of the calendar year.	26
Divide the number of employees at the end of the year by the number of employees at the start.	26 / 30 = 0.87
Multiply the output by 100. This is your retention rate (%) .	87%

? *Unmute or Type in Chat:*

Why do you stay at your current job?



Common Reasons We Stay



Fair pay & benefits



Growth & advancement



Supportive culture



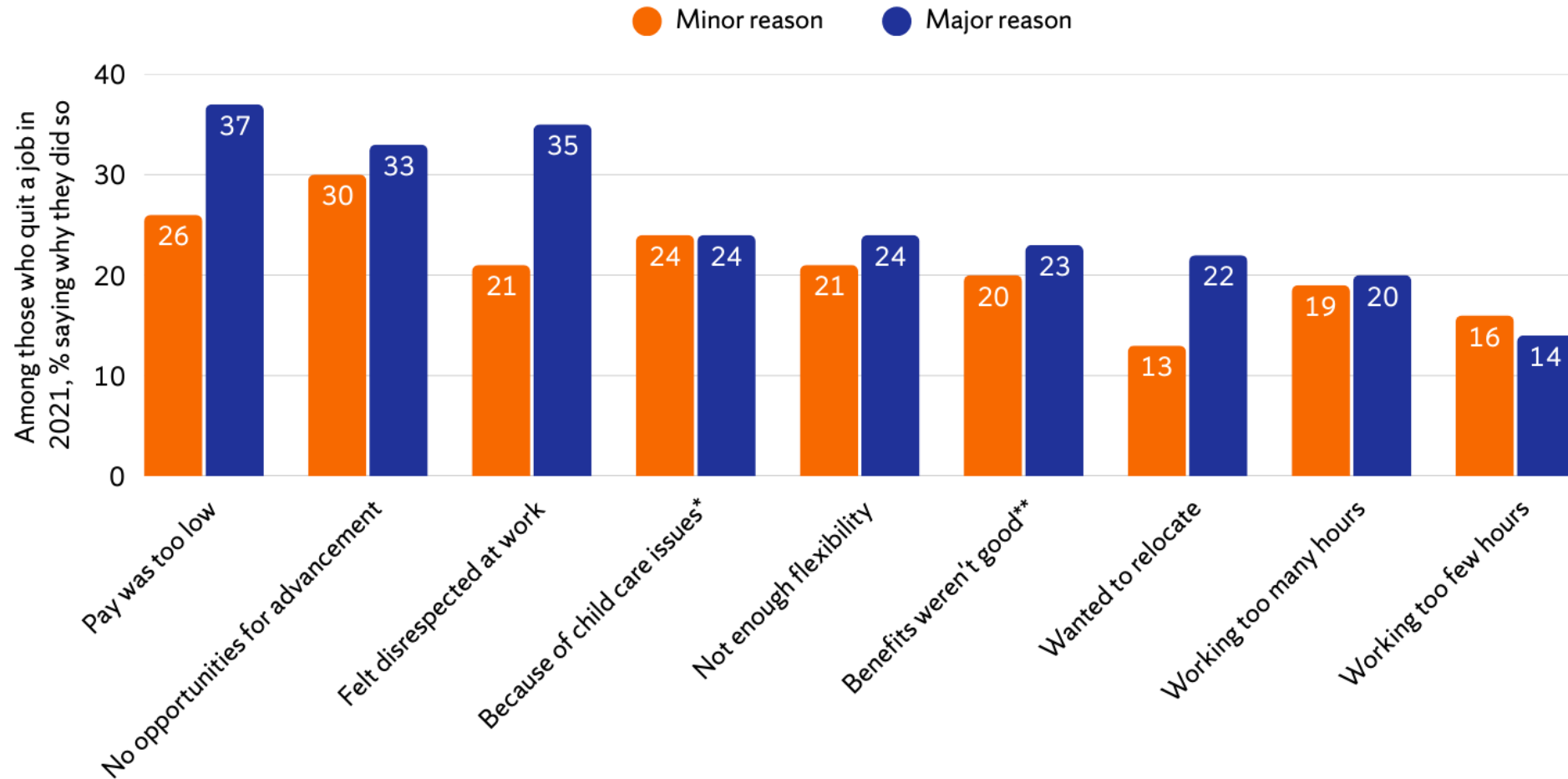
Flexibility



Feeling valued



What Makes People Leave?



Top reasons why U.S. workers left a job in 2021

Source: Pew Research Center

Compensation Isn't Just Pay

- Salary and pay are only one piece
- Benefits: *Health, retirement, vacation, sick/parental leave*
- Perks: *Flexible scheduling, bonuses, telecommuting, training stipends, license renewal support*
- **Total compensation = all the ways you support your employees**



Image Source: Early to Rise

People Stay Where They Feel Respected and Valued

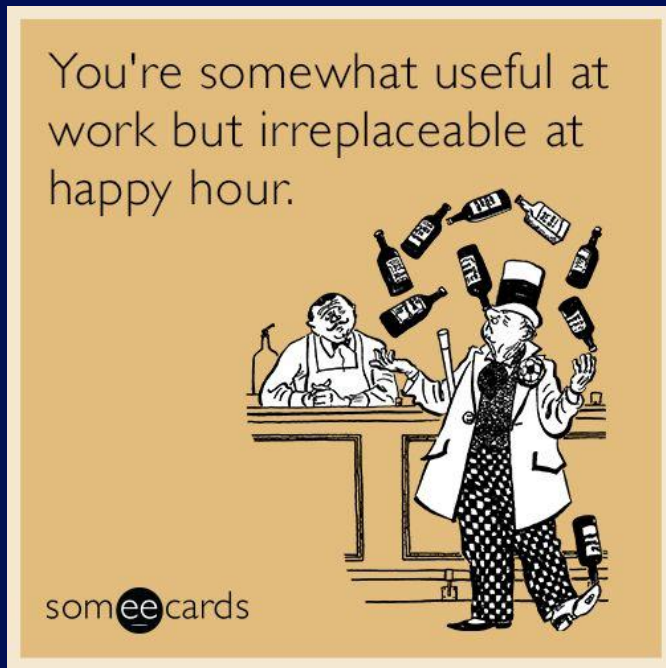
- Positive team culture = higher retention
- Respect, frequent communication, and trust matter
- Help staff feel heard and supported



Good pay will never solve a toxic work environment



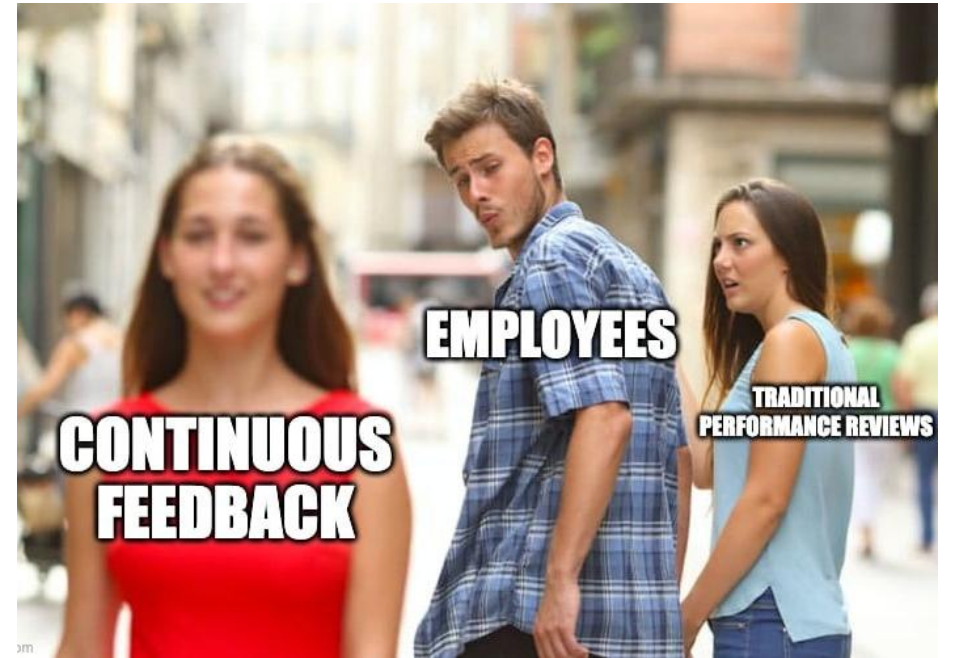
Physical Comfort, Safety, and Team Connection



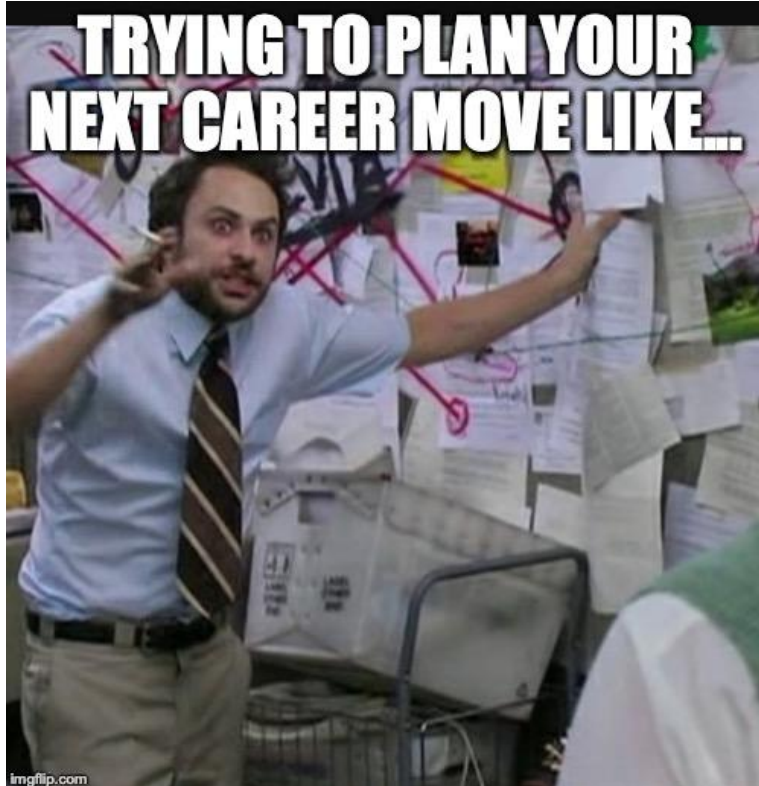
- Make controlled spaces more livable (break rooms, bathrooms, workstations)
- Keep spaces clean, warm, and well-stocked
- Prioritize **workplace safety**
- Build team connection outside of work

Recognition and Feedback

- Don't wait for annual reviews! Give feedback in real time
- Frequent, meaningful feedback builds trust and loyalty
- Recognition is (usually) **free**

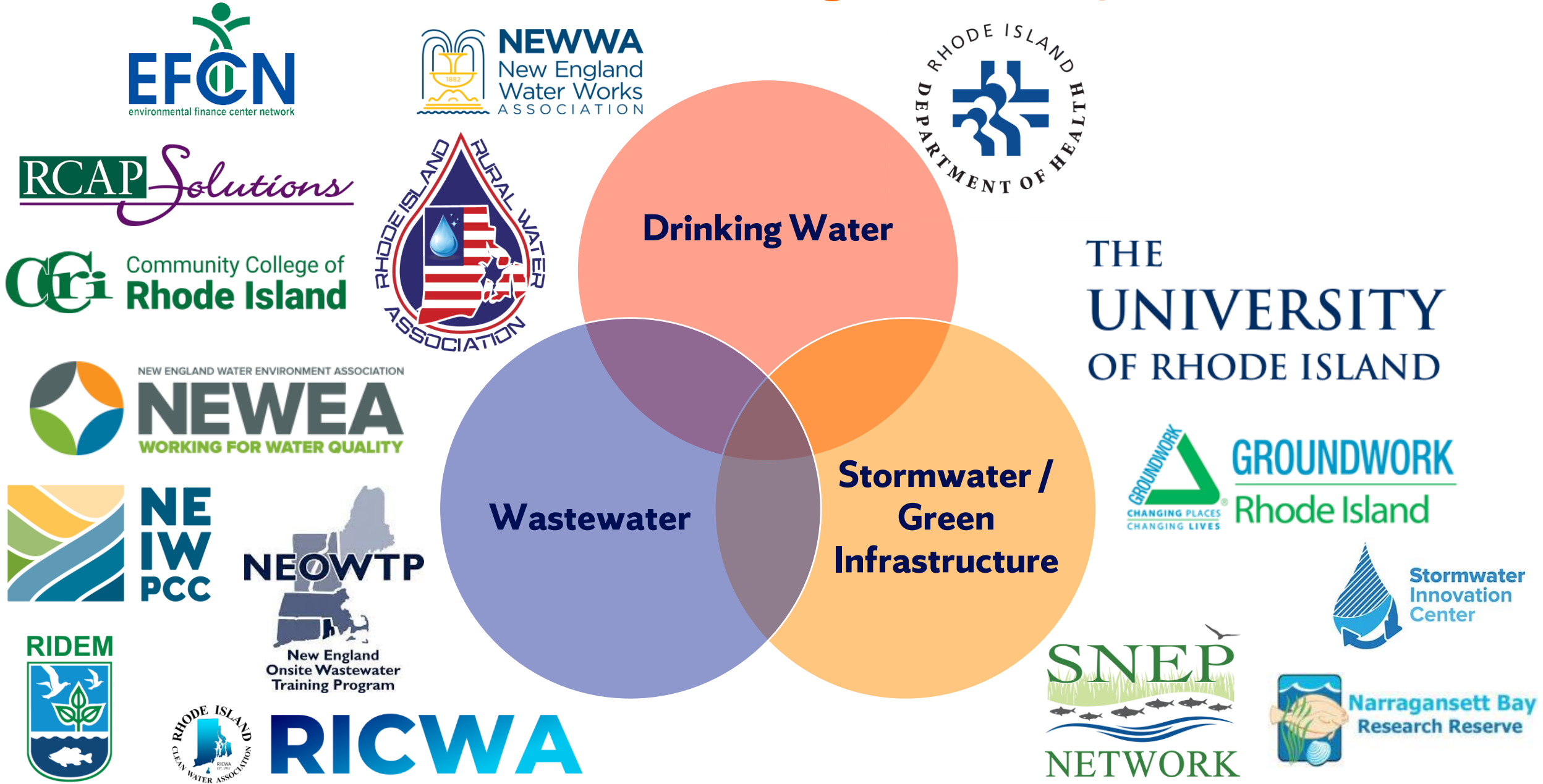


Growth and Career Pathways



- Offer (and encourage) training and development
- Talk about long-term goals and advancement pathways during check-ins
- Let staff know you see their potential
- **Career ladders = retention ladders**

Resources for Training & Development



Wrap-Around Supports: Meeting Real Life Needs



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Source: Simply Psychology

Management Matters



- **Poor management is a top driver of turnover**
- Unclear expectations, lack of communication, no recognition = **high risk**
- Great managers build loyalty and retention
- People management deserves training!

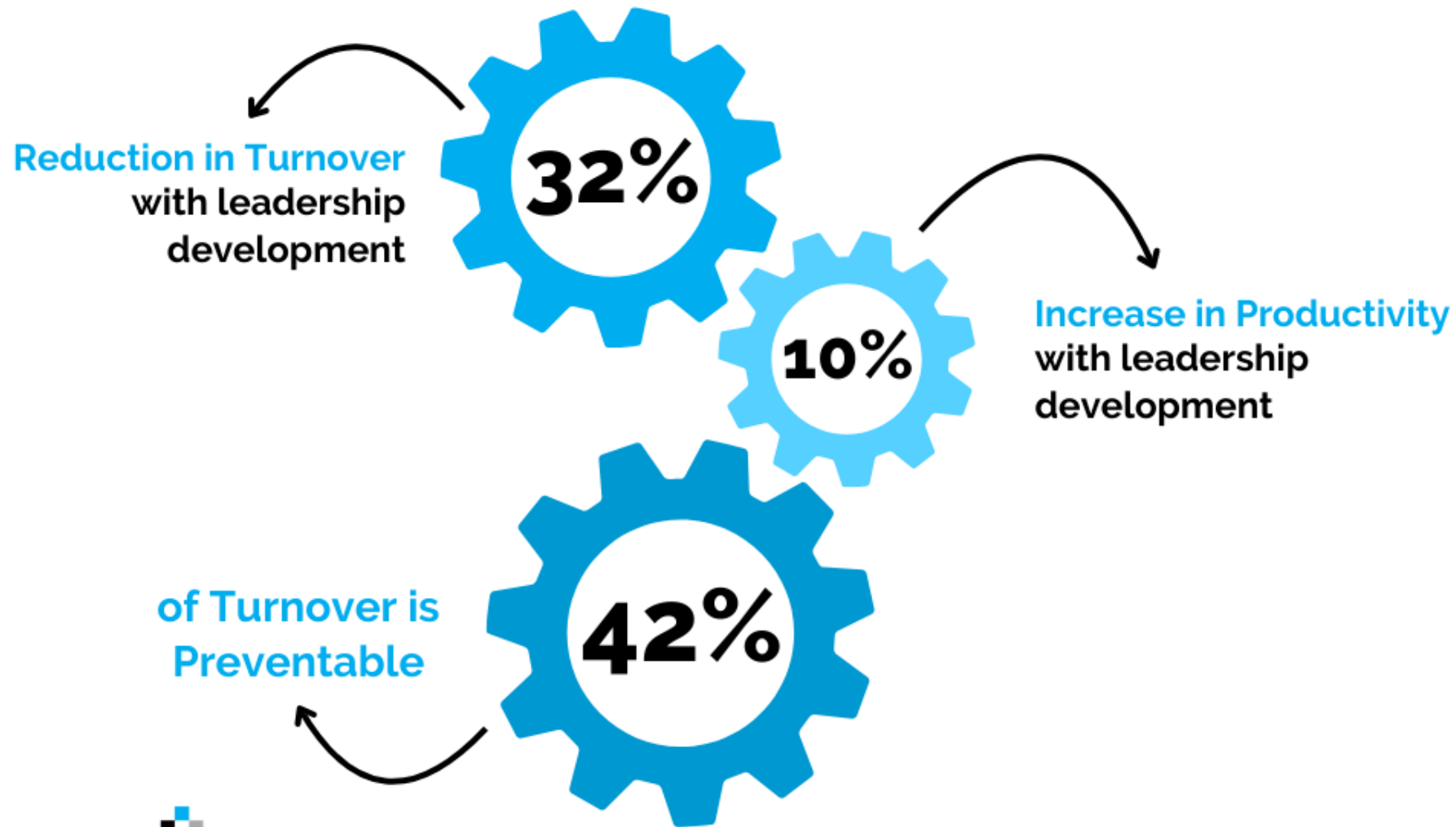
Train the People Who Lead Your People

- Supervisor and mid-level staff need **“soft” skills** training:
leadership development, communication, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence
- Mentoring and performance feedback
- Peer learning opportunities with other managers

When you wanted to be a manager and now you have to manage people



Effective Leadership Is **Key to Retention**

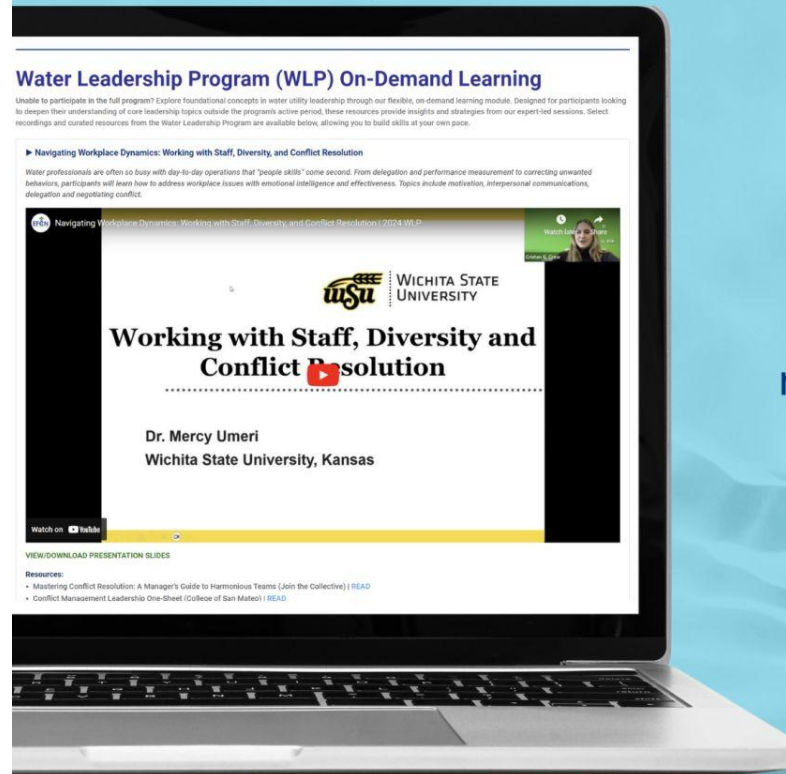
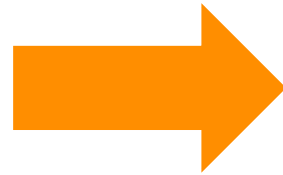


On-Demand Leadership Learning

Curated materials from
the *EFCN Water
Leadership Program*

Visit:

efcnetwork.org/water-leadership-program



Water Leadership Program: On-Demand Learning Module

Enhance your water utility
leadership skills with our
**NEW On-Demand Learning
Module!** Access expert
insights and curated
resources at your own pace.

LEARN MORE



efcnetwork.org/water-leadership-program





Mind the Gap: Managing Five Generations in the Workplace



Source: BSCAI



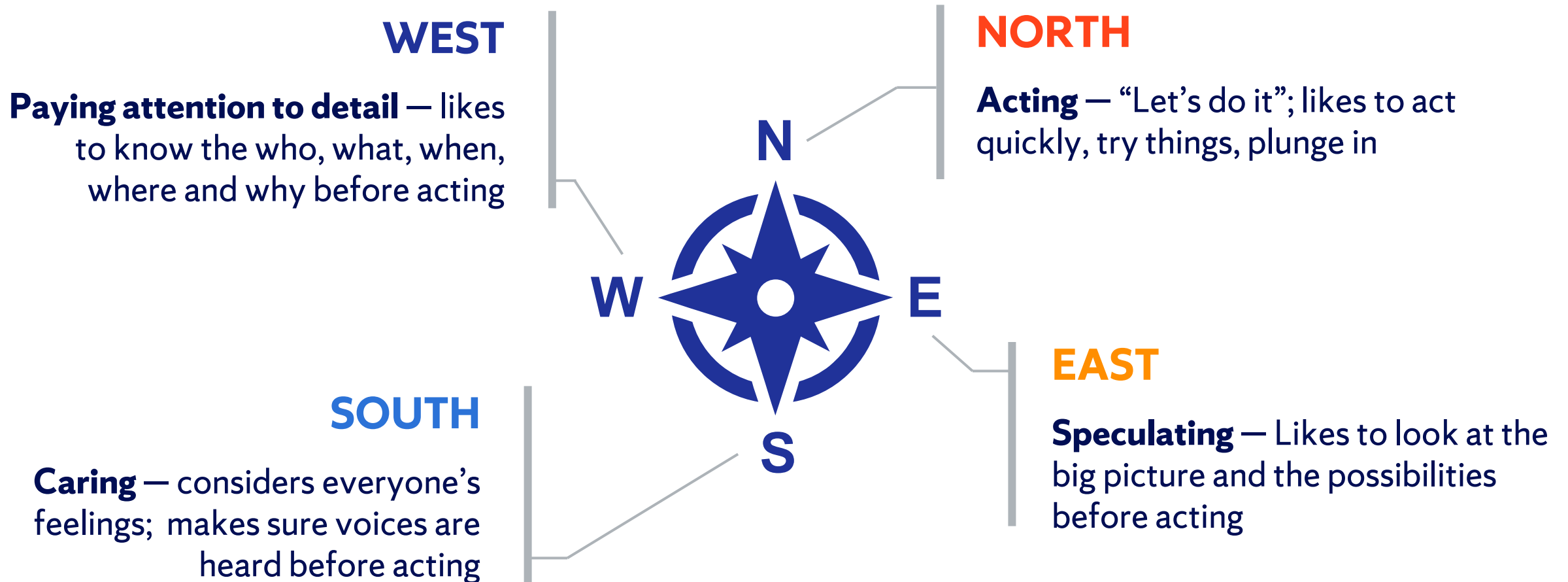
Understanding Workplace Personalities: Turn Differences into Team Strengths

Why it Matters for Workforce Retention



- We stay where we feel understood, valued, and able to contribute in ways that align with our **natural strengths**
- Diverse personality types bring **balance** to teams
- Feeling **appreciated** leads to higher job satisfaction, reduced conflict, and greater engagement

The Personality Compass



Try It With Your Team!

The Personality Compass - Breakout Group Activity



The **Personality Compass** by Turner and Greco is a simple tool for identifying work styles and helps management align their approaches with employee strengths. This activity offers a structured way to better understand staff motivations and foster a workplace culture that supports long-term workforce stability.

- 1. Group Formation:** After a brief overview of the Personality Compass, participants will identify as North, South, East, or West and form breakout groups accordingly.
- 2. Group Discussion:** Within each group, discuss the following questions:
 1. What are the strengths of your type?
 2. What are the weaknesses of your type?
 3. What type do you find most difficult to work with and why?
 4. How should your type adapt to work with others?
 5. How should others' types adapt to work with you?
- 3. Report-Out:** Each group will designate a representative to share key insights with the larger group. Focus on workplace dynamics and implications for team effectiveness.
- 4. Retention Strategy:** Note the distribution of personality types in the room. Then, reflect on how this mix of work styles may influence leadership approaches, workplace dynamics, and retention strategies. Using the guidance on the following page, consider how management practices can be adapted to support engagement and retention across different personality types.

- Ask each team member to identify which type they are on the personality compass
- Group each type together and provide discussion questions
- Have each group report out to the whole team
- Reflect as a group. Did you learn anything surprising?
- Look closer at findings and apply to your workplace

<http://efcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/The-Personality-Compass-Handout.pdf>





EXIT



Next Up | Guest Speaker:

Stephanie Moniz, Training and Education
Program Director, Groundwork RI



**Green Infrastructure Workforce Development in
Action:** Training, Youth Development, & Partnerships





GROUNDWORK
Rhode Island



Adult Environmental Job Training



Groundcorp



STORM CREW

DEVELOPING A NATURE-BASED
SOLUTIONS WORKFORCE IN RHODE
ISLAND

Highlighting the people who make the work possible





HOW DID WE GET HERE



CENTER FOR
**WATERSHED
PROTECTION**

CLEAN WATER CERTIFICATE TRAINING PROGRAM

1

Adult Environmental Job Training
Program

2

Graduate from Job Training/

Earn CWC certificate (Pre-requisite for Storm Crew)

3

Participate in 16-week internship



Our friend Sam
CF Mart
Loves to lend a hand



**New Bioswale installation
in south Providence**



**Establishment care for
young trees in low canopy
neighborhoods**



BRIDGING THE GAPS



RICHARD “RICH” ZEVALLOS



Adult environmental job training graduate



Aquarius

Providence Native

The only adult little league mvp in history

WHEN WE ASKED..



Where is there potential for the industry to grow/add/change/adapt to be more impactful to communities?

“I want to see those who are established in this industry have a bigger visibility in the communities they serve by employing, interacting and engaging them through education, outreach, and job opportunities. ”

PARTNERSHIPS MAKE IT POSSIBLE..

- Garden Time/Canopy Crew
- Providence Neighborhood Planting program
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
- Stormwater Innovation Center
- City of Providence/Providence Dept. Of Public works
- City of Central Falls/ Central Falls Dept. of Public works
- City of Pawtucket
- Green Infrastructure Center
- Maiseys Tree Farm 3LC
- Open fARMs Retreat
- EPA/Southern New England Program*
- RI Dept of Environmental Management*



WHAT'S NEXT



Interested in healthier waterways or green infrastructure?
Sign up for the Center for Watershed Protection's
Clean Water Certificate
training program
led by Groundwork RI!

Open to the general public.



Fill out our
interest form!



What is the Clean Water Certificate Training:

- ANSI/ANAB nationally-accredited certificate that never expires
- Classroom and hands-on training with all material provided
- Beginner to intermediate level stormwater management training focused on **Construction, Inspection, and Maintenance of Green Stormwater Infrastructure**
- Both Individual and Group registration \$300/pp* (Financial Aid Available)
- Builds your knowledge and skills supporting both personal and professional goals

CENTER FOR
**WATERSHED
PROTECTION**

ANAB
ANSI National Accreditation Board
ACCREDITED

SNEP
NETWORK

GROUNDWORK
Rhode Island

For more information or to inquire about
training for your organization, contact us at
info@groundworkri.org

KENNETH “KENNY” BROOKS



Garden Time Green Reentry graduate

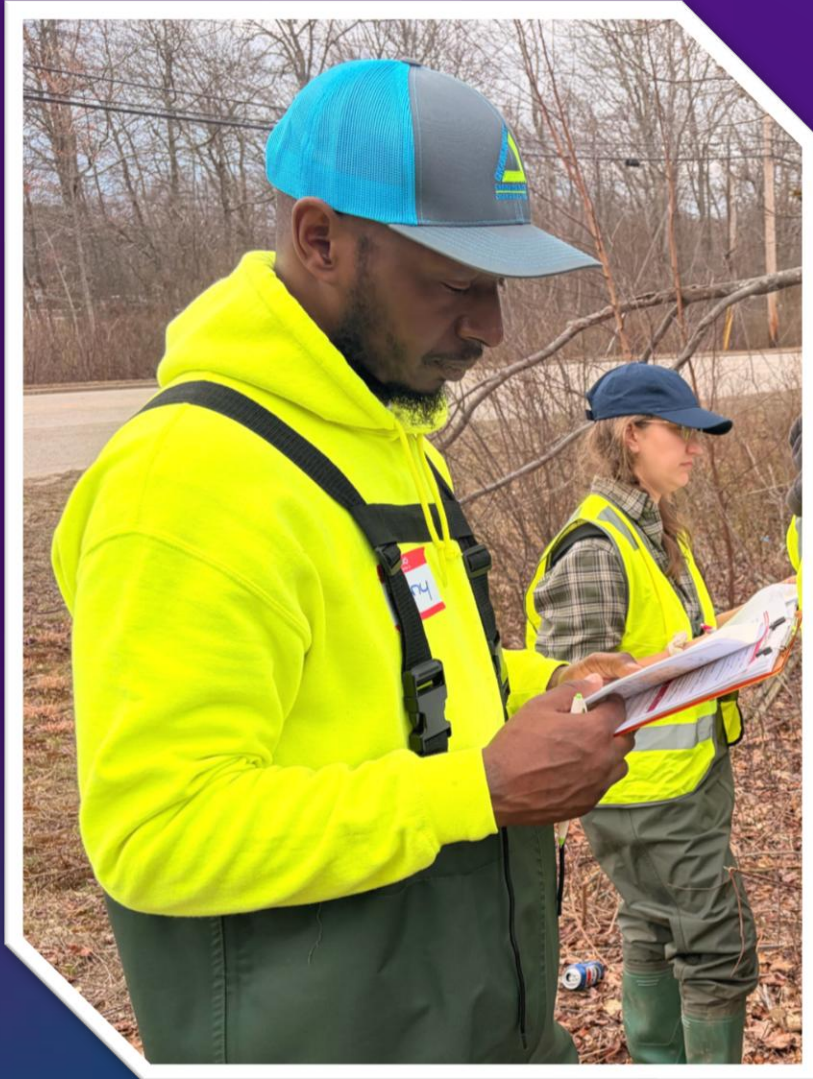


Capricorn

Providence Native

Gamer /bullied by children on the internet

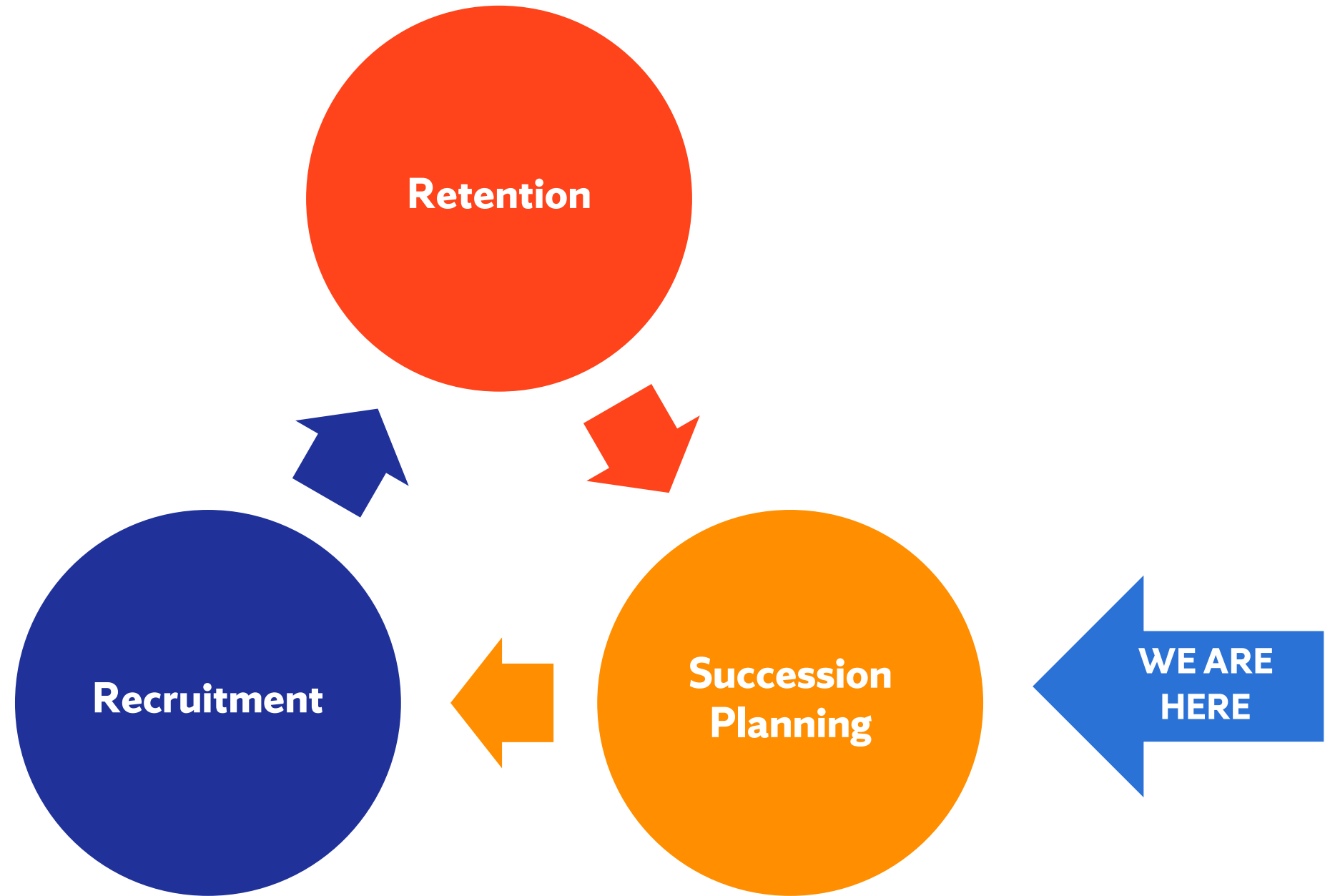
WHEN WE ASKED..



What is it that you want to highlight about the work you've done as part of Storm crew?

"The appreciation that they show us puts a smile on my face and a good feeling in my heart.. "

Workforce Planning



DON'T YOU
THINK WE'RE
CUTTING IT KIND
OF CLOSE?

**JILL'S RETIREMENT PARTY
AND SUCCESSION PLANNING
KICKOFF MEETING**



Overview: Succession Planning

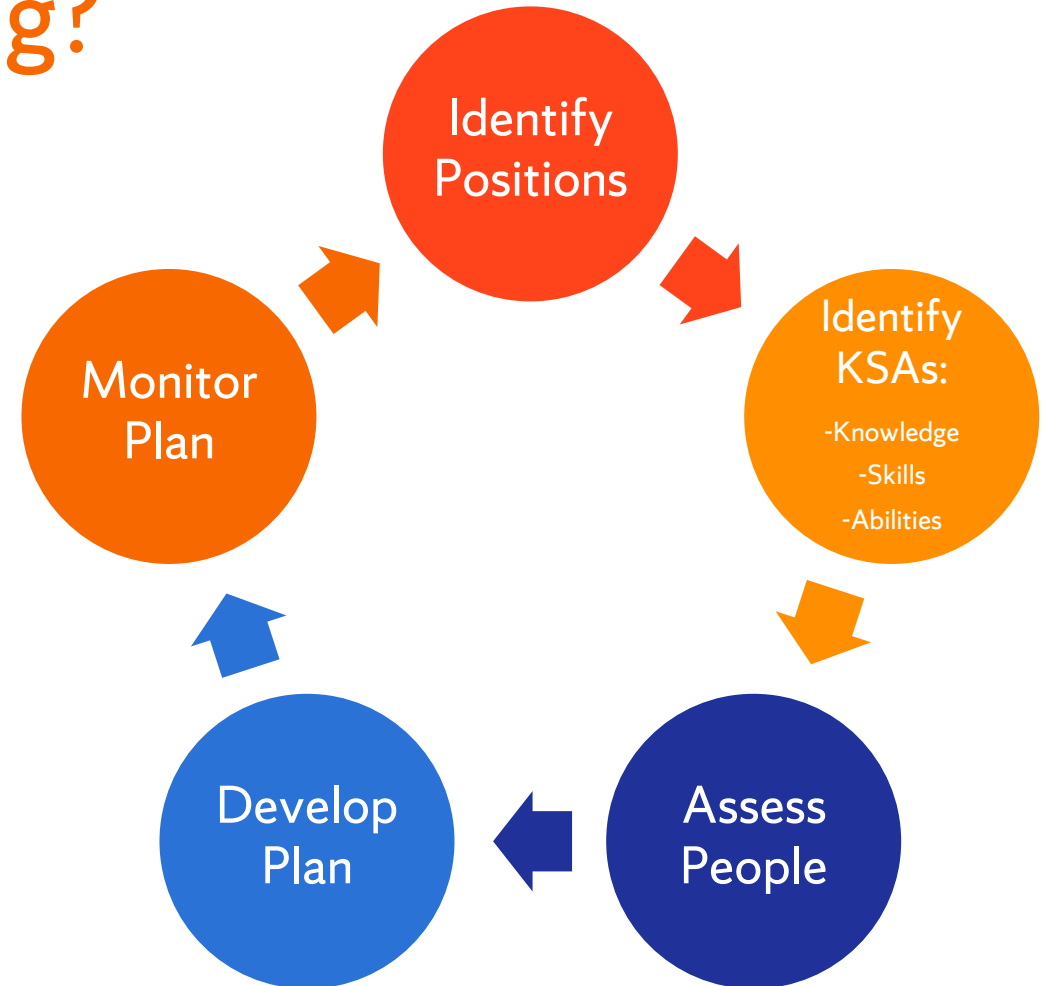
- What is it?
- Benefits
- Developing a succession plan
- Knowledge Transfer
- **Q&A**

Someday, all of this could be yours, but I still haven't created a succession plan...



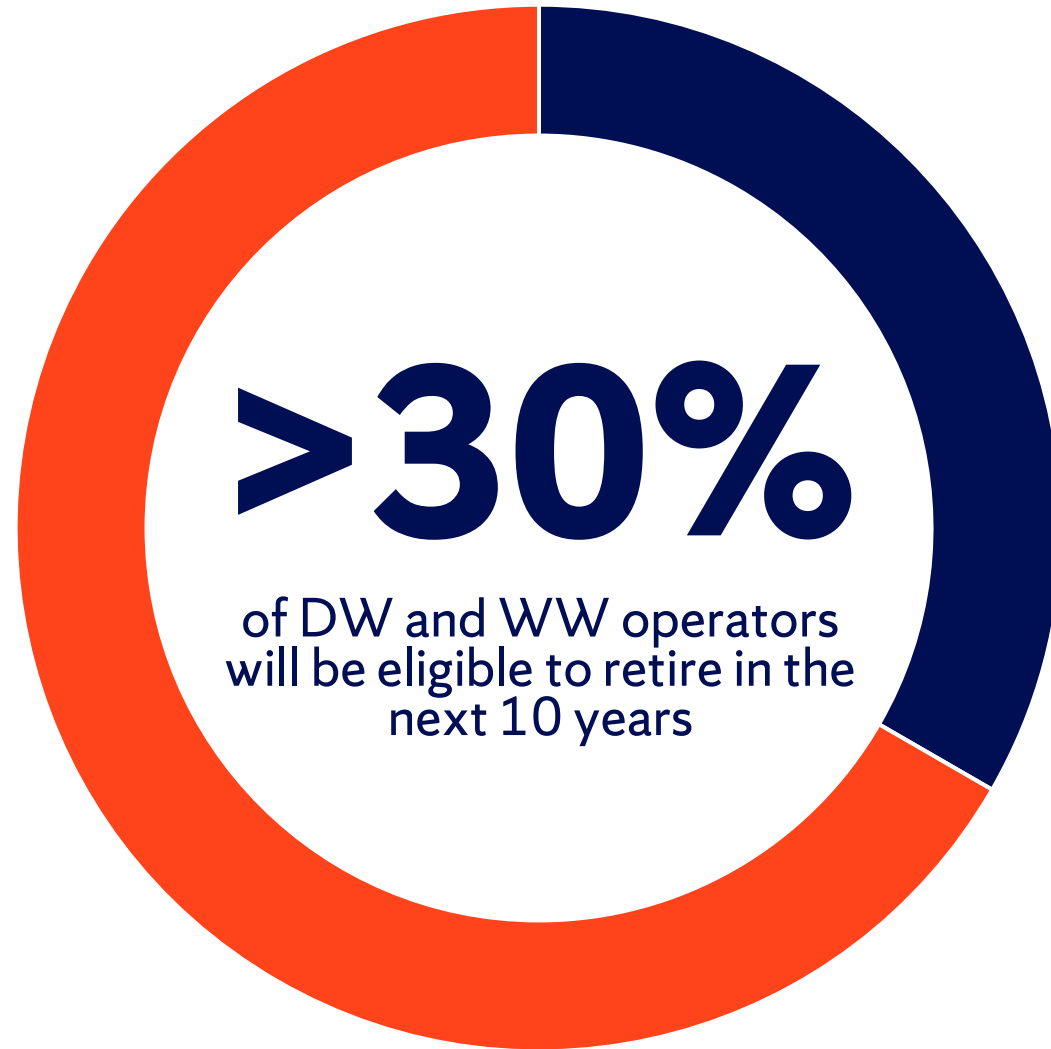
What is Succession Planning?

A systematic approach to **building replacement workers to ensure continuity**, by identifying potential successors in **critical** work processes



An aerial, high-angle photograph of a wastewater treatment plant. The image is dominated by several large, circular aeration tanks. Each tank has a central vertical axis with a complex network of radial metal beams or walkways extending to the outer edge. The water in the tanks appears dark and still. Between the tanks, there are concrete walkways, smaller rectangular basins, and various industrial structures like pipes and scaffolding. The entire scene is captured in a monochromatic blue tone, giving it a technical and somewhat somber feel. The text "Why does it matter?" is superimposed in the center in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Why does it matter?



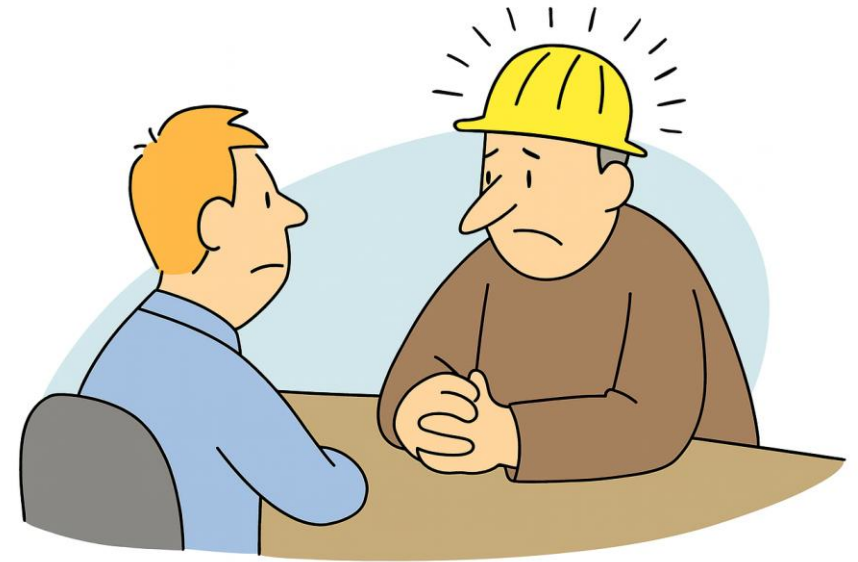
In the water sector, the consequences are higher, and the safety nets are fewer

- **~85% of U.S. water utilities have three or fewer staff**, amplifying impacts of knowledge loss
- **Public health at stake.** Turnover-related gaps can lead to **system failures** or **water quality issues**



Benefits of Succession Planning

- Ensures skilled employees for key positions
- Supports employee development and advancement
- Avoid service disruptions
- Facilitates knowledge transfer
- Improves employee retention



Our succession plan is we don't talk about it.

Developing a Succession Plan



Step 1: Set Goals

- What are the goals of your organization?
- Align with mission, vision and values
- Should be measurable and attainable (SMART)
- Identify a feasible amount of time for plan completion

Developing a Succession Plan

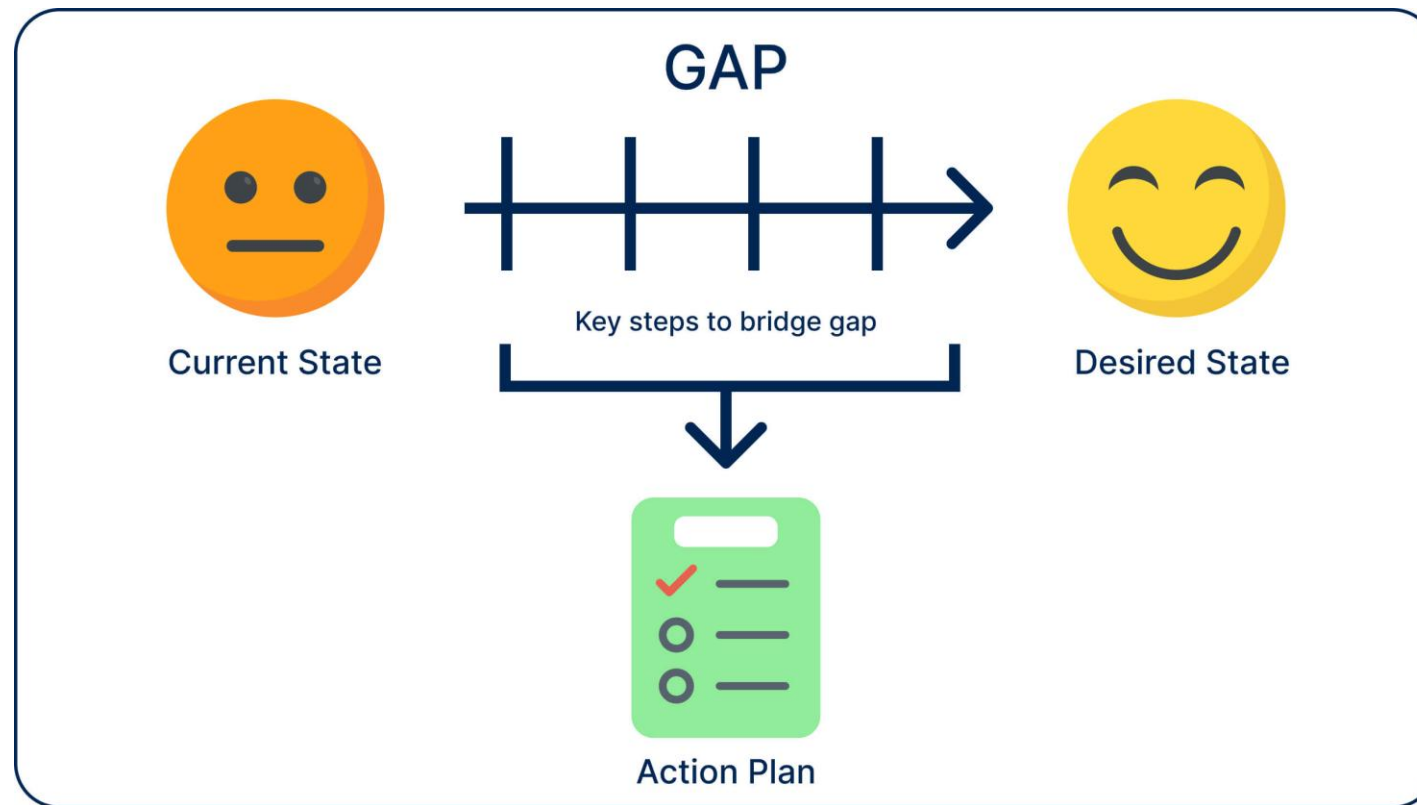
Step 2: Gather and Compile Data

- **Collect data:** *attrition rates, job descriptions, tenure, retirement estimates, training/education records, survey data, and strategic plans.*
- Review staff resources
- Create org chart



Developing a Succession Plan

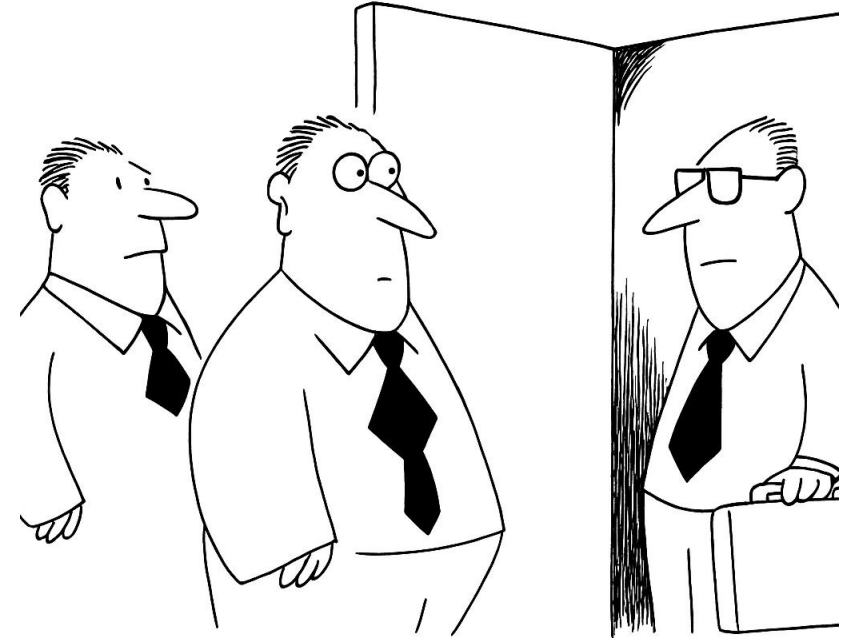
Step 3: Competency Gap Analysis



Developing a Succession Plan

Step 4: Identifying and Assessing Potential Candidates

- Build a leadership pipeline
- Review performance and career goals
- List current staff and possible replacements
- Ensure process is fair, transparent, and merit-based



“That’s the closet for our backup CFO.”

Developing a Succession Plan



Step 5: Develop Learning and Development Plans (LDPs)

- Structured plan to close skill gaps
- Formal training, mentorship, cross-training, job shadowing, hands-on experience in key areas

Developing a Succession Plan

Step 6: Implementation and Evaluation

- Identify any **barriers** to implementation
- Start small - expand over time
- Regularly **monitor** progress and adjust as needed
- Evaluate employee readiness and whether key positions are being filled
- Communicate progress and celebrate wins!



5 Simple Steps to Perform a Skills Gap Analysis



Pick your target

A skills gap analysis can feel overwhelming--particularly when your objective is something vague like "figure out what skills our organization needs to thrive"

Pinpoint important skills

Next, you'll need to determine what skills are necessary for your organization. This is your opportunity to note down everything you need for the specific job or goal

Compare to current employee skills

Your goal was not to find important skills but to see the gaps between what is needed and what you already have. This is exactly where the next step comes in

Prioritize the skills that are most important

It can be a problem when you do a skills gap analysis to discover that you are lacking many of the required skills

Plan to bridge the gap

It's one thing to know that there is a gap, but it's not enough if you don't have a plan for addressing it



Pick Your Target



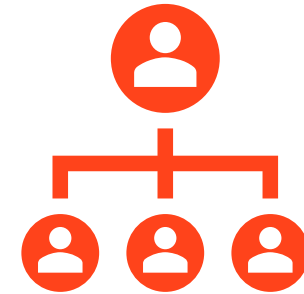
Individual

Understand how an employee's current strengths align with the skills needed for their role



Team

Identify where team abilities meet or fall short of what's required to deliver key functions



Organization

Evaluate whether your overall workforce has the capacity to meet present and future demands

Pinpoint Important Skills

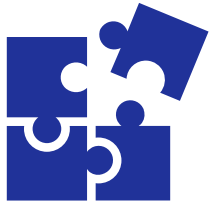


Identify the **knowledge, skills,** and **abilities** each role should have





Compare to Current Skills



Look for gaps between what's needed and what staff can do today.

Not sure what skills you already have? Use:

- Staff surveys
- One-on-one conversations
- Supervisor input and performance reviews
- Training needs assessments





Prioritize the Most Critical Skills

Which skills matter the most?

Ask yourself:

- Is this gap affecting performance, safety, or compliance?
- How much time, money, or risk is involved?
- Is this skill needed soon due to retirements, regulations, or system upgrades?





Plan to Bridge the Gap

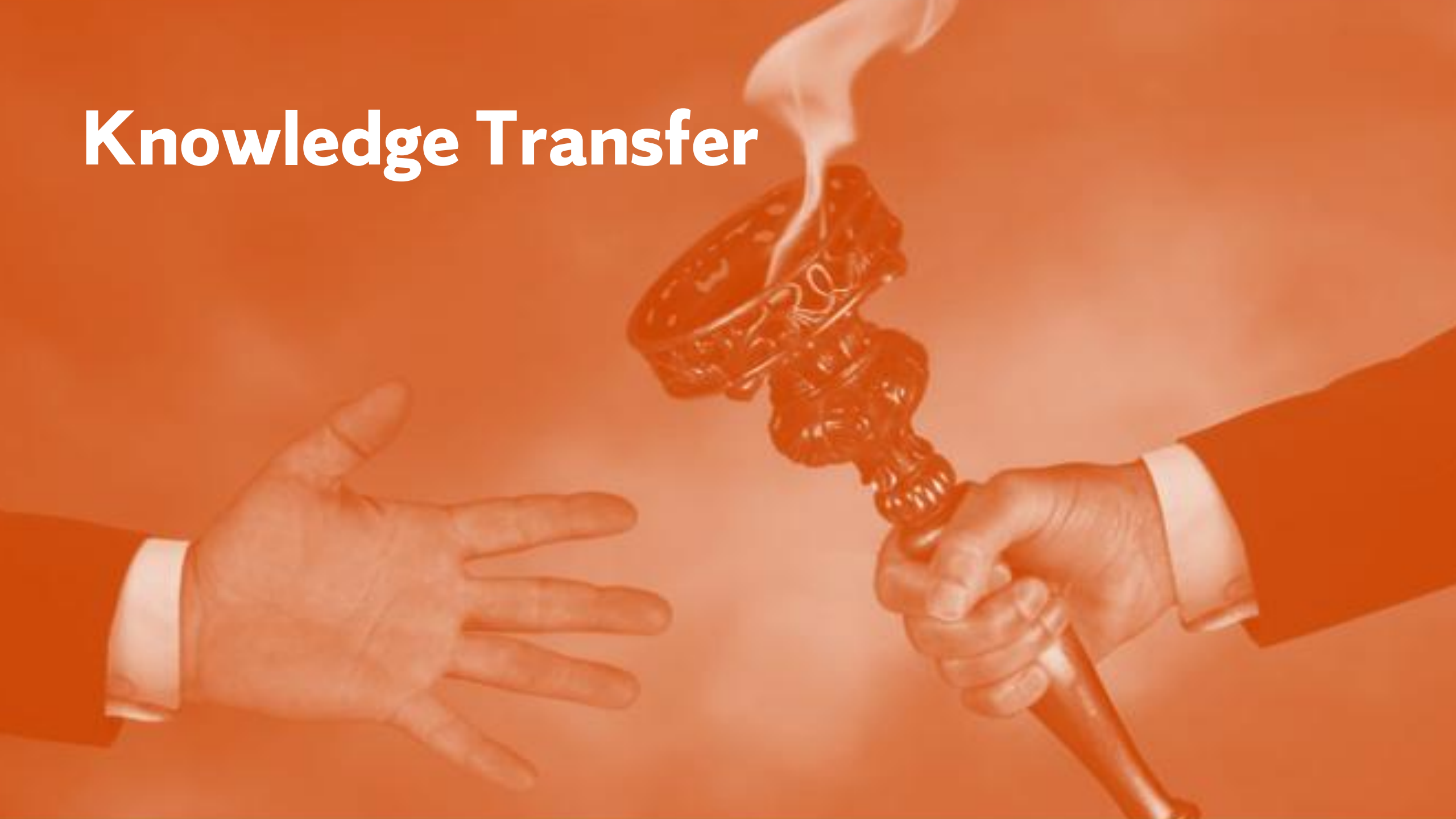
Consider a mix of strategies:

- *Hiring*
- *Mentorship*
- *Training and development*



Choose the right tools based on urgency, budget, and available resources.

Knowledge Transfer

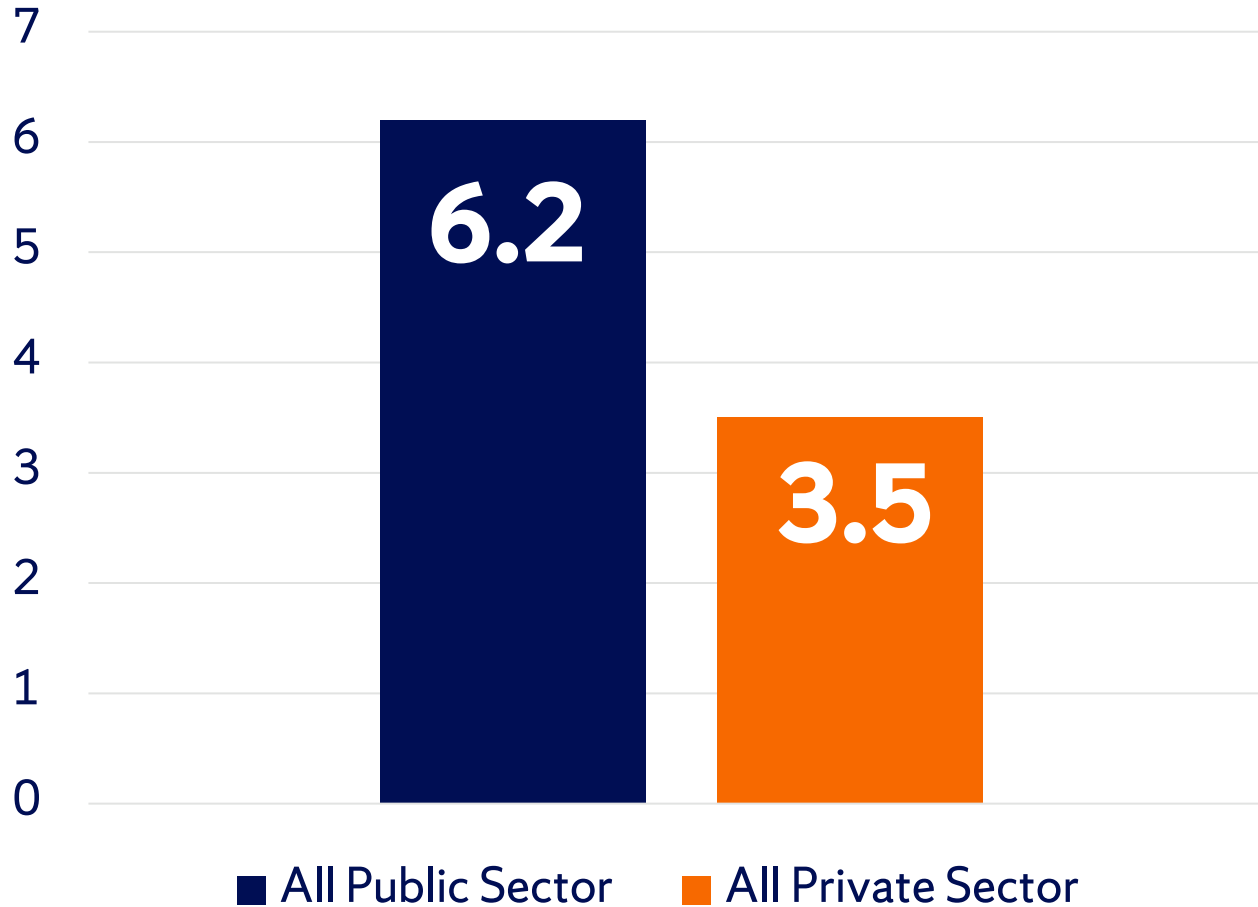




Unmute or Type in Chat:

If someone needed to step into your role tomorrow, what would they need to know that isn't written down?

Median Years of Tenure for Wage and Salary Workers in January 2024



Median age of water employees is **48 years** (6 years older than national median of **42.2 years**)

Turnover Hurts **More** When Experience Runs Deep



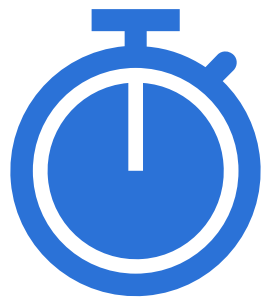
Employees with long tenure carry unique, **practice-based expertise** built through experience

Turnover Hurts More When Experience Runs Deep



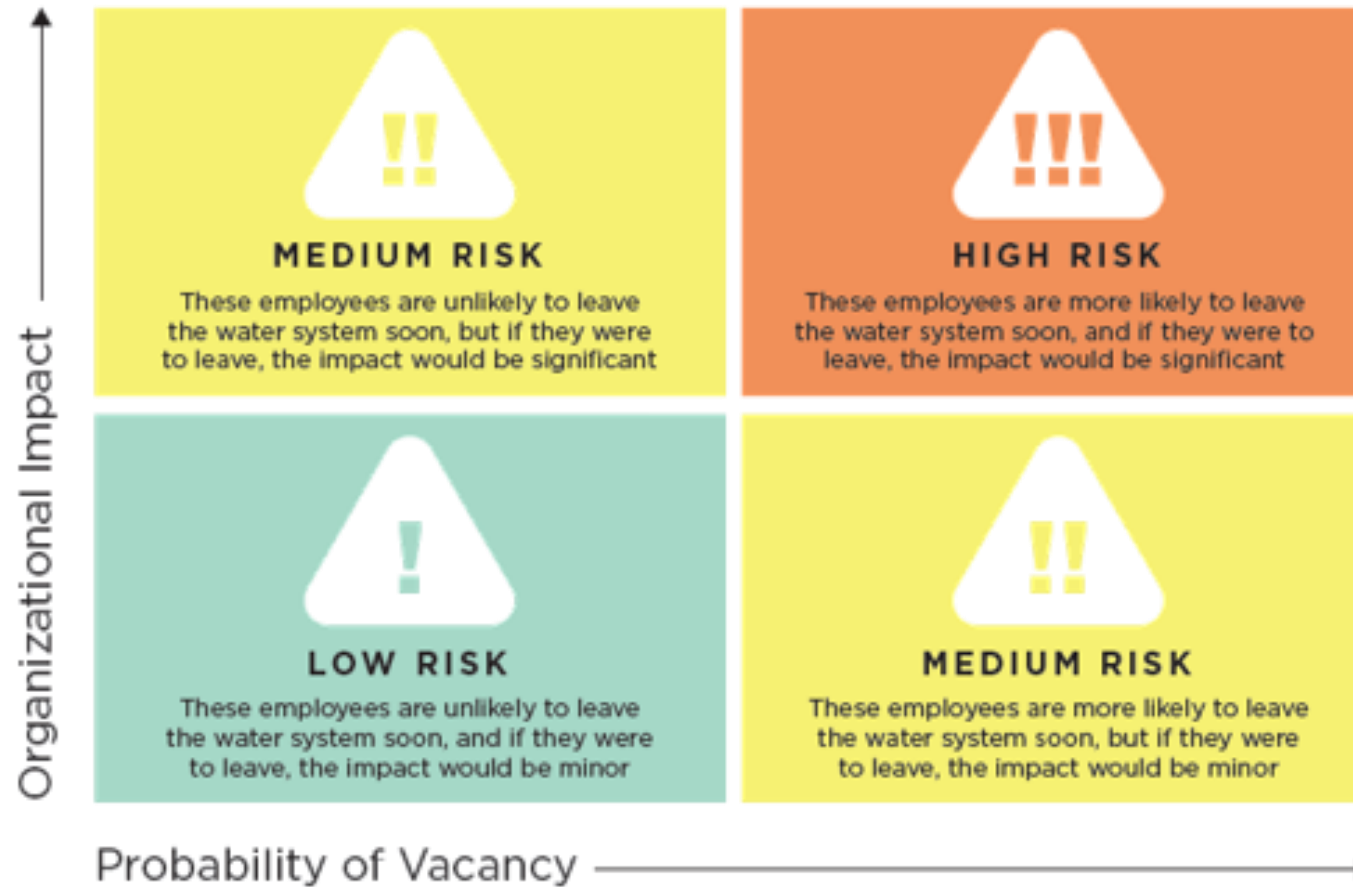
Public sector studies show **retirement** causes significant operational knowledge gaps

Turnover Hurts **More** When Experience Runs Deep



New hires may take up to **two years** to reach the productivity level of departing experienced staff

Assessing Risk



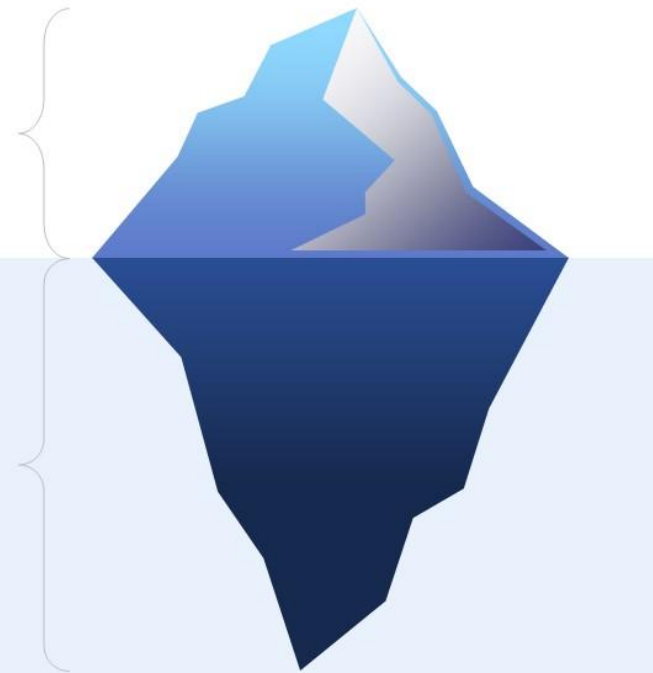
Explicit vs. Tacit Knowledge

Explicit Knowledge:

- ✓ Manuals
- ✓ Documents
- ✓ Procedures
- ✓ How-To-Guides
- ✓ Videos
- ✓ Databases
- ✓ How-To-Guides
- ✓ Notes
- ✓ Records

Tacit Knowledge:

- ✓ Individual Skill
- ✓ Expertise
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Experience
- ✓ Ideas
- ✓ Insights
- ✓ Intuition
- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Cultural Beliefs
- ✓ Values
- ✓ Attitudes
- ✓ Mental Models



Readily transferrable to others

Known but not always articulated

Methods for Transferring Knowledge

- Overlapping positions
- Desk manuals
- Pictures & video
- Interviews
- Work teams
- Job shadowing



Files & Documents



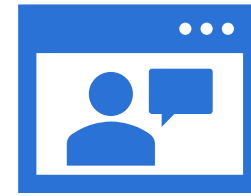
Manuals



Maps



Photos



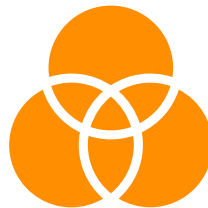
Videos



Notebooks



GIS



*System
Diagrams*



*As-built
drawings*



Policy Guides

Training & Development



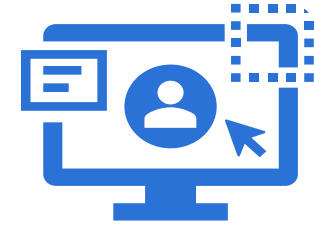
Online



Workshops



Mentoring



Computer
simulations



Classroom

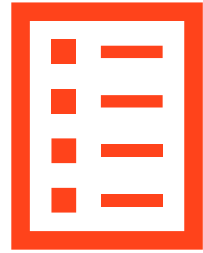


Inter-agency

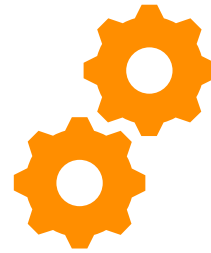


In-house
training

Processes and Practices



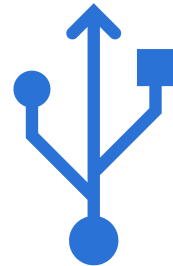
Maintenance
schedules



Day-to-day
Operations



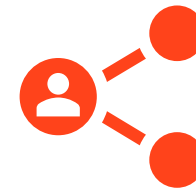
Regulated
Work



Technology



Training &
Mentoring



Job Sharing

Try a Position Knowledge Inventory



- Captures the unique skills, knowledge, and responsibilities tied to each role
- Helps identify what is known and what is undocumented
- Can be used to document institutional know-how, guide succession planning, and safeguard critical workflows

Position Knowledge Inventory



efc.syr.edu

At a minimum... capture the basics:

- Usernames and passwords
- Assigned assets
- Updated manuals
- Contact info for vendors

POSITION KNOWLEDGE INVENTORY
Syracuse University
Environmental Center
2023

Position Knowledge Inventory

Name: _____
Job Title: _____
Community/Organization/Department: _____
Years in your current position: _____
Years since you first started in your community/organization/department: _____

Step 1: Organizational Goals

The purpose of this Inventory is to get an idea of the knowledge and responsibilities required to fulfill your current job position. Before we get to your specific knowledge, it's important to think about your organization's mission or goals so that the community can continue receiving all the services your job provides long after you leave that position.

Attach a copy of your community, organization, or department's overall mission, vision, and/or goals. Highlight the sections of these organizational documents to which you have contributed during your tenure.

Expand on the previous task by explaining in detail how your position helps your community, organization, or department achieve their mission or goals. In what ways does your job help carry out the mission?

Step 2: Critical Roles and Activities

There are probably some aspects of your work that only you know how to address. In this step you are developing a list of those tasks and activities. Use questions below to help guide you in creating your list.

What are you the "go to" person for in your current position? What things in your position do only you know how to do? What responsibilities does your office rely on you for?

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<https://efc.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Position-Knowledge-Inventory.pdf>

Join us next week for Part 2:

Messaging for Workforce Recruitment and Leadership Support

Thursday, August 27, 2026

*Also pre-approved for 2.0 Drinking Water and
Wastewater TCH by RI DOH and RI DEM*

Scan to register



Upcoming RI Online Training:

Capital Improvement Plan Workshop



September 23, 2026



10 AM - 3 PM Eastern Time



SOUTHWEST
ENVIRONMENTAL
FINANCE CENTER



TCH approval pending

Scan to register



<https://efcnetwork.org/event/ri-online-training-capital-improvement-plan-workshop/>

efc.syr.edu

Questions?

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Thank You!

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