

Succession Policy Guidelines

Organisation: Northbridge Advisory Partners **Document Owner:** HR Director, People & Culture **Version:** 2.1 **Effective Date:** Current policy version **Next Review Date:** Overdue — schedule next review with HR Director **Confidentiality:** Internal

These guidelines govern the succession planning process for critical roles at Northbridge Advisory Partners. They establish definitions, readiness tiers, assessment cadence, and governance requirements.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy ensures that Northbridge Advisory Partners maintains continuity for roles critical to business operations, client relationships, and organisational leadership.
- 1.2. Succession planning is a forward-looking process that identifies, develops, and prepares internal candidates for critical roles before vacancies arise.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all roles classified as critical in the Critical Role Registry maintained by the HRIS Administrator.
- 2.2. Roles are classified as critical based on the following factors: revenue impact, client relationship dependency, regulatory or compliance accountability, and organisational knowledge concentration.
- 2.3. The Managing Partner and HR Director jointly approve additions to and removals from the Critical Role Registry on an annual basis.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Critical Role:** A role whose vacancy would materially disrupt business operations, client delivery, or compliance obligations within 90 days if unfilled.
- 3.2. **Successor Candidate:** An internal employee identified as having the potential to fill a critical role, subject to readiness assessment.
- 3.3. **Bench Strength:** The depth and readiness distribution of successor candidates for a given critical role.
- 3.4. **Readiness Tier:** A classification indicating how soon a successor candidate could assume a critical role. See Section 5 for tier definitions.

4. Business Criticality Classification

- 4.1. Critical roles are classified into three tiers of business criticality:

Tier	Label	Definition
1	Essential	Vacancy would cause immediate revenue loss, client attrition, or regulatory non-compliance. Maximum 30-day cover gap tolerated.
2	Very High	Vacancy would degrade operational performance within 60 days. Interim arrangements possible but unsustainable beyond one quarter.
3	High	Vacancy would create a capability gap within 90 days. Internal redistribution could cover for up to two quarters with degraded output.

- 4.2. Roles classified below High are not included in the succession planning process under this policy.

5. Readiness Tiers

- 5.1. Successor candidates are assessed against the following readiness tiers:

Tier	Label	Definition
A	Ready Now	Candidate could assume the role within 0-3 months with minimal transition support. Demonstrated capability across all core requirements.
B	Ready in 1-2 Years	Candidate demonstrates the majority of required capabilities but has identified gaps addressable through targeted development.
C	Development Needed	Candidate shows potential but has significant capability gaps requiring a structured development plan of 12+ months.
D	Not Ready	Candidate does not currently meet the minimum capability threshold for the role.

5.2. Readiness assessments must be grounded in documented evidence from performance reviews, promotion panel outcomes, and manager-submitted capability assessments. Tenure alone is not sufficient evidence for any readiness tier.

5.3. Where a candidate has been assessed under a previous rating scale (e.g., the legacy High / Medium / Low scale), the assessor must map the prior ratings to the current tier definitions before inclusion in the succession plan.

6. Bench Strength Ratings

6.1. Each critical role receives a bench strength rating based on the distribution of successor candidates across readiness tiers:

Rating	Definition
Strong	Two or more candidates at Ready Now or Ready in 1-2 Years, with at least one Ready Now.
Adequate	At least one candidate at Ready Now or two or more at Ready in 1-2 Years.
Thin	One candidate at Ready in 1-2 Years and no Ready Now candidates. Or: multiple candidates but all rated Development Needed.
Critical	No identified successor candidates, or all candidates rated Not Ready.

6.2. Roles rated Thin or Critical must have a documented action plan within 30 days of the assessment.

7. Assessment Cadence

7.1. Succession planning assessments are conducted twice per year, aligned with the promotion calibration cycle (H1 and H2).

7.2. Off-cycle reviews may be triggered by:

- A critical role incumbent giving notice or announcing departure
- A material change in business criticality classification
- A request from the Managing Partner or HR Director

7.3. The HR Business Partner is responsible for initiating the succession review for each critical role within their portfolio.

8. Governance

8.1. The Talent Management Lead reviews and approves all succession plans before they are shared with the leadership team.

8.2. The HR Director has final sign-off authority on succession action recommendations, including development investments, interim coverage arrangements, and external hire decisions.

8.3. Succession plans are classified as Internal - Restrict Access. Distribution is limited to the HR Director, Talent Management Lead, relevant Practice Heads, and the Managing Partner.

8.4. Succession data must not be entered into unapproved tools, shared externally, or discussed with successor candidates without HR Director approval.

9. Vacancy Risk Classification

9.1. Each critical role is assigned a vacancy risk level:

Level	Definition
Imminent	Incumbent has given notice, announced departure, or is expected to vacate within 90 days.
Near-term	Incumbent has communicated intent to transition within 6-24 months, or health/performance signals suggest elevated risk.
Planned	Incumbent and organisation have agreed a transition timeline beyond 24 months. Active succession planning is underway.
Unknown	No succession conversation has taken place. Vacancy risk is unassessed.

10. Action Planning

10.1. For each succession gap (roles rated Thin or Critical), the HR Business Partner must document:

- Immediate risk mitigation (interim coverage arrangement)
- Development actions for the strongest successor candidate(s)
- An acceleration option if vacancy risk escalates
- A target readiness timeline
- A measurable success indicator

10.2. Action plans are reviewed at each succession assessment cycle and updated based on candidate progress and any changes in vacancy risk.

11. Integration with Promotion Outcomes

11.1. Promotion panel outcomes feed directly into the succession planning process. A candidate who is promoted gains evidence of demonstrated capability at a higher level, which should be reflected in their readiness assessment.

11.2. A candidate whose promotion is deferred retains their current readiness tier unless the deferral decision identifies specific evidence that warrants a downgrade.

11.3. The HR Business Partner is responsible for updating successor readiness assessments within 30 days of a promotion calibration cycle.

12. Interim Coverage

12.1. For roles with Imminent vacancy risk and no Ready Now successor, the Talent Management Lead must propose an interim coverage arrangement within 10 business days.

12.2. Interim arrangements may include: acting appointments, shared responsibility across two or more leaders, or engagement of an external interim resource.

12.3. Interim arrangements exceeding 90 days require HR Director approval and must be reviewed monthly.

Appendix A — Deprecated References

This policy supersedes the "Leadership Pipeline Guidelines v1.3" (retired in a prior policy cycle). References to the Leadership Pipeline Guidelines in older HRIS records or manager documentation should be treated as referring to this policy. Note: some HRIS report templates still reference the deprecated "Succession Readiness Score" (1-10 numeric scale) which is no longer in use. The current readiness tiers (Section 5) are the authoritative classification.