

Continuity Planning for LIHEAP: Strategies for Protecting Your Program from a Leadership Vacuum

Division of Energy Assistance
Office of Community Services
Administration for Children & Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Continuity Planning Overview

Larry Dawson, Advisor

National Energy Assistance Directors Association

What is Continuity Planning

Continuity Planning = Succession Planning???

No!

- Succession planning is about people: identifying the right person to assume leadership
- Continuity planning is about process: knowledge transfer and creating an environment conducive to overcoming interruptions in personnel or operations

What is Continuity Planning

Successful Continuity Planning:

- Ensures program effectiveness during leadership or key staffing changes
- Prevents the loss of valuable program information and history due to turnover
- ...and it doesn't have to be complicated

Why Worry About Continuity?

There are many reasons a LIHEAP office could find themselves up stream without a paddle. These could include:

- **Senior Staff Turnover**
- **Key Support Staff Turnover**
- **Long-term or Emergency Absences**
- **Political or Agency Upheaval**



Continuity Planning: What I've Learned

State of New Hampshire - Office of Strategic Initiatives

Tracy Desmarais - Fuel Assistance Program Administrator

Overview

- My experience in New Hampshire
- What I've learned from my experience
- The steps I'm taking as a result of my experience
- Key takeaways

My Experience in New Hampshire

- The path to where I am today
- Transition (overlap) period with prior Administrator
- Stepping out on my own
- Hiring an associate

What I Have Learned

What worked well with the transition I experienced?

- Federal Reporting
- Monitoring
- Subgrantee Management

What I Have Learned

What would I want to see done differently?

- Written policy and procedures for everything
- Avoid assumptions

What I Have Learned

Other Lessons:

- Things aren't always what they seem
- Lack of clear procedures
- To be prepared for training and technical assistance for all parties (state and local)

Steps I'm Taking as a Result of My Experience (at the STATE Level)

As a result of my experience, I'm taking the following steps to ensure resilience/continuity in terms of LIHEAP staffing at the STATE level:

- Establishing trainings steps for any new Administrator
- Hiring and cross training an Associate
- Continued dialogue with agency staff regarding federal expectations (e.g., required reporting)
- Establishing clear written policies and procedures. This includes standardized documents/forms that include rationale for the steps we are taking.

Steps I'm Taking as a Result of My Experience (at the LOCAL Level)

As a result of my experience, I'm taking the following steps to assure resilience/continuity in terms of LIHEAP staffing at the LOCAL level:

- Continued dialogue regarding federal expectations with subgrantees (e.g., federal reporting, assurances).
- Establishing clear written policies and procedures at the subgrantee office level. This includes standardized documents/forms that include rationale for the steps we are taking.

Key Takeaways

CROSS TRAIN

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PRIORITY LIST/MUSTER DRILL

SUBGRANTEE RESOURCES



Continuity Planning: What I've Learned

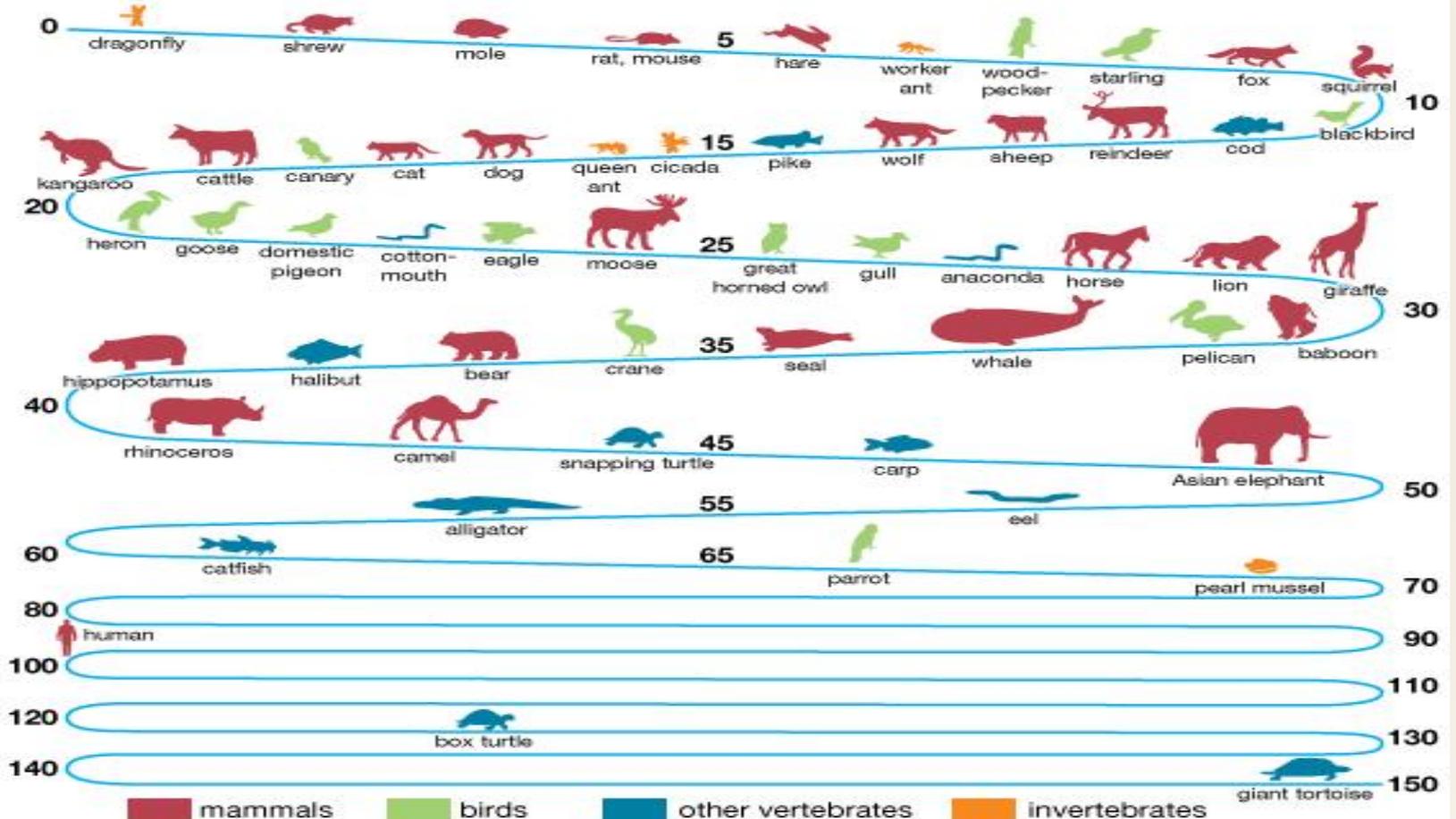
*State of Maryland- Office of Home Energy
Programs*

Bill Freeman- Director

Average Lifespan



How long animals live



Maximum ages, in years, that certain animals may be expected to reach, based on reports of zoos and estimates of biologists. (Data from S.S. Flower, "The Duration of Life in Animals," in *Proceedings of the London Zoological Society*.)

My Experience in Maryland

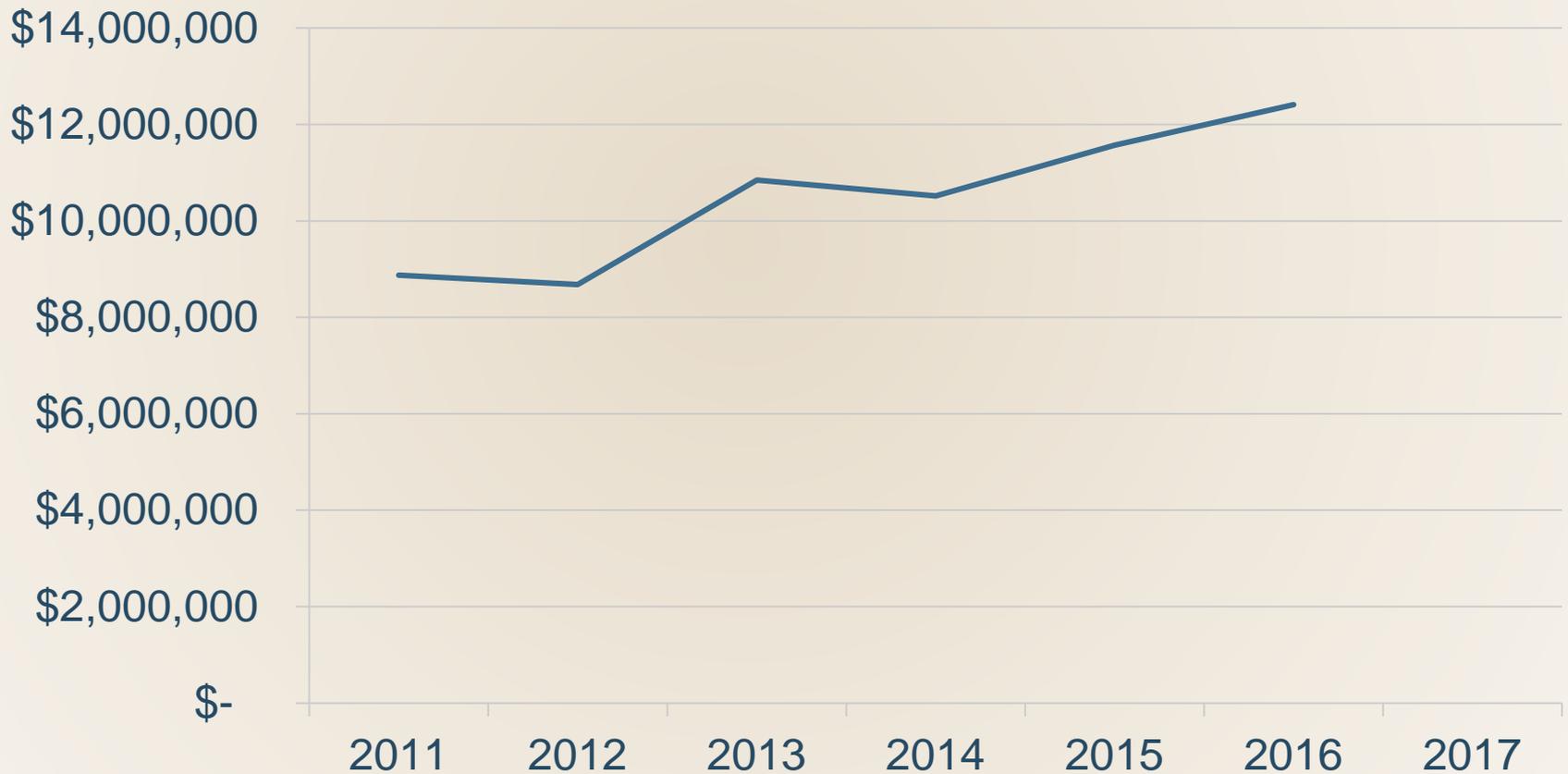
- 5 OHEP Directors in 6 years
- 37 Action Transmittals and Policy Memos in 6 years with no updates to the Operations Manual
- Launch of a new program on the horizon
- Office moved from Community Services Administration to Family Investment Administration, but never fully integrated

Set the Foundation...But Establish the Vision

- Re-developed the Operations and Policy Manual from the ground up.
- Modified the organizational chart and revised all job descriptions to reflect what is needed.
- But then what? Is keeping things going the end of continuity when things aren't that great? Are there opportunities uniquely available during a transition that can lead to greater stability and better continuity moving forward?

What Happens Without Continuity? One Example

Maryland Administrative Budgets by FY



Beyond Checking the Boxes

- Document not just what needs to be done to get through, but what should be achieved.
- For Maryland, that meant, integrating processes and policies with other programs.
- Leverage other resources within the Department to reduce costs
- Above all, establishing a cultural shift that encourages continuous improvement.

What I Have Learned in Maryland

- Continuity is not just keeping the ship afloat.
- Continuity includes charting the course and identifying the destination.
- Seize the opportunity in transitions for long-overdue transformations.



Creating a Transition Plan

Larry Dawson, Advisor

National Energy Assistance Directors Association

Before You Begin: Program Check-up

Make sure your program is in order before developing a transition plan.

- 1) Policies and Procedures Manuals
- 2) Staff Roles and Responsibilities
- 3) Organization Chart
- 4) Contracts and Important Documents

Before You Begin: Cross-Training

Understudies aren't just for theater!

- Use your staff roles and responsibilities list
- Develop a training plan
- Create and share a list of backups
- Practice!

Creating a Transition Plan

Section 1: Key Resources

- List of Federal and State Reports and Due Dates

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/funding-applications>

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/grantee-deadlines-0>

- Calendar of Annual Activities
- Priority Task List
- Organizational Chart and List of Backups
- List of Key Program Contacts
 - Subgrantees, energy vendors, weatherization and fiscal managers, federal staff, and state officials

Creating a Transition Plan

Section 2: Reference Guide

Make a list of all of your important documents, a quick summary of what they are, where they can be found and how frequently they need to be updated.

Creating a Transition Plan

Section 2: Reference Guide

- Federal and State LIHEAP statutes and regulations
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/liheap-statute-and-regulations>
- State/Tribe/Territory Plan
- Policy and Procedures Manuals
- Current Contracts (vendors, subgrantees, tribe/state agreements, etc.)
- Current Official Documents (e.g. Designation letter, Wx waiver request, performance measures reports, etc.)
- Supporting documentation for key program activities (e.g. program definitions, benefit matrix background, templates, and sample documents)

Creating a Transition Plan

Section 2: Reference Guide

Document Name	File Location	Primary Staff Responsible	External Contact	Next Update Due	Description
ACME Electric	Shared drive	Sally Smith, Legal Counsel	Mike Jordan, Contracts Mgr.	8/1/19	Vendor Agreement
Household Report	OLDC	Flash Gordon, LIHEAP Mgr.	April Flowers, IT Liaison	Draft-9/1/19 Final-12/15/19	Summary of Households served

Creating a Transition Plan

Section 3: Departure Planning

Create a standard process for departing staff to follow.

Identify Key Tasks

Assign Fill-Ins

Develop Timeline

Notify Stakeholders

Keep in Contact

Creating a Transition Plan:

Section 4: Training Resources

There are a wide range of training materials available to new directors:

LIHEAP Training Resources:

- LIHEAP Training Resources website
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/liheap-trainings>
- LIHEAP Training and Technical Assistance program
- LIHEAP Clearinghouse <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/>
- Performance Measures website
<https://liheappm.acf.hhs.gov/>
- NEADA <http://www.neada.org>
- Internal program training materials
- List of training conferences

Final Thoughts

The transition plan is a living document.

All components of a transition plan need to be reviewed regularly to ensure they stay up to date.

Use your authority to require your subgrantees to develop their own continuity plans because service starts with them

Thanks!

**Please take a moment to fill
out your session evaluation.**