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LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR AN ORGANIZATIONAL REINCARNATION PLAN: IDENTIFYING STERPDB'S FUTURE

BY CHELSEA MARIE ROBERTSON

BA, BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY, 2005

CAPTSTONE PROJECT

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters in Public Administration in the Department of Public Administration in the
College of Community and Public Affairs
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2009

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Accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters in Public Administration
in the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
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Abstract

Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board (STERPDB) is the primary funneling system of the Economic Development Administration and Appalachian Regional Commission Federal Funds to the Southern Tier area of New York State. STERPDB currently has leadership approaching retirement within the next five years and there is no succession plan in place. This would leave STERPDB with a lack of leadership and result in an ineffective organization. This study strives to answer what the key stakeholders at STERPDB would like to see for the future of STERPDB as well as what action will be necessary to foster a successful transition of leadership at STERPDB. To approach this problem, Stevens' (2001) diagnostic framework based on Organizational Lifecycle Theory is used in the administering of an internet-based survey of the key stakeholders of STERPDB. Results showed that the perception of STERPDB in a *decline stage* is statistically significantly different than the perception of STERPDB in a *mature stage*. Finally, recommendations are offered to STERPDB as to how they can move their organization into a viable *maturity stage* through the appointment of new leadership and reassessment of current structure of the organization.

Dedication

To Zach:
Thanks for pushing me to challenge myself and always being there to help me along the way.

To Mom, Dad and Daniel:

Thank you for always answering your phone "just to talk" (this does not apply to you Daniel, but one day you'll talk to your sister!). Without your love and support school would have been a lot less fun!

Acknowledgements

Many Thanks to the staff of the Public Administration Department; it has been wonderful being a part of this family for the past three years.

A very special thanks to Dr. David Campbell who, from the beginning of my journey in the Public Administration Department, believed in me. Dr. Campbell has helped me realize my love for and commitment to public service. It is important to feel rewarded at the end of the day, and Dr. Campbell has shown me how I can achieve that in my career. Thanks for helping me find what I am passionate about.

Also I would like to thank Dr. Pamela Mischen, who provided a great deal of guidance during this capstone project.

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As the Baby Boomer generation begins to retire (those born between 1944 and 1964), a wave of management will soon be disappearing and will form a leadership gap in our workforce (Lavigna, 2005). Government jobs can expect to see a 10% reduction in highly experienced labor (Reester & Braaten, 2006) while non-profit organizations will need to increase their senior management by a factor of 2.4 over the next decade (Tierney 2006). For many organizations there exist no identified individuals that are prepared to fill this void in leadership. Lack of leadership can result in inefficiencies or even the demise of an entity all together. If the organization is not effective in providing services due to the lack of leadership a second gap may also form. An interruption of services, that were once provided, will leave the public underserved or un-served altogether. Leadership issues must be addressed now to prevent these breaks in service (Lavigna, 2005).

The current leadership of Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board (STERPDB) has a combined 96 years of experience at the organization. STERPDB has a director that has worked at STERPDB since the mid 1970s, a deputy director that began in 1978, and a Regional Development Specialist that began her service 30 years ago. All three of these administrators expect to retire within the next five years. Being a part of the first wave of baby boomers to retire, the issues that STERPDB faces will echo in organizations around the country.

Regional boards are something of recent history, having their beginnings in Western Europe in the mid 1960s as a way to address the employment and industrial issues plaguing areas that had experienced a loss in population and industry. Regional

planning began in the mid 1940s in France, where there was a heavy emphasis placed on the coordination of public and private entities to think on a regional level and address their economic planning issues (Hall, 2002). The United States caught on by the mid 1970's to ideas of regional planning and the importance of working together as a region. Combining these ideas with the innovative federal programs created by the Kennedy and Johnson Administration such as the Economic Development Agency (EDA) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) solidified regional planning and boards in the United States ("About EDA", 2009; "About ARC", 2009). Many problems that individual municipalities face actually cross their boundary lines. Without thinking regionally, multiple municipalities will work independently to solve the same problem. Regional boards are comprised of stakeholders from separate communities working together. A regional board, or regional council, is a formalized group created to address these problems with one unified solution (Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, 2009).

STERPDB, a regional board, was established as a special purpose unit of government to carry out a mission "to partner with member counties to identify and address multi-county issues in order to improve the quality of life within the region" ("STERPDB", 2009). STERPDB's activities over the years have varied depending on the needs identified by the regional board. The regional board is currently comprised of representatives of six contiguous counties in the Eastern Southern Tier area that pay yearly dues. STERPDB has been as big as eight contiguous counties and as small as six contiguous counties. In addition to projects identified yearly by the regional board,

STERPDB serves as the primary delivery mechanism for two federal programs: Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Economic Development Administration (EDA). These two federal programs have funded large projects throughout the Southern Tier Region, ARC focusing on delivering technology, educational and health services to the rural communities while the EDA is focused on providing infrastructure needs to support economic development. STERPDB, a small organization in relation to the vast reaches of its programming, has a total of only six employees ("STERPDB", 2009).

With retirement looming, this organization faces many challenges. The loss of 96 years of knowledge could be detrimental to STERPDB. Currently, in addition to three full time individuals mentioned above, STERPDB employs a full time secretary, a part time Regional Analyst and a part time GIS specialist. The loss of leadership within STERPDB will leave STERPDB with a leadership gap. The presence of leadership is necessary to ensure knowledge transfer and competency as new employees are recruited to fill positions within the organization (Lavigna, 2005).

The absences of leadership in any organization can be harmful. Tierney (2006) explains the cost of lack of leadership as inefficiency due to poor management. For STERPDB the consequences of no leadership succession would be inefficient use of federal funds due to the lack of oversight. If the federal government feels that the money is not spent wisely these dollars could be withdrawn resulting in fewer opportunities for federal funds to be used in the Southern Tier area. The effects of this loss would be sweeping as this funding is used throughout all eight contiguous

counties. While STERPDB's board is comprised of member counties' representatives, it is the people of these counties that directly hold a stake in the success or failure of this organization. There exists a need at STERPDB for an experienced leader with skills, to ensure that its mission is met, money is distributed and opportunities are not lost. If STERPDB were to experience the potential problems that Tierney (2006) suggests will plague an organization such as STERPDB, this could lead to a lack of effectiveness as an organization. Ultimately, the lack of leadership and lack of effectiveness will have stakeholders calling for the demise of the organization all together (Klein & Connolly, 2000).

Currently STERPDB is the funneling mechanism for EDA and ARC funds. These funds are used to address the needs that face this rural and economically depressed area of the Southern Tier of New York. They are vital to the stability of this region. STERPDB also currently provides Geographic Information Systems (GIS) aid to some counties that do not have a GIS specialist on staff as well as provides Census publications to member counties. It is unclear if and how dues paying member counties will have access to the same EDA and ARC funds if STERPDB doesn't assist in the administration of the grants. With STERPDB's potential lack of leadership or demise, administration of grants may no longer be a priority. Without a succession plan in place, the future of STERPDB holds many unanswered questions. It will be the job of the stakeholders, including the regional board, to reincarnate this organization's leadership.

It is the intent of this study to begin the process that will answer questions concerning what the key stakeholders envision as STERPDB's future. The stakeholders can be any individual or group that holds a stake or risk in the organization (Freeman, 1984). For STERPDB those key stakeholders will be current staff, board members and member county's planning and economic development offices. The findings of this project will serve as a foundation for the regional board, those closest to the retirement issue, to plan the future of STERPDB as an organization.

Research Questions

1. What are the interests of the key stakeholders in regards to the future of STERPDB?
2. What actions will be necessary to formulate a plan to foster a transition of leadership?

Conceptual Framework

The future of STERPDB is ultimately up to the governing board of directors. They will need to have a clear understanding of how STERPDB operates currently before they can fruitfully identify the future. Using, Organizational Lifecycle Theory, an evaluation of STERPDB as an organization will give insight into how to address the succession of STERPDB's leadership. Identifying the stage at which STERPDB lies in the organizational lifecycle will help answer the question of how to foster a successful transition of leadership for STERPDB. Also, an evaluation of succession planning and how the lifecycle stage can help determine the characteristics needed in a successor will work to develop the foundation on which STERPDB can later form a succession plan.

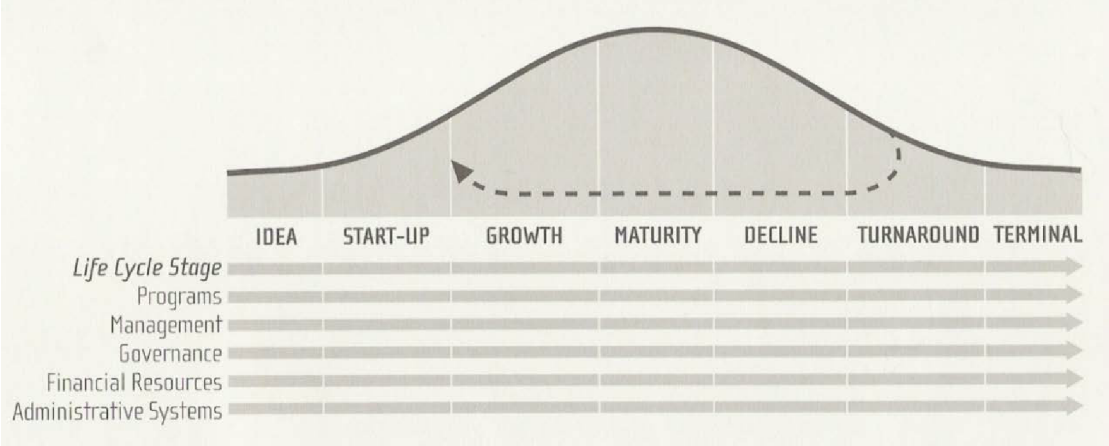
The following literature review, evaluating the topics of Organizational Lifecycle Theory and succession planning, will guide this study offering insight to be used to provide the best chance possible for a positive retirement of STERPDB's leadership and a positive transition for STERPDB's dues paying counties.

Literature Review

Organizational Lifecycles: Maturity, Decline and Revitalization

All organizations follow a lifecycle. This cycle refers to the changes that occur in an organization over time, suggesting that organizations evolve and develop in a sequence of transitions that follow an order and are not random (Cameron & Whetten, 1983). While many models of these stages have been developed, most include stages that begin with *birth* or *start-up* and progress through *maturity* or *decline*. The idea is that these stages can cycle back around to *adolescent* or *growth stages* as well. Different challenges exist at all stages throughout this cycle, yet it is at the younger age that organizations tend to have "growing pains" while mature organizations can slip into *stagnancy* or *declining* stages (Stevens, 2001; Klein & Connolly, 2000). Due to STERPDB's maintenance of long standing programs, ability to meet program opportunities and current service demands in addition to STERPDB's forty year history, STERPDB will be evaluated as a *mature* organization or beyond according to Stevens (2001) definition of the organizational lifecycle stages (refer below to Stevens' lifecycle capacity placement chart).

Figure 1: Nonprofit Lifecycle Capacity Placement



(Stevens, 2001, p. 55)

Like Stevens (2001), others formulated similar lifecycle models. Laura Klein and Paul Connolly (2000) noted the characteristics of *successfully mature* organizations explaining if the challenges of *maturity* are not addressed an organization can slip into *stagnancy* (similar to Steven's (2001) *decline* stage).

Table 1: Lifecycle Stages

Successfully Mature	**Declining**
A vital mission	A fixed menu of long-standing and, perhaps, obsolescent programs
High-quality, well-regarded, relevant programs	Entrenched board and staff leadership
Capable, motivated management and staff	Fragmentations of staff into "fiefdoms" focused on individual program goals rather than overall mission
Clear communications and accountability	Few or no new revenue sources
A well-organized board with able, involved members	Outdated systems and procedures
Efficient management support	Inadequate planning
Solid finances, including reliable and diverse revenue streams.	

(Klein & Connolly, 2000)

Stagnant organizations are fragile and one small change can eventually lead to the demise of the organization all together. While a *stagnant* situation can severely harm an organization, if the situation is recognized and addressed by the stakeholders most damage is repairable (Klein & Connolly, 2000). After *stagnancy* or *decline* an organization can move into a new stage of *renewal* or as Stevens' (2001) refers to it, a stage of *turnaround*. Most models include this last stage of *turnaround* where the organization returns to an earlier stage and begins the cycle again. Ciavarella (2001), notes that with this return to earlier stages in the cycle, the organization tends to make a transition from high employee involvement and decentralized decision reverting back to centralized decision making by the leadership and lower employee involvement, similar to the characteristics of an organization in *infancy* or *growth stages.* A move by an organization to re-centralize decision making tends to occur in times of crisis, such as lack of funding and waning support from stakeholders (Ciavarella, 2001).

If *stagnancy* is determined, turning an organization around will require evaluating the past, while planning for the future, and of course never losing site of what is happening now. A strategic plan helps to evaluate an organization's strengths and weaknesses and establish objectives. Successful organizations often revisit the strategic plan on an ongoing basis. Mark Ciavarella, (2001) notes that there exist a correlation between the success of an organization and stakeholder involvement. Increased involvement of the employees will revive the organization. Energized new leadership with new ideas is often needed to bring an organization back from *decline.* The new leadership will look to make great changes to the staff, programs, and current

funding sources. New leadership may also explore joint ventures or mergers (Klein & Connolly, 2000). It is these extreme changes that will be necessary to push *declining* organization into a viable *maturity*.

At the furthest end of the lifecycle, after *maturity*, is the *terminal stage* (Stevens, 2001). At this stage the organization may still be in business, but it has lost sight of its mission. At this stage the organization may be irrelevant to those it serves. The organization will ignore its mail, not return phone calls or reconcile bank statements. Overall the board and employees have lost enthusiasm. The choices are to call it quits, wither away until the organization can no longer function or take significant steps to begin the cycle again and work towards *renewal* (Stevens, 2001). Identifying STERPDB's current location in the lifecycle will assist in determining what the future holds for STERPDB. If STERPDB is viewed as stagnant by its stakeholders, revitalization should go hand in hand with the eventual succession plan. Identifying the organizational lifecycle will allow STERPDB's board then to evaluate the struggles that go along with the lifecycle stage and determine how best to deal with those struggles as well as the type of successor that would be most appropriate for that stage in the lifecycle.

Successful Leadership Transition/Succession Planning

If there exists one common theme across all literature concerning succession planning, it is that planning for a leadership transition cannot start soon enough and certainly should be made a priority for all organizations to remain healthy and effective (Tierney, 2006). As defined by Reester & Braaten (2006) succession planning is, "a deliberate process of identifying and preparing employees for future leadership roles

within the organization." It is truly the job of the organization's stakeholders to begin the process of a succession plan. This is a strategic plan for the future and should not be a considered replacement issue (Schall, 1997). All organization's situations are different and should be treated as such. While some organizations choose to think about succession planning in advance, many organizations, such is the case of STERPDB, put succession planning on the backburner. At STERPDB there is no pre-identified individual to step into leadership. Yet, there exist ideas in the literature of succession planning that will truly be useful on how STERPDB can cultivate this transition study as a positive and a worthwhile venture.

Some leaders may be reluctant to confront the challenge of succession planning. Sonnenfeld (1988) grouped organizational leaders into four types, the most extreme being "Monarchs" who must be overthrown by staff, while the least extreme are "Governors" who are happy to leave when they feel their time is up. Identifying the type of current leadership within the organization will offer insight into how best to involve the leadership in the succession planning process. It is important that current leadership come to terms with the reality of the situation their organization faces. STERPDB's acceptance of interns into their organization and allowing the intern to offer recommendations illustrates that STERPDB is ready to address this issue of leadership.

The risk in a succession of leadership is the loss of knowledge. There exist two types of knowledge, explicit and tacit. Explicit knowledge is knowledge that is clearly defined and easy to understand. This knowledge can be transferred through the use of written procedures and databases of information, while tacit knowledge is

"unarticulated knowledge that is in a person's head that is often difficult to describe and transfer. It includes lessons learned, know-how, judgment, rules of thumb and intuition" (Bollinger & Smith, 2001, p. 9). To transfer explicit knowledge it will be vital for the current leaders to create written procedures on how things work, as well as offer training to the incoming successor. In contrast, the transfer of tacit knowledge is best achieved through the use of mentoring, apprenticeships and active learning. Often an overlap of employment of the successor and the outgoing leadership can provide the active learning necessary for a successful transition.

With each stage of transition within the organizational lifecycle, different characteristics in a successor are a better fit. Stevens (2001) notes the following characteristics for leadership, based on their lifecycle stage:

Table 2: Characteristics of Leadership

Maturity Stage	Decline Stage	Turn-Around Stage	Terminal Stage
Good manager who likes to manage people and processes Respected in the field Policy and procedures oriented Sees the value in stability, while always seeking ways to improve client/community service Capable of motivating staff Understands and values organizational structure	Committed to mission Willingness to shake the status quo Capable of objective rather than subjective analysis Understand the dynamics of organizational renewal Highly responsible with no tendencies to blame or deny Able to motivate and lead others to change the status quo	"Take charge" personality Confidence builder Highly energetic Comfortable with bad news, confrontation , and conflict Doesn't take things personally Natural problem solver Able to make quick decisions, but also capable of long-term thinking Doesn't need others' approval	Good communicator Able to accomplish tasks in an orderly fashion Good negotiator Cares about what will happen to clients if organization terminates Respectful of process, but capable of some emotional distance

(Stevens, 2001, p.71-72)

Finding the best fitting successor will allow for growth and development of the organization. A good successor will use the transition of leadership and the momentum that will follow to his or her advantage and take the organization to the next stage in the organizational lifecycle (Stevens, 2001). A good succession plan will allow for a great successor and an outstanding organization. Tierney (2006) also suggest that stakeholders must keep their minds open in the search for new leadership. There are three potential pools of candidates. Baby boomers who would like to continue working,

mid-life career changers and young management graduates. All three groups contain potential leaders and to do a narrow search, even unintentionally, would be a disservice to the organization.

This unusual time in an organization is exciting. Bringing on new change has the potential to reenergize the organization. During the succession plan process stakeholders should consider possibilities for re-engineering the job as well as considering alternatives such as contracting out or consolidation (Lavigna, 2006). Thinking outside the box is key when readying for succession. The successor may completely transform the organization but one must ask, is that a bad thing?

Methodology

It is not uncommon for multiple staff members to leave an organization when new leadership enters, their interest wanes with the transition of leadership and ultimately the transition of the organization. Yet, the more recent phenomenon of the baby boomer generation approaching their 60's exacerbates this pattern (Paton, 2007). To answer the question of the stakeholder's interest concerning the future of STERPDB, a method of stakeholder analysis (Brugha & Varvasovzky, 2000) rooted in Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) is used to identify types of stakeholders. The typology used for stakeholder analysis will classify each subject as either a Supportive, Non-Supportive, Mixed-Blessing or Marginal stakeholder (Savage, Nix, et al., 1991). In doing so this will ensure that the sample population is generalizable (Schutt, 2003). This stakeholder analysis was conducted through the use of an internet-administered survey. To better determine what the stakeholders would like to see as STERPDB's future, this survey

also included questions that identified the lifecycle stage with which STERPDB is most closely identified with. Determining STERPDB's organizational lifecycle identity ultimately leads to recommendations for the direction that STERPDB should take when choosing a new leader. Lastly, this survey included open ended questions that allowed stakeholders to answer what they see the next step as. This research is meant to provide the regional board with a foundation to begin planning the future of STERPDB as leaders retire.

Stakeholder Analysis: determining the typology of the subject pool

Over the past fifty years, there has been considerable research on stakeholder theory. Freeman (1994) defined stakeholder theory as "The principle of Who or What Really Counts"(p. 411). Stakeholders are "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman,1984, p. 46). The definition of stakeholders varies from one theorist to another, some taking a broad approach such as Freeman while others present a more narrow approach (Windsor, 1992). Freeman's (1984) definition is considered broad because of how many individuals and entities are identified as stakeholders, while the narrow approach to defining a stakeholder allows for only those who are truly affected by the problem and are cognizant of the affects. An example of a narrow approach to defining a stakeholder can be found with Clarkson's (1994) definition that distinguishes between those stakeholders that are voluntary and involuntary risk-bearers:

> "Voluntary stakeholders bear some form of risk as a result of having invested some form of capital, human or financial, something of value, in a firm.

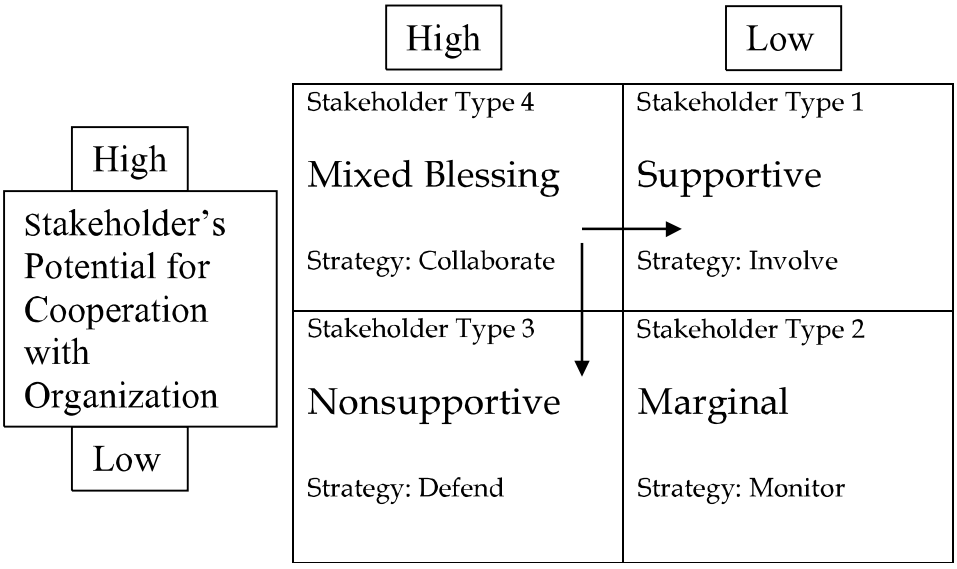
> Involuntary stakeholders are placed at risk as a result of a firm's activities. But without the element of risk there is no stake" (1994, as citied by Brugha & Varvasovsky (2000).

The idea that is explained here is the direct correlation between risk and being identified as a stakeholder. A stakeholder, to have interest in the situation, must have something at stake. In other words, they must have something to win or something to lose (Clarkson, 1994). Similarly, those with potential relationships may also be considered stakeholders (Starik, 1994). The theoretical argument that exists is between the use of a broad definition that could potentially encompass all human life as stakeholders and a narrow definition that really sharpens the idea of what truly is at stake. This, of course introduced the idea of a stake being a risk. Though we can argue that everyone has a stake, the researcher must decide not necessarily who has one, but rather who has a stake that matters. Defining who has a stake that matters will lead to a narrow definition that is more appropriate when discussing STERPDB's future. While STERPDB's work affects citizens, public officials, nonprofits and businesses within the eight counties it serves, a narrow stakeholder definition is used to determine the recipients of the survey to encompass only employees, board members and public officials within the member counties and former member counties.

Identifying who the stakeholders are helps to target a key group of individuals. Once a target group is established, it is important to focus on what the key stakeholders want. Stakeholder Theory also offers suggestions on identifying types of stakeholders and based on the type, one may be able to determine their particular interest. Savage,

Nix, Whitehead and Blair (1991) note that there are four types of stakeholders: Supportive, Marginal, Nonsupportive, and Mixed Blessing (refer to Figure 2). Supportive stakeholders support the organization, while Nonsupportive stakeholders do not. Marginal stakeholders are those that are indifferent to the organization, tending to have a high level of apathy concerning their involvement. Lastly, Mixed Blessing stakeholders are unsure how they feel. Mixed Blessing stakeholders can move into the Nonsupportive or Supportive roles once an opinion in formed. The typology of the stakeholder is determined by the threat that the particular stakeholder may cause to the organization along with the true stake that the stakeholder holds. Diagnosing the stakeholder's potential for threat to the organization as well as potential for cooperation allows for the typology to be formed. The four types of stakeholders should be addressed and treated in different ways (Savage, Nix, et al., 1991).

Figure 2: Stakeholders Potential for Threat to Organization



(Savage, Nix, et al., 1991, p. 65)

Managers should meet the needs of supportive and mixed blessings stakeholders, while attempting to minimally support the wishes of a marginal stakeholder. Keeping as many stakeholders happy as possible is vital. Furthermore "to survive in the future, organizations should establish goals for their relationships with current and potential stakeholders as part of an on-going strategic management process" (Savage, Nix, Whitehead and Blair, 1997, p.72). These strategies will ensure a healthy organization and will narrow down to the key issues within an organization.

Using Savage, Nix, et al.'s, (1991) model, the subjects, identified themselves as either, Mixed blessing, Supportive, Non-Supportive or Marginal stakeholders through a question asked on the survey. This ensures that a representative sample of the different categorical stakeholders exists.

Organizational Lifecycles

To identify STERPDB's organizational lifecycle stage, Susan Steven's (2001) framework is used. Steven's (2001) explains, "lifecycle theory's most important contribution is as a diagnostic tool for defining the normal characteristic and predictive challenges organizations face at each life stage" (p.49). In using this framework individuals surveyed were asked to identify STERPDB's current lifecycle stage. STERPDB was evaluated only as a *mature, declining* or *turnaround stage* in the lifecycle based on STERPDB's 40 year history and longstanding programs. Also, this survey does not evaluate STERPDB as a *terminal stage* prospect, since at that stage the organization has few employees and only operates on an ad hoc basis (Stevens, 2001).

The diagnostic questions will overview the following five topics:

- Programs
- Management
- Governance
- Resources
- Systems

While findings show STERPDB at different stages within different topics, some insight into their overall lifecycle status can be reached.

The survey instrument used a Likert-scale to analyze responses by a method of assigning a level of feeling to a particular statement (Trochim, 2006). Categories of "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Do not Know", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree" was the Likert-scale phrasing used for this survey. This offers some insight into the depth of the current situation at STERPBD. Based on the response to questions of these topics, the researcher is able to diagnose STERPDB's current lifecycle status (Stevens, 2001).

The analysis from this research has lead to recommendations for appropriate steps to address the ailments of STERPDB specifically, as well as the challenges that its lifecycles stage presents. Also, a list of suggested characteristics for the director's successor is formed. This will guide the future succession plan process and help to narrow the search for that successor.

What the Stakeholders Want

Finally, the survey included open ended questions that address what the stakeholders see for the future of STERPDB. These questions allowed the subjects to

express their feelings as to what changes they would like to see in STERPDB and what type of leader they may see as beneficial for the future of STERPDB. The suggestions were evaluated in a qualitative matter to search for common themes among subjects. Also, they serve as a tool to evaluate if the desires of the stakeholders match to the recommended remedies and characteristics of a successor based on the current lifecycle stage. The goal was to identify the stakeholder's wants while advising of what scholars' state as their needs.

Research Methods & Analysis

Data Collection

Survey: To collect necessary data a survey has been administered (see Appendix B). The use of a survey has the advantage of reaching a larger population than would be reached with interviews. Also the ability to keep results anonymous allow for more truthful answers and higher rate of participation (Schutt, 2003). Due to the sensitivity and politics of the research question, anonymity is protected to offer the best results. Lastly the administering of an internet survey has proven better than a hard copy survey in that there are less missing values and often more responses (Stanton, 2006). The survey was designed and results were collected through Survey Monkey, http://surveymonkey.com. To administer the survey a link to the instrument was sent to the subjects through electronic mail. The survey was sent to a total of 37 stakeholders, comprised of current employees of STERPDB, current and former regional board members of STERPDB, current and former member county economic development directors, current and former member county planning directors as well as leadership at

Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Development Board and Southern Tier West Regional Planning Development Board. The subjects were given one week to complete the survey with two reminder messages sent to encourage participation.

The survey instrument had three objectives:

- Identify what type of stakeholder the subject is.
- Identify the subject's perception on STERPDB's current stage on Stevens (2001) lifecycle capacity placement chart.
- Identify what the subject wants for the future of STERPDB

To address the first objective a stakeholder analysis has been conducted, asking one question on the survey that identifies the subject as a particular type of stakeholder. The second objective was addressed through a series of survey questions using a Likert-scale and a diagnostic framework, offered by Stevens (2001), determining the organizational lifecycle of STERPBD. The last two questions offer a space for the subject to write and identify what they would like to see in the future of STERPDB and other comments they have. This study will operate with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: The mean of the index constructed for the *decline* scale will be statistically significantly lower than the mean of the index constructed for the *mature* scale.

SPSS was used to conduct a Cronbach's Alpha test. This test determines if the groups of questions (questions relating to *maturity, decline and turnaround stages*) that are used on the survey hold internal consistency, more so than a random group of questions. The test produces a coefficient that measures reliability of the study (Santos, 1999). An index was constructed of the results from the survey. This index shows the

average Likert-scale score for questions from three different stages of the lifecycle: *mature, decline and turnaround stages.* Using this index of averages a paired t-test was conducted to determine if there is a statistically significant difference at the .05 level, between the different lifecycle stages. Based on findings, recommendations have been offered to coincide with the current stage at which STERPDB is identified.

Revenue Review: To better identify the trends of revenue for STERPBD. An analysis of the last four years of revenue has been conducted. This information was obtained through STERPDB's annual reports starting in 2005 and ending in 2008. A graph has been presented to see if there are any noteworthy changes in revenue in the past four years. This also helps to identify where in the organizational lifecycle STERPDB stands, in terms of revenue.

Qualitative Analysis. The last two questions on the survey are the following open ended questions:

"What I would like to see for the future for STERPDB's leadership is?"

"Other Comments"

These questions give subjects a chance to voice their opinions on STERPDB and what they may see as the answer to the changes that should occur in STERPBD's future leadership. This also allows for a qualitative analysis to be conducted by the researcher to determine if there are ideas and plans already in action that should be evaluated. In addition this allows those that are currently outside the organization to voice their opinions on what the future should hold, as potential future stakeholders.

Findings

While the findings of this study hope to prove advantageous to STERPDB, it is important to understand the limitations of this study. The survey was distributed to a total of 39 identified stakeholders. A total of 28 survey responses were received in one week. With such a small sample, options for statistical testing were limited.

One question on the survey identified the stakeholder as a type. Of the four types of stakeholders there was at least one subject that fell into each typology. While the majority of stakeholders were Supportive, there was representation from each type of stakeholder group. This is a representative sample of STERPDB's stakeholders (see Appendix C).

Quantitative Analysis of Survey

Reliability. To test the reliability of the questions asked on the survey a Crombachs Alpha test was used (see Appendix D). This determine if the set of questions used for the three areas of interest (*mature, decline and turnaround*) hold together as an index better than random questions asked. The coefficient produced for the *mature* index was 0.733 using a total of eight questions. This means that the questions concerning *maturity* hold internal consistency as a framework and are reliable. The second group of questions concerning *decline* resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.654 with a total of five questions, two questions were eliminated due to high variance. This finding is borderline because an ideal Cronbach's alpha is 0.7. Yet, the questions concerning *decline* are also considered reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha concerning the *turnaround stage* was 0.602 with two questions being discarded for

analysis. The questions concerning *turnaround* are considered unreliable as the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is low. Therefore the paired t-test is only analyzing the differences between the *mature* index and the *decline* index. All other analysis notes that STERPDB is either in a *mature* or *decline* stage, therefore the *turnaround stage* will not be evaluated.

Paired T-Test Findings. A paired t-test revealed that with there is a statistically significant difference between the stakeholder's (subjects) perception of STERPDB currently in a *mature stage* and their perception of STERPDB in a *decline stage* (see Appendix E). At a significance level of .010, stakeholders perceive that STERPDB is currently in a *decline stage* (with a mean of 2.04, which is an "Agree" on the Likert-scale) and that STERPDB is not in a *mature stage* (with a mean of 2.59, which is closer to a "Disagree" on the Likert-scale.) This difference in perception is statistically significant.

Table 3: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	IndexMature	2.59352	25	.561194	.112239
	IndexDecline	2.04440	25	.534089	.106818

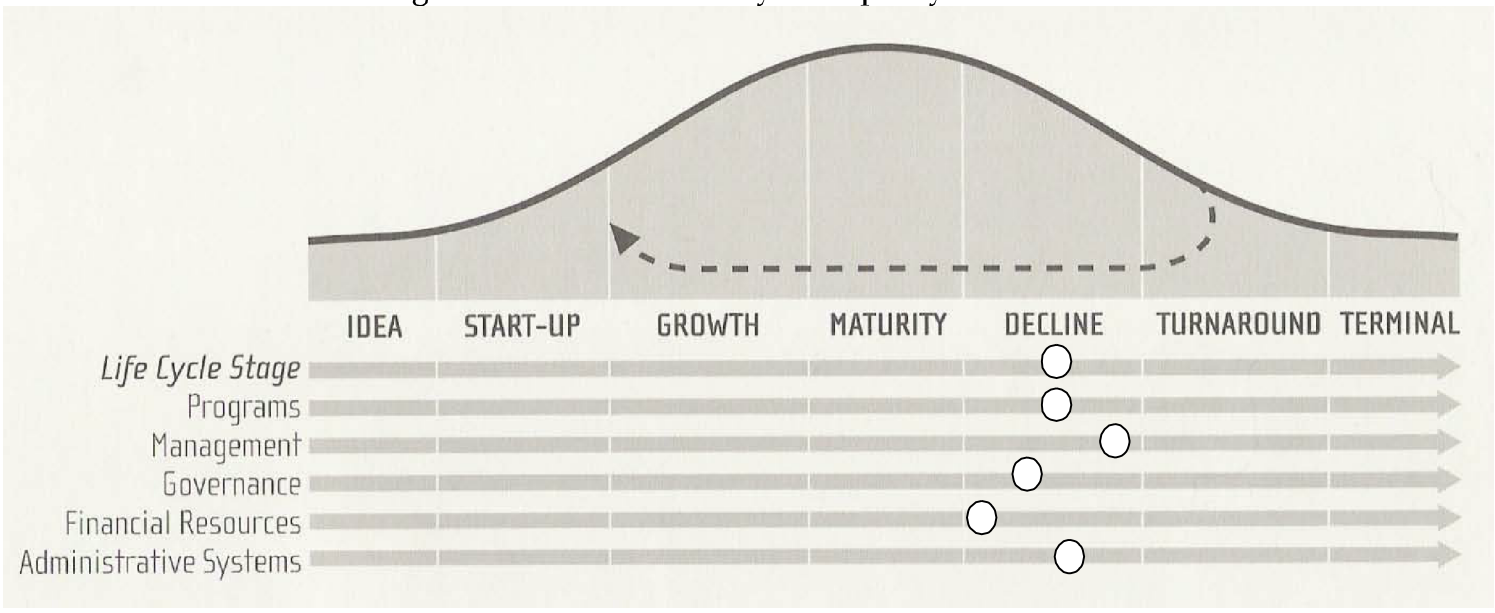
Table 4: Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper	Lower		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	IndexMature - IndexDecline	.549124	.980313	.196063	.144471	.953777	2.801	24	.010

Based on the findings above, the null hypothesis is rejected with a 0.010 significance and the research hypothesis that STERPDB is in a *decline stage* according to Organizational Lifecycle Theory is accepted.

Descriptive Statistics. To better draw conclusions based on the survey, descriptive statistics were evaluated (see Appendix F). Using a simple analysis of results of the survey, below is how the subjects ranked the programs, management, governance and administrative systems of STERPBD. The answers of the Likert-scale were averaged to determine where on the lifecycle capacity placement scale STERPDB fell. Financial resources were averaged and results were inconclusive. Using an analysis of the revenue over the past four years, the researcher was able to determine that STERPDB's financial resources are in *decline*. Lastly, using the survey, with statistical significance, STERPDB's overall lifecycle stage is perceived by stakeholders to be in *decline*.

Figure 3: STERPDB's Lifecycle Capacity Placement



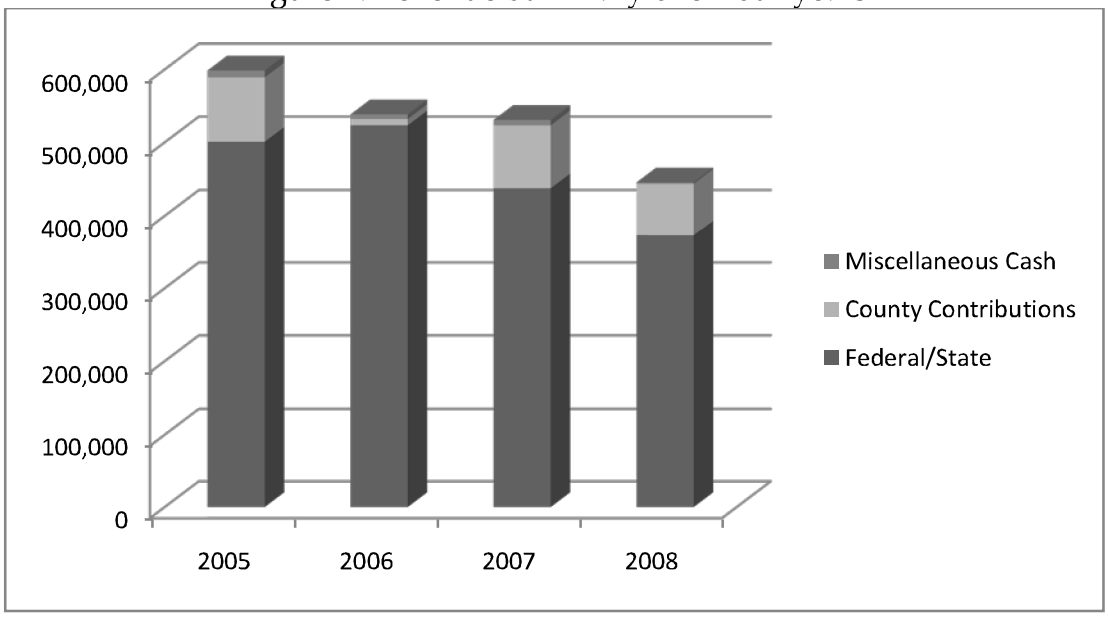
Using descriptive statistics, questions concerning programs, management, governance, financial resources and administrative systems were evaluated. Calculating the mean score (from the Likert-scale) of the answers to each of these questions, the research was able to identify where each of these aspects of STERPDB lay. Programs and administrative systems clearly fell into the *decline stage* with mean scores of 2.05 for both. This means that the majority of stakeholders taking the survey perceive STERPDB to be in the *decline stage* when it comes to programs and administrative systems. Also falling into the *decline stage* was STERPDB's governance with a mean score of 2.09. *Mature* governance questions scored a 2.65, an average that is closer to "Disagree". It appears that stakeholders recognize STERPBD's governance as in a *decline stage*, but also understand some aspects of governance are closer to the *mature stage*.

Management fell within the *decline stage*, but had a lower scoring on questions concerning management in the *turnaround stage* as well. The questions of concern show that stakeholders agree (2.05) that, "management is trapped by commitment to programs, staff, systems, or policies, no matter how outdated or poorly they are working" (survey question two) this indicates that management is in *decline*. Yet stakeholders also agreed with a score of (1.85) that "Turnover on STERPDB's board has shrunk board down to only a few committed members" (survey question two). This indicates a *turnaround stage*. So it is fair to say that when it comes to management, STERPDB is between the *decline* and *turnaround stage* in the organizational lifecycle.

Lastly, financial resources at STERPDB were inconclusive as to where they fall in the organizational lifecycle capacity placement chart based on survey questions'

descriptive statistics alone. The cause of this may be due to the fact that many stakeholders are not aware of the specifics of STERPDB's financing. To better identify where STERPDB lies concerning financial resources Figure 4 will be used to evaluate revenue changes over the last four years based on STERPDB's 2005-2008 Annual reports.

Figure 4: Revenue Summary over four years



Using Stevens' (2001) diagnostic framework and the revenue report published in STERPDB's annual report from the last four years it appears that STERPDB's finances are located in the *decline stage*. Stevens states that the organization must be able to have "sufficient financial flexibility to at least partially self-fund new initiatives" (p.61). STERPDB's miscellaneous cash has been minimal for the past three years, an only reached a high of $9,515 in 2005 (STERPDB Annual Report, 2005-2008), this is hardly enough to fund new initiatives. Also while the percentages of types of incomes have not changed dramatically over the past four years, Federal/State aid as well as county

contributions has continually decreased each year. All sources of revenue were significantly higher in 2005 than they were in 2008. To continue following this trend will lead STERPDB to fall into full *decline stage* and will need to move into a *turnaround stage* of cutting expenses or fundraising.

Qualitative Analysis of Survey

The survey's two open ended questions received a total of 18 responses out of the 28 surveyed. The responses offer insight into what stakeholders would like to see for the future of STERPDB. Using a thematic analysis I discovered two common themes that arose throughout. One theme concerns the priorities and actions to be taken while the other specifically targets characteristics that the stakeholders would like to see in the new incoming leader.

Priorities. Below is a list of the five priorities that were repeatedly mentioned in the open ended questions of the survey. These priorities are listed in order of how often the respondents mentioned the item.

1. Change Now
2. More Services / Better Services
3. Board Responsiveness
4. Organization Restructuring
5. Bring Back Lost Counties

The first and foremost priority that respondents mentioned is that change is wanted now. Stakeholder's perceive that STERPDB is in a *decline stage* as the paired t-test has proven and many stakeholders taking the survey would like to address this decline

through a change in leadership. It is interesting to note that most stakeholders do value STERPDB as an organization and enjoy the services they are currently receiving, but stakeholders want more services and services that better fit the needs of their particular county. In the same vein as addressing services, stakeholders also called for an organizational restructuring as well as a more engaged board. While some would like to see changes in rules for board membership, and others called for splitting of the region into two separate boards, there was a consistent desire for restructuring of some kind. Additionally, recruitment of new board members as a means to encourage a more engaged board was suggested. Lastly, a few respondents mentioned a desire for the counties who have left the organization to return and continue their involvement. The responses concerning priorities for STERPDB's change were cohesive on the whole, many individuals hitting on the same points. These results are quite encouraging concerning the future of STERPDB.

Characteristics of new Leader. The other theme within the responses that could be gleaned from the survey was the type of leader that stakeholders would like to see at STERPDB. Table 5 refers to the characteristics of a new leader that stakeholders mentioned in the survey. Many of these characteristics are similar to those offered by Stevens (2001) as characteristics needed in a leader in a *declining* organization. This finding is also encouraging, showing that the ideals of the stakeholders and those based on research concerning leadership are closely aligned.

Table 5. Incoming Leader Characteristics

Multifaceted	Community Oriented	Has Drive
Energetic	Hands on With Counties	Familiarity with Region
Has Vision	Innovative	Far-sighted
Motivated	Flexible	Dynamic
Young		

Recommendations

1. *Begin succession planning as soon as possible.*

It is vital that STERPDB begin the succession plan today. While the findings of this study have laid the groundwork for this plan, a committee made up of board members and current leadership should be immediately formed. This committee can conduct the necessary research and begin the processes needed to set a succession plan in place. Current leadership should begin documenting procedures and day to day activities. The use of mentoring or an apprenticeship should be considered as well to address issues of tacit knowledge transfer. Lastly, STERPDB may find it helpful to bring an intern on board with the sole responsibility of assisting in the succession planning process.

2. *Seek successor with characteristics appropriate for decline lifecycle stage.*

The search for a new successor should also begin. While there are many qualified candidates it will be important to find the perfect candidate for an organization in *decline,* as well as a perfect candidate for an organization as unique as STERPDB. The findings of this research resulted in a list of what types of characteristics the

stakeholder's would like to see in a successor. These findings coincide with the characteristics offered by Stevens (2001) for an organization in *decline*. According to Stevens, a leader of a *declining* organization should have the following:

- Commitment to mission
- Willingness to shake the status quo
- Capable of objective rather than subjective analysis
- Understanding of the dynamics of organizational renewal
- High responsibility with no tendencies to blame or deny
- Ability to motivate and lead other to change the status quo.

Coupling the above characteristics with those that the stakeholders would like to see in the future leadership of STERPDB will provide for a positive change within STERPDB, moving the organization out of the *decline stage*.

3. *Work to move into a viable maturity stage.*

To successfully move into a viable *maturity stage*, STERPDB will need to first recognize the realities of the current status as an organization. Findings showed stakeholder's had a strong interest in restructuring of the organization. To move into a *maturity stage*, restructuring will be necessary. STERPDB will need to insist on a full board involvement in the restructuring tasks. Members will need to evaluate what is working and what is not working within the organization and restructure the board, the staff, management, as well as programs and resources accordingly. Recruiting new board members will be necessary to accomplish these tasks, while unresponsive board members should be asked to leave. Lastly, a full financial analysis and reassessment of

programs should be done to align STERPDB on a path to success, moving out of the *decline stage*. All of these actions should be worked into a strategic plan that is regularly revisited. This strategic plan should involve all stakeholders on a regular basis.

Long Range Recommendations: Conduct a needs assessment of member counties. Findings of the survey also noted that many of STERPDB's stakeholders felt they could use more services or better services from STERPDB. While the priority for STERPDB will be to replace current leadership and move out of a *declining* state. A needs assessment of member (current and former) counties should also be conducted. This assessment should lead to a change in programming to best meet the needs of the member counties; while inviting back to the organization lost membership with lure of programs that will meet the particular needs of those counties.

Conclusions

The future of STERPDB is quite bright. The findings of this study were bittersweet. While it may be disappointing for some that STERPDB is proven to be in a stage of *decline*, the interest of the stakeholders to not only to continue the organization but to better the organization with more and better programs is encouraging and telling. STERPDB's stakeholders are interested in change and interested in getting started immediately. This is an exciting time for STERPDB as they evolve with the changing economic and political climate all while the current leadership is leaving a valuable legacy and setting a very high standard of performance for the future.

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Appendix A

Date: March 27, 2009

To: Chelsea Robertson, DPA

From: Anne M. Casella, CIP Administrator

Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Subject: Human Subjects Research Approval

Protocol Number: 1141-09

Protocol title: *Identifying STERPDB's Future*

Your project identified above was reviewed by the HSRRC and has received an expedited approval pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations, 45 CFR 46.110(7). The Informed Consent document has been approved with the following Waivers: 46.116 (4) Waiver alternate treatment, 46.116 (6) Waiver of requiring whether medical treatments are available if injury occurs

An expedited status requires that you will be required to submit a Continuing Review application annually as outlined by Federal Guidelines: *46.109 (e) An IRB shall conduct continuing review of research covered by this policy at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year, and shall have authority to observe or have a third party observe the consent process and the research.*

If your project undergoes any changes these changes must be reported to our office prior to implementation, using the form listed below:
http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Modification%20Form52.rtf

Any unanticipated problems and/or complaints related to your use of human subjects in this project must be reported, using the form listed below,
http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Adverse%20Event%20Form.rtf

and delivered to the Human Subjects Research Review Office within five days. This is required so that the HSRRC can institute or update protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary. In addition, under the University's Assurance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Binghamton University must report certain events to the federal government. These reportable events include deaths, injuries, adverse reactions or unforeseen risks to human subjects. These reports must be made regardless of the source of funding or exempt status of your project.

University policy requires you to maintain as a part of your records, any documents pertaining to the use of human subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to, and received from, the subjects, as well as any executed consent forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least six years after project completion or termination. If this is a funded project, you

should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representative of the University, State and Federal governments.

Please notify this office when your project is complete by completing and forwarding to our office the following form: http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Protocol%20Closure%20Form.rtf

Upon notification we will close the above referenced file. Any reactivation of the project will require a new application.

This documentation is being provided to you via email. A hard copy will not be mailed unless you request us to do so.

Thank you for your cooperation, I wish you success in your research, and please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or require further assistance.

Cc: file

David Campbell

Anne M. Casella, CIP

Administrator

Human Subjects Research Office

Binghamton University

ITC Room 2205

casella@binghamton.edu

Telephone (607) 777-3918

FAX (607) 777-5025

Appendix B

Identifying STERPDB's Future

Principal Investigator: Chelsea Robertson, Student
Masters of Public Administration
Binghamton University
chelsea.price@gmail.com

You are invited to participate in a research study of STERPDB's future succession plan. The purpose of this research is to build a foundation for STERPDB to being a succession plan. This survey will identify at what stage in the organizational lifecycle STERPDB stands. Knowledge of where STERPDB stands will lead to recommendations to begin a succession plan. Should you choose to participate in this study, the survey should take Five to Ten minutes to complete. Please answer each question to the best of your ability, if you do not know the answer please mark the appropriate box noting this. At the end of this survey there are optional open ended questions in which you can choose to write your thoughts on the processes of succession planning for STERPDB.

Participation in this survey has minimal risks as all answers are anonymous, unless you choose to offer your name, which is optional. If you do choose to include your name, it will be coded and a key will be made for the principal investigator to identify subject. This will be kept on a secure computer at all times and will only be viewed by the principal investigator.
The benefits of this study, is to being the process of a succession plan for STERPDB, as the current leadership plan on retiring within the next five years. A succession plan will lead to a smooth transition for STERPDB's employees as well as the member counties that STERPDB serves. This smooth transition will ensure that all needs of the member counties continue to be met even through the changing leadership.

While I encourage all individuals to complete this survey, participation is not mandatory. Thus if you wish not to participate in this project, please stop here. There will be no penalty for failure to participate. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with STERPDB or Binghamton University. If you decide to participate you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.
Before you sign the form please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is at all unclear to you. If you have any additional questions later, please contact Chelsea Robertson at chelsea.price@gmail.com . If at any time you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject you may call the Chair of the Human Subjects Research Committee at (607) 777-3818.
Signature_____
Date: _____

Survey Questions

Survey to be written and distributed using survey monkey.com

Stakeholder Classification:

As a stakeholder of STERPDB, please select the option that best describes your feelings towards STERPDB.

A. I support STERPDB's mission, goals and activities to achieve the mission.
B. I am undecided if I support STERPDB's mission, goals and activities to achieve the mission.
C. I am indifferent to STERPDB's mission, goals and activities to achieve the mission.
D. I do not support STERPDB's mission, goals and activities to achieve the mission.

Organization Lifecycle:

Please rank between 1-5. 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree. If you do not know the answer please mark rank it 3 or "Not Sure or Do not Know"

1-Strongly Agree
2-Agree
3-Not Sure or Do not Know
4-Disagree
5-Strongly Disagree

Mature Questions

STERPDB provides steady, relevant and vital services to the Counties it serves.
STERPDB's Programs are well organized, results-focused and in touch with regional needs.
STERPDB's Director inspires confidence in staff, board and community.
STERPDB's board of directors is organized for maximum effectiveness and has a structure for continuity of leadership and culture.
STERPDB's board of directors is policy oriented and allows STERPDB's director to manage the organization.
STERPDB makes accurate financial forecast and avoids deficit.
STERPDB has multiple sources of income and is not dependent on one source of funding.
STERPDB's administrative systems are at a level of sophistication required for competent management and decision making.

Decline Questions

STERPDB's programs are rigid, status quo and method focused.
Management is trapped by commitment to programs, staff, systems, or policies, no matter how outdated or poorly they are working.
Board is focused on "what we want to do" rather than the Southern Tier, Member County needs.
STERPDB displays a lack of organizational "spark" causing diminished attendance and engagement by STERPDB's board.
STERPDB's systems are developed but antiquated and physical space is deteriorating.
STERPDB's electronic systems, policies and procedures are developed but antiquated.
STERPDB's physical space is deteriorating.

Turnaround Questions

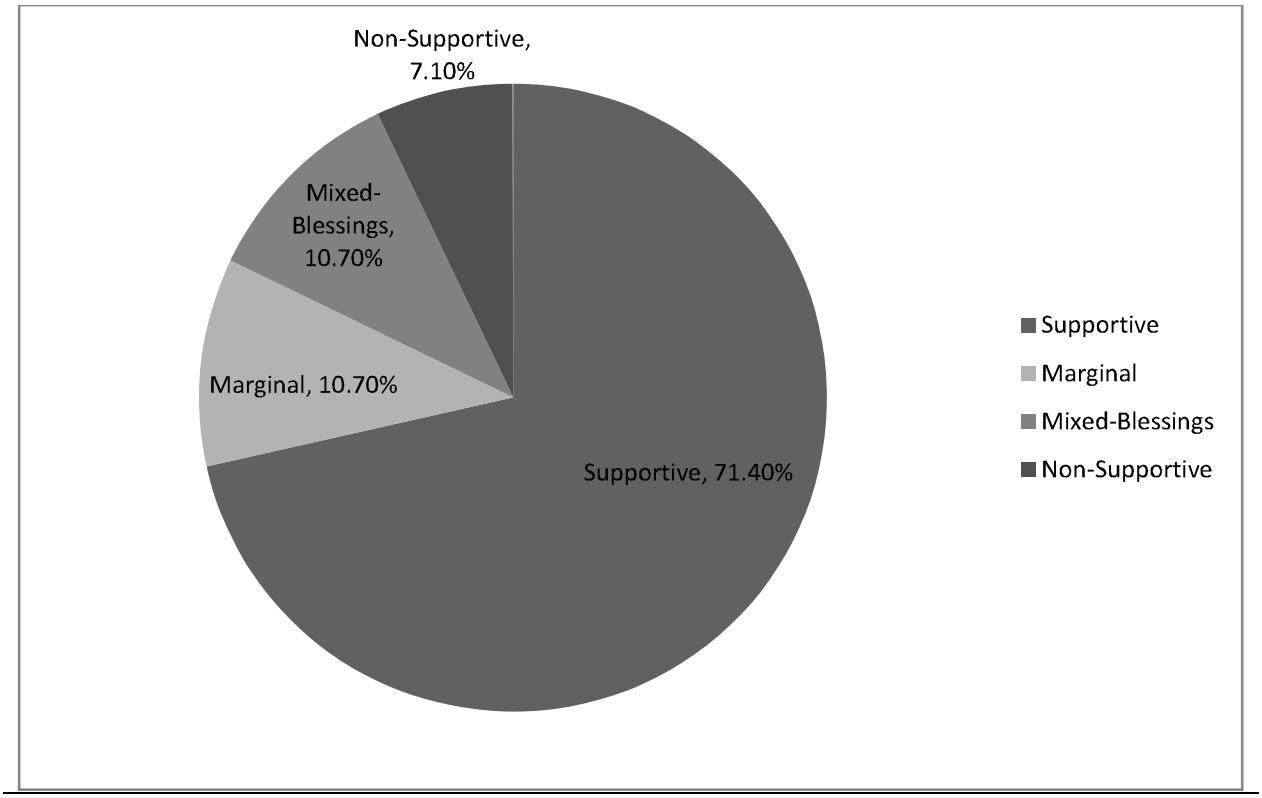
STERPDB's programs have recently been reassessed and modified in light of current market needs and financial viability.
STERPDB offers fewer programs and services than in years before.

STERPDB's director is decisive, able to size up problems and mobilizes resources effectively.
Turnover on STERPDB's board has shrunk board down to only a few committed members.
STERPDB has a willingness to cut expenses to reflect realistic income and cash flow.

Space to expand thoughts:
What I would like to see for the future for STERPDB's leadership is:

Other Comments:

Appendix C
Stakeholder Analysis



Appendix D
Cronbach's Alpha

Mature

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	5	16.7
	Excluded(a)	25	83.3
	Total	30	100.0

a Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.733	8

Decline

Eliminated Questions 13 & 14

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	14	48.3
	Excluded(a)	15	51.7
	Total	29	100.0

a Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.654	5

Turnaround

Eliminated Questions 16 & 18

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	11	37.9
	Excluded(a)	18	62.1
	Total	29	100.0

a Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.602	3

Appendix E
Paired T-Test

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	IndexMature	2.59352	25	.561194	.112239
	IndexDecline	2.04440	25	.534089	.106818

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	IndexMature & IndexDecline	25	-.602	.001

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper	Lower		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	IndexMature - IndexDecline	.549124	.980313	.196063	.144471	.953777	2.801	24	.010

Appendix F
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1M (O)	24	2	4	2.71	.751
Q2M (P)	21	2	4	2.90	.831
Q3M (M)	21	1	4	2.76	.831
Q4M (G)	21	2	4	3.05	.590
Q5M (G)	20	2	4	2.20	.523
Q6M (R)	16	1	3	2.06	.680
Q7M(R)	19	1	4	2.26	.733
Q8M (S)	22	1	4	2.41	.796
Q9D (P)	21	1	3	2.05	.740
Q10D (M)	21	1	3	2.00	.775
Q11D (G)	22	1	4	2.18	.853
Q12D (G)	22	1	4	1.77	.813
Q15D (S)	21	1	4	2.05	.805
Q17T (P)	17	1	3	1.76	.664
Q18T (M)	21	2	4	2.81	.750
Q19T (M)	20	1	3	1.85	.587
Q20T (R)	16	1	3	2.00	.632
Valid N (listwise)	4				