

Raffa

[Name]

## **Executive Director Succession Policy Example**

### **Introduction**

A change in executive leadership is inevitable for all organizations. It is a time of both risk and opportunity. It is a period in an organization's history when the Board President must increase his/her level of engagement. It is also a time when some may seek assurance of the organization's viability and long-term sustainability.

A succession policy for the Executive Director position is a routine risk management and sustainability planning tool. The Policy ensures organizational sustainability by providing a proactive, orderly plan for executive leadership transitions.

To that end, the Board of [name] is adopting this succession policy for purposes of:

- Focusing Board attention on leadership team development through annual communications between the Executive Director and Board about the depth of staffing and succession plans for Management Team positions
- Establishing principles, role clarity and procedures to support positive leadership transitions that foster good endings and beginnings with departing and arriving leaders and build organizational capacity when a planned or unplanned executive leadership change occurs

The Board President shall be responsible for implementing this policy and its related procedures, and for annually reviewing and updating the policy as needed.

In the event of a planned or unplanned leadership transition, the Board shall immediately consider appointing a Transition Committee which shall plan and manage the transition, including the search for a new Executive Director.

### **Guiding Principles**

- [Name] is open to and will consider both internal and external candidates when filling the Executive Director position. A national search may be conducted to accomplish this principle.
- In organizations such as [name], the Executive Director's position is often shaped by the incumbent's talents and areas of specialized interest. That person's departure might necessitate other organizational changes including the creation of new positions and/or realignment of current positions.
- The preeminent goal of a transition to a new Executive Director is maintaining continuity of [name]'s mission-related work. A transition also presents an opportunity for the organization to continue to grow and develop.

## Lines of Authority

1. The selection of the Executive Director is the responsibility of the Board.
2. The current Executive Director has the responsibility to continuously identify, encourage, and help to develop senior managers within the organization who are qualified to meet future leadership needs, whether that be on a temporary or permanent basis.
3. The current Executive Director has the responsibility to plan for the orderly transition of all senior managers.

## Emergency Backup Plan

1. Related to the position of Executive Director: To be prepared at all times for a leadership transition, the organization should maintain an up-to-date Emergency Backup Plan with guidelines for the planned or unplanned short-term and long-term absence of the Executive Director. This plan is approved by the Board and should be reviewed annually. The plan can also serve as the Transition Plan when there is a vacancy in the Executive Director position.
2. Related to Management Team Positions: To be prepared at all times for a senior management transition, the Executive Director should maintain an up-to-date Emergency Backup Plan with guidelines for the planned or unplanned short-term and long-term absence of members of the Management Team. Those plans shall be provided to the Board President and made available to the Board.

## Board Action in the Event of Vacancy in the Executive Director Position

1. Organizational Assessment: The Board or Transition Committee should take time to assess the leadership needs of the organization before the search for a new Executive Director is conducted. The assessment should include a review and update (if needed) of the organization's strategic plan. The assessment should be designed to help assure the selection of a qualified and capable leader who fits well with the organization's mission, vision, values, culture, goals, and objectives, and who has the necessary skills to lead the organization.
2. Option of appointing an Acting or Interim Executive Director: To assure the organization's operations are not interrupted while the Board assesses the leadership needs and recruits a new Executive Director, the Board may appoint an Acting Executive Director from among senior executive staff or hire an Interim Executive Director from outside the organization.
3. Duties of the Acting/Interim Executive Director: Among such duties will be to ensure that the organization continues to operate without disruption and that all organizational commitments previously made are appropriately executed, including but not limited to, speaking engagements, grant and contract obligations, reports, licenses, certifications, membership renewals, and other obligations to funders and other stakeholders.
4. Simultaneous transitions for the Executive Director and Senior Management Positions: After appointing an Acting or Interim Executive Director from within, the Board may make other temporary senior management appointments from among other senior

management staff, external hires, or whatever combination of those options best assures continuity in leadership and program success through the transition period and afterwards.

### **Preparation Time Frame for Replacement of the Executive Director**

1. The optimal period for the Executive Director to announce his/her departure from that role – or proposed commencement of a new role in the organization – is at least six to twelve months before the date of departure.
2. The organization's Board understands that the time required for successfully completing a planned leadership transition is approximately eight to twelve months.

### **Role of the Outgoing Executive Director in Planned Transitions**

The departing Executive Director, unless otherwise directed by the Transition Committee, will be involved in some transition activities such as: fundraising, communicating with funders and other stakeholders, and briefing the incoming Executive Director. The departing Executive Director's role during the transition and after the new Executive Director starts shall be developed in consultation with the Board President and/or Transition Committee and communicated to the Board.

### **Initial Implementation of the Transition Plan**

1. Within approximately fifteen (15) days of the announcement of a planned departure, the Board President may appoint a Transition Committee. This Committee shall be comprised of at least three members of the Board. Other external stakeholders and/or staff may be recruited to advise or assist the Committee at the discretion of the Board President and Transition Committee.
2. The Transition Committee shall be responsible for implementing this transition plan and further developing the plan as needed.

At its first meeting, the Transition Committee should determine its role, including responsibilities related to conducting the search process. (The Transition Committee may recommend that the Board President appoint a separate Search Committee, while the Transition Committee manages the overall transition process for the organization.) The Committee shall also discuss and decide on how the senior staff will be substantively involved in the transition planning process and consulted in the selection process.

3. The Transition Committee should also determine the need for consulting assistance (i.e., transition management consultant and/or executive search firm) based on the circumstances.
4. As needed, the Board President should authorize an organizational assessment and schedule a Board Retreat to review and refresh the organization's strategic plan.

**The [name] Commitment Regarding Diverse Candidates and Staff Leader Development**

1. In order to provide career advancement for staff, the organization shall encourage the professional development of current employees.
2. In order to support the Board's due diligence and ensure that the best possible candidate is hired, the organization shall implement a search and selection process that is open to internal and external candidates.
3. In order to develop a finalist pool that is reflective of the community, the organization shall work proactively to develop a diverse pool of candidates for the Executive Director position.

Adopted by the Board of Directors on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2008.

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[name] Secretary