

Succession/Contingency Plan Template

XYZ MINISTRY

Responsibility for embedding succession planning into the culture and workflow of XYZ is assigned to the Trusteeship/HR Committee of the board and the Executive Director.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Succession planning addresses the vulnerabilities of transition while focusing on the needs of the future in a thoughtful and beneficial way.
- Developing a deeper bench of staff leadership is a priority and should be a regular topic of discussion with the board.
- Establishing a succession plan for the Executive Director helps XYZ be prepared in the event of an unanticipated crisis.
- The board committee on governance identifies and cultivates prospective board members and adopts means of evaluating effective transitions.
- Succession planning is part of the annual workflow of the board, Executive Director, and leadership staff. It is not an event or a document, but rather, it is ongoing work about preparing for the future.
- Succession plans are reviewed annually by the Trusteeship/HR Committee, the Executive Director, and key leaders.

GENERAL POLICIES

Death of Executive Director

- *Care of Surviving Spouse*
Duration of housing: XX months. Can be extended based on agreement with new Executive Director, the former director's spouse, and the board.
- *Duration of Pay*
If the spouse is an employee, pay continues with the job. It is assumed the spouse will continue to work after the Executive Director's death. Should the spouse wish to end employment during the first year of a new Executive Director, s/he will be paid for an additional XX months beyond the last day of work.
- *Benefits*
If spouse is an employee, s/he is entitled to applicable benefits. Since the death of the Executive Director is a qualifying event for benefit enrollment outside the annual enrollment window, it's assumed the spouse will enroll. Should the spouse exit the organization as described under Duration of Pay, benefits will continue with pay until the end of the XX-month window. If the spouse is not an employee, XYZ will make a one-time payment equivalent to the cost of XX months of COBRA plus any applicable tax payments for the health benefits provided at the time of the death of the Executive Director.

Extended Leave of Executive Director

- *Medical, Pay, Benefits*

If leave is needed beyond the twelve weeks available via Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the HR Committee can review the request and make a recommendation to the board for additional leave up to XX months. The Executive Director will receive full pay during this time—or partial pay from XX to fill any pay gap not supported by insurance. All benefits including housing continue. Housing, pay, and benefits continue with no change for the spouse of the Executive Director whether the spouse is an employee or not.

- *Sabbatical*

Upon requests for a Sabbatical, the HR Committee will make a recommendation for board approval. Follow the guidelines for extended/medical leave but the HR Committee can make a specific recommendation based on the needs of the Executive Director.

- *Interim Director*

In the event of the death, extended leave, or sabbatical of the Executive Director, _____ will be named interim director for no longer than twelve months. If the spouse of the Executive Director is an employee, s/he will continue to report to immediate supervisor according to the organizational structure. As with the Executive Director, the board will support the interim director. The board chair and HR Committee will remain in frequent contact with the interim director and provide additional support or coaching if necessary.

Messaging

- *Spokesperson Script*

“_____ will act as the official spokesperson for XYZ and be responsible for any news to be published on social media, website, or a press release. Announcements will be run past the Chairman to ensure consistency with Board intentions.”

- *Timeline*

Day 1: Announcement of Executive Director’s death, disability, inability to serve

“We are saddened to announce our long-time Executive Director of XYZ Ministry was killed/succumbed to a long illness/suffered a traumatic injury today.” [Insert information about circumstances...]

Note: people will want to know what happened. They should be told as part of the moving ahead process. Control the news and eliminate speculation.

Day 2A: Announcement of interim director

Message to Staff:

“The board wants you to know we are grateful for you. We are committed to standing together through this time of unexpected transition. It comes as no surprise to you that the Executive Director and the board worked intentionally to prepare for a time like this. Although we hoped this would never happen, we’re prepared. Here are a few things to know:”

- o “The board has confidence in God’s leadership. This was not a surprise to Him.”
- o “_____ will serve as the interim leader.” Add qualifying reasons.
- o “Team effort from all of us is important. We are in this together as we continue to live out our mission.”
- o “The board has confidence in you to walk the ministry through this time.”

- “A special all-staff meeting has been called for (day and time) at (location). The board chair and one or two other board members will be at the meeting to answer questions and to address concerns regarding sustaining our momentum. _____ will be responsible for communications with the various constituencies, and the staff should refrain from making public statements.”

“We are asking that God make us stronger through this time of unexpected loss and change.”

“With gratitude for each one of you,”

Day 2B: Announcement of Interim Director

“The board chair announced today that _____ will serve as interim director starting immediately. _____ has been a key member of the XYZ ministry since _____ and has demonstrated his/her love for the ministry. Please join us in praying for _____ as s/he stands in the leadership gap for this season.”

Day 3A: Announcement for Memorial Service

“A celebration of life service to honor _____ will be held on (date) at (location).”

“As we move through this time of grieving, we are grateful for the guidance that was developed with the Board and _____ (Executive Director). As we reflect with gratitude on _____’s life and leadership, we move forward with a process that ensures XYZ’s stability with a strong transition team, prepares a search process for the next leader, and invites you to join us in prayer through this time of transition.”

Day 3B: Search Committee for New Executive Director

“The board is pleased to announce the establishment of the search committee for a new Executive Director of XYZ Ministry. Attached is a position description. Please feel free to share this with people who might be a good fit. Join us in prayer for God’s leadership in this. Thank you.”

ADDITIONAL TOPICS FOR BOARD TO CONSIDER

- Insurance
 - o Who is the beneficiary?
 - o Can the benefits be split?
 - o Disability insurance
- Should board hire a search firm?
- Should a temporary search committee be appointed?