



# Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK *of* KANSAS CITY  
DENVER • OKLAHOMA CITY • OMAHA



## Foreword



The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City has a broad range of responsibilities. As a regional headquarters of the central bank of the United States, it participates in setting national monetary policy, supervises and regulates financial institutions, maintains stability of the payment system, and provides financial services to banks and other depository institutions.

To succeed in each of these mission areas, the Federal Reserve relies on numerous resources, ranging from the most current economic and banking data to the analysis and expertise of its staff. One of the Federal Reserve's most important resources is its Community Development function, created in the 1980s following Congress' approval of the Community Reinvestment Act.

Community Development professionals take policymakers to the front lines of community issues through a range of initiatives, including forums, conferences, directed research and advisory councils. These initiatives position the central bank to respond effectively to emerging economic developments, long term needs and new challenges confronting rural and urban low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities.

The Kansas City Fed understands the vital role nonprofit organizations play in providing services and resources that strengthen the well being and economic stability of LMI families and communities. In 2009, the Kansas City Fed, which serves a seven-state region including Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming, conducted a districtwide assessment of nonprofit organizations. Findings revealed common concerns among 89 organizations that serve District constituents, which include the ability to:

- nurture strong and sustainable executive leadership;
- create long-term viability to serve clients;
- build and maintain committed boards; and,
- increase staff knowledge.

Organizations also commented that high costs and travel requirements are the primary barriers to accessing capacity training for leadership and staff. In response, the Kansas City Fed partnered with a nonprofit organizational development expert to develop this inclusive executive succession-planning toolkit with strategies, guidelines and templates that can be modified and applied by users.

A strong nonprofit leader is critical to the success of organizations, its ability to continue providing uninterrupted services to the community, and for long term sustainability. Yet the assessment revealed that 68 percent of organizations lack a succession plan to get them through a leadership transition.

Nonprofit organizations are encouraged to adopt this toolkit and use it as a guide for completing the executive succession planning process. An organization that is prepared for the departure of an executive is better positioned for future success and its ability to provide ongoing services to LMI families and communities.

# Table of Contents

2	Foreword
4	Toolkit Introduction
5	Executive Succession Planning Defined
6	Succession Planning Roles
7	Succession Planning Readiness Questions
8	Case Study: Why Succession Planning?
9	Emergency Succession Planning
10	Steps to Address Emergency Succession With No Formal Plan
11	Departure-Defined Succession Planning
12	Strategic Leader Development Planning
15	Barriers to Successful Succession Planning and Implementation
17	Before You Start Succession Planning
18	Next Steps
19	List of Additional Resources
20	About the Author/About the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
21	Succession Planning Templates
22	Emergency Succession Planning Timeline
23	Emergency Succession Planning Template
28	Departure-Defined Succession Planning Timeline
29	Departure-Defined Succession Planning Template
35	Executive Self Reflection Questions
36	Executive Sample Job Description
38	Important Competencies
40	Board Membership Matrix

## Toolkit Introduction



Executive succession planning is a critical step for nonprofit organizations. The statistics related to executive departures are startling, with an estimated 65 to 70 percent planning to retire in the next five years.

*A national study conducted in 2006 by CompassPoint and the Meyer Foundation identified that between 60 and 75 percent of nonprofit executive directors plan to leave their positions in the next five years. Furthermore, 10 to 15 percent of nonprofits hire a new executive every year.*

The departure of an executive leader almost always has an effect on the organization. However, organizations that have not planned for a departure often face additional difficulties and challenges to their sustainability that could be averted if the board had undertaken succession planning prior to the departure. Boards, executives and staff play a key role in succession planning and should schedule time to discuss and plan for executive leader departures.

This toolkit is a resource for nonprofit board of directors and executive leaders. It provides tools to effectively implement succession planning and overcome barriers.

This resource is intended for organizations who have no plan in place as well as those that wish to update their current succession plans. The tools may be applied differently between organizations based on the board and executive's expertise, talent, resources and strategic plans.

The toolkit includes an outline of key planning roles, readiness questions, overview of the succession-planning process, and templates for succession plans and complementary documents that organizations may tailor to fit their specific needs. The toolkit contains numerous links that easily direct users to related and pertinent templates and sections.

# Executive Succession Planning Defined



Executive succession planning is a structured process to ensure leadership continuity in key positions and to retain and develop knowledge capital and relationships for the future. The process ranges *from*-identify and develop specific candidates to fill the executive position, *to*-develop a talent pool with capacity to be effective leaders in any number of key positions in an organization, including board and staff.

Succession planning can take on different forms and be completed for various situations. Three scenarios, in particular, are recommended for all organizations, and are defined in this toolkit:

- *Emergency Succession Planning* – A process that is in place in the event the executive suddenly departs – either permanently or for an extended period of time (i.e., longer than three months).
- *Departure-Defined Succession Planning* – A process that is in place for a future planned retirement or permanent departure of the executive.
- *Strategic Leader Development* – A process that promotes ongoing leadership development for talent within the organization.

---

## Chief Executive Succession Planning....

*Is not only about determining your organization's next leader, it is a continuous process that assesses organizational needs, and creates a climate for an executive to succeed. An effective succession plan is linked to the organization's strategic plan, mission and vision...*

— NANCY R. AXELROD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE SUCCESSION PLANNING: THE BOARD'S ROLE IN SECURING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S FUTURE

---

Effective succession planning increases the likelihood that a non-profit will have the strong leadership required to increase an organization's service capacity, program effectiveness, and long-term stability and sustainability.

# Succession Planning Roles

An effective succession-planning process requires collaboration between board members, the incumbent executive and key staff members. The planning should be completed and a plan adopted in advance of any departures. This will help create a strong foundation and conditions for a successful executive leadership transition. Furthermore, success depends on defined responsibilities among board, the executive and staff. Properly outlining responsibilities and communicating them prior to the planning process will help alleviate concerns among those involved.

## *Board Members*

- Secure the organization's future by clarifying direction and ensuring strong leadership. A succession plan promotes the availability of a strong executive when needed.
- Understand the complexity and responsibilities of the executive role. Select, support and evaluate the executive on a regular basis.
- Leverage board contacts and expertise, especially during periods of leadership transition.
- Play a lead role in working with the executive to develop and approve succession plans for various scenarios.
- Appoint a board committee to address transitional issues in the unexpected departure of the executive.

## *Executive*

- Provide a process for regularly reviewing and stretching the board's effectiveness.
- Ensure legacy and succession occur. Draft an emergency succession plan and submit to the board for approval.
- Implement process to develop key staff members and promote a culture that encourages professional development.
- Work with the board chair to schedule board meetings dedicated to the succession-planning process.
- Evaluate their role in the organization, promote and encourage the executive succession-planning process.
- Implement, upon board approval, and communicate the succession plan with affected staff.

## *Key Staff*

- Support successful transition of new executive and provide program and organizational information as requested.
- Continue to provide services to clients in absence of executive and during transition.
- Ensure they are aware of the defined internal and external communication plan so they can address public inquiries.

## Succession-Planning Readiness Questions



A nonprofit organization's board of directors is responsible for overseeing the transition of an executive leader and ensuring that the organization is well positioned to successfully continue its operations during a change in leadership. Poorly managed executive transitions can reduce organizational sustainability and program effectiveness. In worst case situations, poor transitions also can put an organization out of business. The following questions should act as the first step in measuring your organization's readiness for succession planning.

1. Is your organization in a position to implement a succession plan that was previously adopted and approved?
2. If your executive is suddenly unable to serve, or retires, have you identified candidates for the job?
  - If the answer is yes, is that talent prepared? Do they have the required leadership style, financial knowledge, contacts and necessary experience to take charge of the organization and continue to provide clients and funders with uninterrupted services?
3. Would your organization be able to sustain a decline in income or fundraising activities without the executive? Is the executive the primary fundraiser? Do board and staff work with the executive to maintain relationships with funders?
4. Do funders trust that the organization can succeed without the current executive?
5. Does the board have the right mix of talent to effectively hire a new executive for your organization? How committed and supportive is the board to the success of the executive?
6. Will the organization lose institutional knowledge and contacts if your executive were to suddenly leave?
7. Is the executive's current level of responsibility realistic, or has the executive, in good faith, taken on too much responsibility at the expense of staff development? What skills need to be replicated in the new executive versus those that could be developed among staff or board members?
8. Does your current executive understand and possess skills and expertise necessary to lead your organization in today's resource constrained-world?
9. Are there other positions besides the executive that would leave the organization vulnerable should they depart? If so, what plans are in place to address their departure?

## Case Study: Why Succession Planning?

There are many examples of organizations that experienced a departure and unsuccessful transition of an executive leader. To further aid organizations in understanding the importance of succession planning and preparing them to undertake the process, the following case study should be reviewed and discussed by the current executive, board of directors and key staff.

### *Case Study*

Two days before the call, I had assumed the role of board president of a highly successful nonprofit organization. As a board member for four years, I felt the agency was positioned well for a successful year. The nonprofit had numerous strengths that positioned it for continued success, including: A senior executive with more than 20 years experience who had a great reputation in the community; highly satisfied clients; experienced and high-performing staff; diverse board membership with experience; a solid financial position with dedicated funders; and, a recently approved three-year strategic plan. The organization's strategic plan called for the immediate launching of an approved capital campaign for a new facility to expand their services.

The call I received was from the senior executive submitting her resignation. She had accepted an offer with another organization. She felt confident that she was leaving the agency in a good position and that it could continue operations without any problems. I was very disappointed to see her leave but wished her the best.

I called a board meeting to make the announcement and discuss our next steps. What I anticipated being a relatively simple process turned out to be anything but simple.

The organization recently had updated and approved various human resources policies and procedures, but an executive

succession plan had not been drafted or approved. The lack of preparation generated many questions that the board and I had to consider:

1. Do we fill the senior executive position from the outside or promote from within—i.e., the “unofficial successor” who has worked alongside the executive during the past several years?
2. What are we really looking for in a new executive? Should we consider new requirements from those possessed by the departing leader?
3. How do we address concerns by the current leadership staff who may be nervous about a new executive joining the organization?
4. How long should we plan for the process to take?
5. What do we do in the interim? Do we need an acting executive? If so, what does that look like in terms of compensation, authority and decision-making responsibilities?
6. Who will serve as the organization's main contact?
7. What action do we need to take to ensure that current funders do not get nervous about the executive's departure?

These and many more questions had to be answered and agreed upon while still ensuring the organization continued its day-to-day operations. Over the next several months, there were many long discussions, meetings and conversations with the staff and phone calls/personal visits with funders as I and the succession planning committee worked to manage the emotion and differing agendas of key stakeholders.

Eventually a new executive was successfully appointed. However, this experience taught me that an organization should not have to spend this amount of time and effort in replacing their executive. It is preferable for boards and staff to spend time developing and approving an executive succession plan that they can implement should a departure occur.



# Emergency Succession Planning



Emergency succession planning is a process that is implemented in the event the executive suddenly departs—either permanently or for an extended period of time (i.e., longer than three months). It is a good idea to also have emergency succession plans in place for other senior and staff within the organization.

In many organizations the executive, with input from key board and staff members, drafts the emergency succession plan and presents it to the board for discussion and approval. Completing the plan prior to an emergency departure reduces the emotional component involved in the transition and promotes candid input from the executive and board.

The emergency succession-planning process provides organizations and executives with a unique opportunity to examine the current leadership structure and job responsibilities. Many organizations do not complete evaluations on a regular basis so they are often not fully informed of all key responsibilities placed on the executive and other senior staff. By evaluating current job duties and reporting structures, the executive and board can better plan and prepare an emergency succession plan.

It is also a good opportunity to outline and examine the organization's communication plan with funders and stakeholders. Ensuring that relationships are cultivated by key staff and board members and not solely the responsibility of the executive can help create a smoother transition and uninterrupted services in the event of an unexpected departure.

An outside succession-planning consultant is sometimes used to facilitate the planning process and meetings necessary to complete this plan and to ensure appropriate customization. A primary objective is for the board and executive to collaborate and approve this plan prior to an emergency leadership situation occurring. The *Emergency Succession Plan* template provides a step-by-step planning guide for executives and boards to complete the process. Modifications should be made to reflect the organization's unique situation, size, structure and current resources.

## Steps to Address Emergency Succession with No Formal Plan



Should the organization unexpectedly (with no plan in place) be faced with the need to immediately replace the senior executive, the following steps are recommended:

1. The board's executive committee convenes to address the following and make a recommendation to the board:
  - a. *Identify the key spokesperson* for the organization until the new executive is hired.
  - b. *Draft communication plan*, refer to step three of the *Emergency Succession Plan*.
  - c. *Agree on process to hire new executive*. Decide whether or not to conduct an outside search or promote from within without considering external candidates. The recommendation should be to conduct an outside search, unless an internal successor has been identified and previously approved by the board. An external search or previous identification of an internal successor demonstrates the board's commitment to find a qualified replacement and facilitates a smooth transition for the new executive. Expectations of potential internal successors and candidates should be managed in order to avoid turnover during the hiring process.
  - d. *Identify interim executive and recommend additional temporary compensation*. In a small organization this could be a board member or qualified volunteer.
  - e. *Define the interim executive's responsibilities, authority and decision making limitations*. Also define any additional functions that should be handled by a second manager (e.g., director of clinical programs could also be the contact for healthcare funders.)
- f. *Identify board support and supervision of the interim executive*. Determine who will be the primary contact for support and supervision. Schedule regular meetings to discuss organizational issues. The board chair is often the primary point of contact for the executive.
- g. *Identify executive search task force committee* to facilitate the hiring process and present final candidate(s) to the board for approval. In smaller organizations this may be the executive committee along with one or two select staff members.
2. Executive search task force committee facilitates the recruiting and hiring process by completing the following steps:
  - a. *Update the executive job description* to ensure the right person is identified to lead the organization into the future. Refer to *step one of the Emergency Succession Plan*.
  - b. *Outline and implement process to recruit and select new executive*. This will include identifying candidate sources, selection criteria, interview steps and team, reference/background checks, compensation range, hiring package, communication of new executive and transition plan. Agencies should leverage board and volunteer expertise when possible.

## Departure–Defined Succession Planning

Departure-defined succession planning is a process that is in place for a future planned retirement or permanent exit of the executive. Planning under these circumstances allows an organization to position itself for sustainability and continued success upon the executive's departure and includes input from the current executive. However, this can also be a difficult situation when retiring executives, particularly founders, find they are not ready to turn over the reins to their successor and continue to influence decisions after they depart.

2. How committed and supportive is the board to a new successor? Is the board open to new ideas from the successor and are they willing to explore new alternatives?
3. Has the departing executive fully addressed personal and professional barriers in a manner that allows them to embrace the departure and fully support the transition?
4. Has the successor been prepared to assume the executive role or has the successor been more of an administrative support for the outgoing executive? Has the successor developed credibility and trust with key stakeholders, including funders and staff?

---

*“The departing executive’s final two leadership tasks are ‘leadership of letting go’ and ‘leadership of preparing the way.’”*

— EMILY REDINGTON AND DONN VICKERS, FOLLOWING THE LEADER: A GUIDE FOR PLANNING FOUNDING DIRECTOR TRANSITIONS

---

The departing executive's willingness to support the succession-planning process and their ability to deal with personal issues will impact the success of the transition by making it extremely painful and messy or smooth and successful. The transition can be more challenging when an organization founder is planning to depart.

There are numerous key challenges that differentiate the departure-defined succession-planning process from the emergency and strategic leadership succession-planning process. In order to prepare for a successful departure-defined succession-planning process the following questions should be considered:

1. Is the organization ready for a change in leadership style, if required, to ensure sustainability, capacity effectiveness and achievement of the strategic plan?

The success of a transition may be unintentionally sabotaged if the answer to any of these questions is no. In a high percentage of founder transitions the succeeding executive does not last longer than one year. In some instances, agencies plan for this challenging period by hiring an interim executive for a short period of time until the organization can move beyond the current culture and way of thinking and is ready to embrace a new executive.

The *Departure-Defined Succession Plan* template provides a step-by-step planning guide to be used by board and the current executive in the planning process. Modifications should be made to reflect the organization's unique situation, size, structure and resources.

## Strategic Leader Development Planning



The strategic leader development succession management process is a proactive approach to ensure ongoing leadership talent is available, in key roles, at various levels, when needed to drive organizational sustainability. It creates a culture that promotes ongoing leadership development for talent within the agency.

Another way to look at this is creating a “capacity-building plan” to be ready should a vacancy occur. Developed internal talent helps ensure continuous execution of necessary operational, programmatic and administrative responsibilities that promote sustainability. This also helps create a positive culture of development, which is a proven tool in retaining and attracting talent. This is particularly important for organizations with large staffs. The following elements should be in place to optimize the strategic leadership development process:

The leadership talent development requirements should be reviewed and updated when there is a major strategic directional shift and minimally during the strategic planning process. Refer to the *Emergency Succession Plan* template for examples of how to translate the strategic plan into leadership requirements.

2. *The board conducts an annual executive performance evaluation including, rating performance against strategic objectives.*

Boards play a critical role in nurturing strong and sustainable leadership along with oversight of the executive. A responsibility of the board is to implement and conduct a performance feedback and evaluation process. This should be completed on a regular basis regardless of the executive’s high performance. A structured process creates opportunities to address any performance issues in a timely manner and not only when there are concerns.

---

*“The old adage ‘People are your most important asset’ is wrong.*

*People are not your most important asset. The right people are.  
Good to great depends on having the right people on the right bus at the right time.”*

—JIM COLLINS, GOOD TO GREAT

1. *Create and approve a three-year strategic plan that includes objectives for leadership talent development.* The strategic plan should include a definition of the leadership requirements necessary to lead and achieve organizational goals. These also can apply to board, key staff and fundraising leaders. An emerging critical leadership skill is the ability to keep the organization’s business model current and effective.

3. *The board conducts an annual self-assessment to measure performance of major governance responsibilities.* Committed boards play a key role in the success of the executive and the organization’s sustainability. The board should periodically assess its effectiveness and commitment to supporting the organization and leadership.

*Continued on next page*

## Strategic Leader Development Planning *Continued*

- a. The executive, working with the board chair, should ensure that a board self-assessment occurs.
  - b. The board should assess its ability to understand the organization's mission and purpose; provide sound financial oversight; ensure legal compliance with federal, state and local regulations; understand the organization's programs and methods to measure success; and, ability to provide feedback to the executive.
4. *The executive and senior management conduct annual evaluations of staff to ensure they are performing in their positions and have the necessary skills needed for success.* All staff should be provided periodic feedback and have formal development plans that promote professional and personal growth.
- a. The senior executive should identify direct reports and staff who have the potential to assume additional leadership responsibilities. The organization's limited development resources should be focused on key staff. These resources can include board member mentoring or job shadowing. One method is to link the development plans to strategic initiatives so that the organization can benefit from high-performance staff. This helps build an internal supply of leadership talent.
  - b. A fundamental development need for many staff is the understanding of how to measure program effectiveness, by focusing more on impact and outcomes versus the number of activities conducted and other outputs.
5. *Develop the organization senior management into a high-performing team.* The executive should promote the leadership team's ability to work together. If possible, the executive should conduct an effectiveness assessment and then work with the group to identify improvement strategies. The assessment should explore what is working well and how your peer group can work better to achieve objectives. Components of a high-performing team include:
- a. Clear goals understood by all.
  - b. Trusting and respectful working relationships.
  - c. Information is communicated across the organization.
  - d. Conflict is regarded as helpful and focused on problems not people.
  - e. Decision making is effective and promotes a climate that is conducive to involving people.
6. *Staff, board members and the executive cultivate relationships with external stakeholders.* It is important that there be more than a single relationship with external stakeholders. An organization is in a vulnerable position when critical external relationships are maintained by only the executive or business development manager. Identify external relationships and target internal staff to create contacts as a way to promote continuous exchange and trust in the event of a departure. In a very small organization the board or long-term volunteer(s) can be responsible for this.
7. *Create financial reserves to cover a minimum of six months' worth of operating capital.* All leadership talent needs to understand the funding sources and how they impact the financial stability of the organization. This should be a developmental objective for all leadership to ensure adequate funding knowledge and ability to maximize funding resources.

*Continued on next page*

## Strategic Leader Development Planning *Continued*

8. *Develop awareness of financial management systems that meet industry standards.* Conduct regular financial system audits to ensure the organization meets industry standards and use this as a developmental opportunity for staff. Knowledge of the financial management system should be a core competency of top leadership and high-performing staff who are being developed for future opportunities.
  
9. *Develop operational manuals for administrative systems and ensure they are accessible and current.* This step helps to minimize confusion during staff transitions. Key activities should be documented and a backup person identified to carry on duties in case of an emergency or unexpected departure. This is a common goal but often not completed due to time and limited resources; however, organizations should consider using a volunteer or borrowing from another organization that has completed the process. Examples of key manuals include records retention policy, information technology and computer usage policy, volunteer recruitment process, performance management process, recruiting process, code of conduct, whistle blower policy and fund raising process.

## Barriers *to* Successful Succession Planning *and* Implementation



Below are additional common barriers to, and recommendations for, successful implementation of a succession plan in a nonprofit organization.

- 1. Lack of time to dedicate to a planning process.* Recommendation: Schedule time to develop and approve a succession plan. The executive and/or executive committee should schedule two meetings specifically to draft a succession plan. Then the complete board should schedule one to two meetings to discuss and approve the succession plan.
- 2. The board understands neither the implications of not having a succession plan nor the potential of going out of business without a competent leader.* Recommendation: The board president and executive committee (or ideally the complete board) should read and discuss their answers to the case study in *Why Succession Planning?* The outcome of that discussion will most likely be to schedule time to develop and approve an emergency succession plan.
- 3. The executive may be apprehensive about starting a process in which they could be easily replaced.* Recommendation: Ensure that the executive receives ongoing performance feedback as well as defined development objectives (*refer to Strategic Leader Development step number two*). This increases their sense of feeling valued and secure. Include them in the discussion about *Why Succession Planning?*, to help them see the critical importance of developing at minimum an emergency succession plan.
- 4. Concern that identifying internal successors may alienate staff not selected who could become unhappy and leave.* Recommendation: Similar to the executive, make sure staff receive ongoing performance feedback and opportunities for development so they feel valued. Ensure that the required leadership specifications are clear (*refer to Strategic Leader Development step one*). If possible, link employee development plans to important requirements.
- 5. Weak-to-nonexistent development efforts.* Recommendation: Involve staff and board members in the implementation of the succession development plans. Ensure that the plans are linked to the achievement of strategic and operational objectives. This helps talent easily identify their contribution while focusing on development. For additional items to consider refer, to *Departure Defined Succession step number two* and *Strategic Leader Development steps four and six*.
- 6. Focusing on short-term talent rather than long-term. Placements fill current needs rather than positions that can positively impact the longer-term needs of the organization.* Recommendation: Identify current and future leadership positions and desired/required leadership competencies. Then identify any potential internal candidates who may be able to fill future gaps. Use the gap analysis information for development plans and hiring criteria. Refer to *Strategic Leader Development steps one, three, four and five* for additional information.

*Continued on next page*

## Barriers *to* Successful Succession Planning *and* Implementation *Continued*

7. *The succession plan is not customized to meet the organization's cultural norms.* It is not integrated into the rest of the organization's human resource and business processes (e.g., hiring, development, strategic planning, placement, etc.) Recommendation: Add the succession plan action steps into processes. Include the missing leadership competencies and updated job requirements; review promotional decisions as they relate to the succession plan; and update the performance management and budget processes with feedback and development plans. Ensure the board and staff development plans are integrated into the strategic-planning process.
  
8. *The succession plan is too rigid to meet changing needs.* Recommendation: Keep the plan as simple as possible for maximum flexibility. Verify that the plan is updated at each strategic planning session and, at minimum, review the succession plan every two years so it remains current. Refer to *Strategic Leader Development step one* for further suggestions.
  
9. *There is no follow-through on the plan, no one is accountable for implementation.* Recommendation: The board or executive committee should have a standing quarterly agenda item to review progress against succession plan action steps. The executive should be held accountable for implementation of action steps because this impacts the long-term sustainability of the organization.



## Before You Start Succession Planning



1. *Determine your objective.* Do you have an emergency succession plan in the event you should need one? Are you currently in an emergency situation-your executive is no longer in the senior leadership role? Is there an upcoming need for replacement of the executive? Is the organization's growth creating a need for internal staff to take on leadership roles? Based on the objective(s) you will determine which of the three succession-planning processes to begin with.
2. *Identify any succession-planning/development planning process that already exists in the organization.* Look at what is working well and what isn't. Keep what is working and build on that using this toolkit.
3. *It is recommended that the strategic-planning process include updating the executive's job description each time the plan is completed.* That will reduce time to update the job description and provide development direction for the current executive.
4. *For true commitment the plan should be reviewed and discussed with the entire board and key staff.* If the plan has been approved, then they can better support it publicly when it is implemented.
5. *Keep it simple where possible.*

## Next Steps

If you have a succession plan in place, it is hoped that this toolkit has given you additional actions to consider in assessing the effectiveness of your plan. The key items to incorporate in your planning process are clarity, linkage to strategic direction, executive skills and competencies needed, a process to replace the executive, and defined communication and transition plans. Review your current plan and make the appropriate modifications.

A critical variable in successful succession planning is whether or not there is commitment and support for executing the plan. Implementing an incomplete process with strong commitment is a better start than having a perfect plan but no one using it.

If you do not have a succession plan in place, the goal is that you take the appropriate action and set a goal to have one completed within the next three months.

## Additional Resources



Adams, Tom. "Founder Transitions: Creating Good Endings and New Beginnings." Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005. Subject File: 610.

Axelrod, Nancy R. *Chief Executive Succession Planning: The Board's Role in Securing Your Organization's Future*. Washington, D.C.: BoardSource, 2002. Call Number: 610 AXE CHI.

Bridges, William, *Managing Transitions: Making the most of Change*. Perseus Publishing, 1991.

*Capturing the Power of Leadership Change: Using Executive Transition Management to Strengthen Organizational Capacity*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004. Subject File: 602.

Furry, Deb. "Building Organizational Capacity." *Association Management*, vol. 56 (January 2004): p. 64-8. Subject File: 610.

Lakey, Berit M. *The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps to Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: BoardSource, 2007. Call Number: 610 LAK BOA.

*Look Here! Attracting and Developing the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders*. Pittsburg, PA: Forbes Funds, 2004. Subject File: 633.

Williams, Ken. *Mentoring the Next Generation of Nonprofit Leaders: A Practical Guide for Managers*. Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development, 2005. Subject File: 636.

Wolfred, Tim. *Interim Executive Directors: The Power in the Middle*. San Francisco, CA: Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, 2005. Subject File: 602.

Wolfred, Tim. "Building Leaderful Organizations: Succession Planning for Nonprofits." Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008. Vol 6.

## About the Author

Arlene Alvarez Quick has more than 20 years of experience in the field of talent management with extensive organizational and leadership development, and human resources experience in both for profit and nonprofit organizations. Her focus is on helping organizations achieve missions in changing environments, through increasing employee and organizational capacity and sustainability. Arlene has served on corporate and nonprofit boards and has been directly involved in assisting several nonprofits with their succession-planning efforts—in both emergency and departure-defined succession management situations. She was raised in South America and uses her international and cultural experience to successfully partner with management to respect and leverage differences in the workplace.

## About the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, along with its Branch offices in Denver, Oklahoma City and Omaha, serves the Tenth Federal Reserve District, which covers all or parts of seven states: Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City's Community Development professionals are uniquely positioned to provide financial institutions, nonprofit organizations and others with information and technical assistance on issues related to community and economic development, and access to capital and credit for low- and moderate-income communities. To keep informed about LMI conditions, subscribe to the Kansas City Fed's *LMI Survey*.

To see a full listing of Community Development programs or to subscribe to the latest research, information and activities in the Tenth District, visit us at [www.KansasCityFed.org](http://www.KansasCityFed.org).

### *Senior Vice President and Public Information Officer:*

Diane M. Raley

### *Vice President, Public and Community Affairs:*

Krissy Young

### *Assistant Vice President and Community Affairs Officer:*

Tammy Edwards

### *Senior Economist:*

Kelly Edmiston

### *Community Development Advisors (by Region):*

Ariel Cisneros, Senior Advisor – Colorado,  
New Mexico and Wyoming

Dell Gines, Advisor – Nebraska

Erika Ramirez, Senior Advisor and Toolkit  
Co-Author – Kansas and Missouri

Paul Wenske, Senior Advisor – Kansas and Missouri

Steve Shepelwich, Senior Advisor - Oklahoma



FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of KANSAS CITY



## Succession- Planning Templates



# Emergency Succession- Planning Timeline



Organizations that face the prospect of implementing and completing an emergency succession plan or use succession-planning may feel overwhelmed and may not be clear about where to begin the process, particularly if they are facing an immediate need. The following timeline is recommended to help organizations prepare for the emergency succession-planning process. It should be used to complement and drive the completion of the emergency succession-planning template on the following page.

## *Week 1:*

1. Review and discuss the *succession planning readiness questions*.
2. Review and complete the *Case Study: Why Succession Planning?*
3. Current executive, board chair and selected staff meet to discuss succession-planning process and assign roles and responsibilities.

## *Week 2 – 6:*

1. Update job description and identify the top three to five strategic objectives that fall under the executive's core responsibilities.
2. Select interim executive and recommend additional temporary compensation.
3. Define the interim executive's responsibilities, authority and decision making limitations.
4. Identify required board support and supervision process of the interim executive.
5. Determine backup appointees.
6. Establish development plan for backup appointees.

## *Week 6 – 7:*

1. Identify the key spokesperson for the organization until the new executive is hired.
2. Define internal and external communication plan.

## *Week 8 – 9:*

1. Outline process to recruit and select permanent new executive.
2. Appoint executive search task force committee.
3. Develop transition plan for new executive.

## *Week 10 – 12:*

1. Current executive shares completed succession-planning template with board executive committee.
2. Board executive committee submits completed emergency succession-planning template to complete board for approval.

Note: The planning process can be expedited depending on the organization's immediate needs and meeting frequency.

# Emergency Succession-Planning Template



*Organization Name:*

---

*Purpose:*

The purpose of this emergency succession plan is to ensure continuous coverage of executive duties, critical to the ongoing operations and organization's sustainability, in the event of an emergency departure of the executive.

Ideally the senior executive's input along with board involvement will make this an effective plan to ensure continuity in external relationships and operational effectiveness.

This plan addresses issues related to both permanent (executive will not return) and temporary (executive will return after unplanned absence such as illness, etc.) replacement. Issues specific to temporary absence are denoted in the plan.

*Steps to Develop Emergency Succession Plan:*

1. Update job description to ensure executive responsibilities and hiring requirements promote the organization's sustainability. Matching organizational needs with leadership competencies desired in the next executive is one of the most important features of the executive search phase. This planning process provides a unique opportunity to update the executive requirements and responsibilities.

- a. Attach current executive position description. Position should be updated as needed, preferably during the organization's strategic planning sessions and should consider numerous questions.

- b. What are the top three to five objectives and/or challenges outlined in the strategic plan that fall under the executive's core responsibilities?

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) \_\_\_\_\_

- c. Based on these objectives and/or challenges, is there an impact on the executive's job description?

- (1) Key competencies (e.g., skills—core leadership and management, strategic thinking, board oversight, staff management, agility skills, etc.)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

- (2) Expertise and experience (e.g., fundraising, financial, building new facilities, etc.)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

*Continued on next page*

## Emergency Succession- Planning Template *Continued*

- (3) Required leadership style (e.g., high control or participatory?).
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) Leadership traits not desired (e.g., poor relationship building, poor board management, etc. These are common derailers in nonprofit organizations).
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Define interim executive key responsibilities. The interim executive is a staff or board member who is appointed by the board to fulfill executive duties until the position is filled or until the executive returns, if the vacancy is temporary.
- a. Outline the key interim responsibilities below. Examples of key activities are outlined. You can edit, update or add responsibilities as necessary.
- (1) Serve, with integrity and strength, as the organization's primary leader, representative and spokesperson to the greater community.
  - (2) Support the board of directors, including preparing executive reports and attending board committee meetings.
  - (3) Lead the management team.
  - (4) Participate in the recruitment and selection for directly supervised staff.
  - (5) Manage initiatives related to organizational capacity, sustainability and strategic plan.
    - (a) Maintain accountability for current year operating budget and financial performance.
    - (b) Establish, maintain and cultivate relations with donors, foundations and other stakeholders/volunteers.
    - (c) Execute resource development goals and fund-raising plan.
  - (6) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (7) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (8) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Outline authority and restrictions of appointed interim executive. The person appointed as interim executive shall have the full authority for decision making and independent action outlined above, except for the following which must be approved by the board:
- (1) All financial decisions over (\$X).
  - (2) Termination of staff.
  - (3) Issues that may negatively impact the organization's reputation in community.
  - (4) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Compensation for the interim executive. Interim shall receive a temporary salary increase to the entry level salary of the executive position or up to (X%) above their current salary, whichever is greater.

*Continued on next page*



## Emergency Succession- Planning Template *Continued*

3. Define internal and external communication plan. Communication is a key function of a healthy organization and is integral to the success of a transition. Conversations between staff and board members can significantly impact, negatively or positively, the interim executive and transition's success. It also helps alleviate concerns about the organization's direction and sustainability, particularly with key funders. Donors have a vested interest in the organization's ability to continue to serve its clients and should be kept informed about the transition process.

a. Immediately upon departure, the board should communicate the following internal information:

- (1) Effective departure date (or pending departure date);
- (2) Implementation of the approved succession plan and process to address transition and replacement issues;
- (3) Temporary leadership structure and any changes in key contact points—including appointment of key spokesperson during the transition period.

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) \_\_\_\_\_

(6) \_\_\_\_\_

b. External communication with stakeholders, including but not limited to funders, government contract officers, foundation program officers, civic leaders, major donors, volunteers, past board members and the community at large should be a coordinated process. The interim spokesperson to address external communication during the transition shall be (insert name and job title). A detailed and current key stakeholder contact list is

maintained by (insert name and job title). (Hint: Fund development function often has the best updated contact list.)

4. Process to appoint interim executive. In the event of an unplanned departure or long-term absence of the executive, the board of directors authorizes the executive committee to implement the terms of this emergency succession plan. As quickly as possible the board president shall meet with the executive committee to confirm the procedures outlined in this document and/or to make any modifications the executive committee deems appropriate.

The appointed interim executive will assume responsibilities outlined above in step two. Should the interim assignment be longer than three months or if extenuating circumstances exist, it may be necessary to identify a secondary backup for the interim executive position. This will allow the focus to be on fulfilling the interim responsibilities. The executive committee (or designated approver) may also consider the option of splitting executive duties among the designated appointees.

a. Approved appointee to the position of interim executive  
*(Insert name and job title)*

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Approved appointee as the primary backup for the interim executive: *(Insert name and job title)*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Continued on next page*

## Emergency Succession- Planning Template *Continued*

- c. Approved appointee as the secondary backup for the interim executive (*Insert name and job title*)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Cross-training plan for interim appointees. The executive shall develop and execute a plan for training the three potential appointees in each priority function. The director of Human Resources, executive committee, or \_\_\_\_\_ is responsible for implementing the training plan and ensuring that it is completed.
6. Board oversight and support of interim executive. Establish an information system that enables the board chair to gain access to all critical information pertaining to the organization in an event of an emergency. The board's executive committee will have responsibility for monitoring and supporting the work of the interim executive. Regular meetings should be established with designated board representative(s) and the interim executive to discuss key issues and support needed by the acting director. These meetings will occur every (*insert timeframe*) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Process to select permanent new executive. An outside search will be conducted unless there is a designated internal successor approved by the board within the six months prior to the executive's departure. The board chair shall appoint an executive search task force to identify and recommend candidates to board for approval. The task force should include board and staff members, as appropriate. The interim executive should not be included on the search task force if they are a potential candidate. (NOTE: If board members are assuming additional roles due to their expertise such as coach, recruiter, etc., they need to define when they are operating in board role versus "expert resource" role.)  
Appointed search task force members:  
a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_  
d. \_\_\_\_\_  
e. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Process to transition and assimilate new executive. Within the first two weeks of the executive's employment, the board president and/or designated coach will work with the new executive to develop and implement an initial 90-day plan to ensure the new executive has the resources and information for a successful transition.
9. Approval of Emergency Succession Plan. This succession plan will be approved by the executive committee and presented to the full board of directors for review and approval.

*Continued on next page*

# Emergency Succession- Planning Template *Continued*

Signatures AND copies kept of this document by:

- Board President \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Executive \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Appointees and backup appointees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Human Resources \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Corporate attorney has copy but signature not required.

## Departure-Defined Succession-Planning Timeline

The future planned departure of the current executive may create anxiety and a fear of the future if the process is not properly handled. To help alleviate anxiety and create a shared understanding of the process among all those involved, the following timeline is recommended to help organizations prepare for the departure-defined planning process. It should be used to complement and drive the completion of the departure-defined succession-planning template on the following page.

### *Week 1:*

1. Current executive meets with board chair to discuss their intent for a future departure.

### *Week 2:*

1. Review and discuss the *succession-planning readiness questions*.
2. Review and complete the *Case Study: Why Succession Planning?*
3. Current executive and board executive committee meet to discuss departure-defined succession planning process and assign roles and responsibilities.

### *Week 3:*

1. Current executive reviews and completes the *self-reflection questions*.
2. Address personal and professional barriers for the departing executive.

### *Week 4 - 5:*

1. Identify the top three to five strategic objectives that fall under the executive's core responsibilities.
2. Identify leadership skills desired and leadership traits not desired for new executive.

3. Update job description for successor.

### *Week 6 - 7:*

1. Identify the key spokesperson for the organization until the new executive is hired.
2. Define internal and external communication plan.

### *Week 8 - 9:*

1. Form a succession planning committee and define roles and responsibilities, including departing executive.
2. Develop a timeline for the executive search strategy.

### *Week 10 - 16*

1. Define internal and external communication plan to be used during the recruiting, hiring and transition process.
2. Conduct sustainability audit of the organization and develop strategies to address organizational and leadership vulnerabilities.

### *Week 17 - TBD:*

1. Conduct executive search for the successor.
2. Provide regular updates to the board and staff about the selection and hiring process.
3. Identify successor and officially hire them.

### *Upon Hiring Successor:*

1. Search committee drafts and board implements the successor development and transition plans.
2. Successor is officially placed in executive role and works with the board to implement the 90-day transition period.
3. Board chair works with departing executive to make sure they understand the emeritus role, as agreed upon.

Note: The sequence of steps above is more important than the estimated time frames, which depend on the length of time before the departure and length of the search process.

# Departure-Defined Succession-Planning Template



*Organization Name:*

---

*Purpose:*

The purpose of this departure-defined succession plan is to ensure continuous coverage of executive duties, critical to the ongoing operations and organization's sustainability, when a long-term executive or founder plan a future retirement or departure date. The objective for this process is to share the expertise of the departing executive with the successor while simultaneously preparing the organization, and departing executive, to fully support the successor.

Ideally the departing executive's input, along with involvement from the board and successor, will make this an effective plan to ensure continuity in external relationships and with staff, while promoting an environment of operational effectiveness under new leadership.

*Steps to develop a departure-defined succession plan:*

1. *Address the personal and professional barriers for the departing executive.* The departing executive should review and consider the *self-reflection questions*.
  - a. *Facilitate personal planning for departing executive* by providing *self-reflection questions* and/or access to a life coach.
  - b. *Understand and address founder syndrome, if applicable.* Communicate to the board and staff the potential

challenges associated with the founder's departure. Increasing the key stakeholder's awareness of their role in addressing the challenges in a founder transition is very helpful. William Bridges, in *Managing Transitions*, says that for a group to fully embrace the style and ways of a new leader they must first let go of the old.

- c. *Agree on parameters of the executive's emeritus role.* In collaboration with the founder, the board should identify strategies and boundaries to facilitate a successful transition. If there is an essential need for the outgoing founder to remain directly involved in the organization, then clearly define his/her role in supporting the successor's decision/direction even if different than the founder's. The founder's prior mentor role should change to a resource role.
2. *Update job description to ensure executive responsibilities and hiring requirements promote the organization's sustainability.* Matching organizational needs with leadership competencies desired in the next executive is one of the most important features of the executive search phase. This planning process provides a unique opportunity to update the executive requirements and responsibilities.
  - a. Attach current executive position description. Position should be updated as needed, preferably during the organization's strategic-planning sessions and should consider numerous questions.

*Continued on next page*

## Departure-Defined Succession-Planning Template *Continued*

b. What are the top three to five objectives and/or challenges outlined in the strategic plan that fall under the executive's core responsibilities?

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) \_\_\_\_\_

c. Based on these objectives and/or challenges, is there an impact on the executive's job description?

(1) Key competencies (e.g., skills—core leadership and management, strategic thinking, board oversight, staff management, agility skills, etc.)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Expertise and experience (e.g., fundraising, financial, building new facilities, etc.)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Required leadership style (e.g., high control or participatory?).

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Leadership traits not desired (e.g., poor relationship building, poor board management, etc. These are common derailers in nonprofit organizations).

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. *Form a succession-planning committee with clear roles and accountability.* The committee will be accountable for developing, seeking commitment and implementing the departure-defined succession management plan. The committee will facilitate, manage and obtain board and executive approval of this critical leadership transition. The key difference for this committee from a standard executive search committee is the focus and time commitment to developing the successor and preparing the organization for a successful transition. The committee should consist primarily of board members and a few staff members; community volunteers, funders and other stakeholders can serve as ad hoc resources. The committee will also oversee the following steps:

a. *Determine the executive search strategy.* The committee should decide whether to use an executive recruiter or to conduct the search using board members, staff and other resources, such as social media tools and community contacts.

*Continued on next page*

## Departure-Defined Succession-Planning Template *Continued*

- b. *Update job description.* Matching organizational needs with leadership competencies desired in the next executive is one of the most important features of the executive search phase. This planning process provides a unique opportunity to update the executive requirements and responsibilities. It is critical to distinguish any job differences between the departing executive and the replacement executive and to clearly communicate the rationale for any differences. Refer to *sample job description*.
        - c. *Create and implement the successor development plan.* An effective plan will link the successor's development to key initiatives in the strategic plan, build effective relationships with stakeholders, and ensure an understanding of how the organization achieves its operational objectives and remains financially sustainable. A detailed development plan with stated outcomes can help measure the successor's development and avoid having him or her become the departing executive's aid. The successor will be better prepared to step into the leadership role. A plan left solely to the departing executive's discretion and oversight may inhibit the successor's opportunity to build credible relationships with stakeholders and to understand and address important operational initiatives and challenges.
      - 4. *Define internal and external communication plan.* Conversation is a key function of a healthy organization and is integral to the success of a transition. The communication plan for departure-defined succession planning can span several years as the successor is identified, hired and developed to assume the departing executive's role. It may help alleviate concerns about the organization's future direction and sustainability, particularly when the departing executive is a founder.

        - a. The plan should address communication with stakeholders, including but not limited to staff, funders, government contract officers, foundation program officers, civic leaders, major donors, key volunteers, past board members, and the community at large. The communication should be a coordinated process.
        - b. A well-prepared plan is helpful in a successful transition from a departing long-term executive to a successor. The plan should include: rationale for change, steps to achieve success and commitment to the successor, and a plan for the organization's continued future success. Communicate detailed information about the departure and transition to key stakeholders, including information such as strategic direction of the organization; why the executive is leaving; why the successor was selected; the successor's grooming process; and, how board, staff and other stakeholders are supporting the transition. Implementing a communication plan, which outlines contacts, during the transition helps avoid confusion and promote trust and credibility with the successor.

*Continued on next page*

## Departure-Defined Succession- Planning Template *Continued*

- c. The communication plan should also outline procedures that promote two-way communication. Creating an environment that allows for input from stakeholders, particularly staff, can help identify transition issues, as well as comment on successes. An ideal time to solicit stakeholder input regarding the successor's progress is during the mid-year performance review. Input provides an opportunity for feedback and adjustments to the development plan.
5. *Position the organization for future success by conducting a sustainability audit.* This is an ideal time to assess the organization's alignment with the strategic plan, operating performance, and capacity to meet future client needs to ensure sustainability. Conduct a sustainability audit by completing the following steps:
- a. Gather input electronically or by phone from stakeholders such as the departing executive, board members, key staff, funders and volunteers. Use good survey practices to ensure confidentiality and trust for those who provide data. Soliciting feedback is valuable in determining organization performance and recommending adjustments. Standard questions that may help you gauge your current performance include:
- (1) As you look at the organization's mission what are the organization's greatest strengths and areas for improvement?
  - (2) What major upcoming issues may impact the organization's ability to successfully provide services?
  - (3) What changes might be needed to address those issues?
- b. Additional items to explore during the sustainability audit process will help you gather data about effectiveness, financial position, community engagement and leadership.
- (1) Operational effectiveness of administrative and program functions: How effective are the human resources and financial functions? Are there organization programs/services that are not fully utilized by clients?
  - (2) Resource relationships: Are the key external relationships held by more than one key staff member? How well does the organization collaborate with other agencies in the community?
  - (3) Financial oversight: The organization's finances should be extensively reviewed with a goal to ensure a strong financial position prior to a leadership transition. Does the organization have financial reserves (unrestricted funding, if possible) sufficient to cover at least six months' worth of operating expenses? Has multi-year program funding been secured?
  - (4) Leadership and staff effectiveness: Is there an opportunity to share leadership responsibilities throughout the organization and reduce dependency (and workload) on the executive? Where are the opportunities to develop future leaders?

*Continued on next page*



## Departure-Defined Succession- Planning Template *Continued*

- (5) Board effectiveness: Is the current board role still appropriate for the senior executive that is taking over? Does the board membership need to be modified to better compliment the new executive's skills and competencies? This is particularly critical when a long-term executive is departing and the board was built to reflect their strengths and preferences. Complete the *Board Membership Matrix* to identify the current board composition and determine if changes should be adopted.
- c. Design and implement strategies to address organizational and leadership vulnerabilities. It is important that the sustainability audit results be communicated, developed into an action plan and addressed. Gaining commitment and following through on implementing the plans are critical.
- d. The results from the sustainability audit can also be translated into a desired set of personal and professional competencies that match the organization's core needs. This list can also be used to update the senior executive's job description for their developmental purposes.
6. *Promote successful transition of new executive.* The board president and successor should agree on and implement a transition plan. Although the successor has been working with the organization for a period of time and has completed a development plan, the first 90 days in the new executive role brings challenges. An effective 90-day transition plan includes:
- a. The board's written goals and expectations of the successor for the first 90 days and 12 months.
- b. Participation in a formal orientation program as well as meetings with board members, staff, funders and volunteers.
- c. A structured feedback mechanism with pre-identified key stakeholders to assess progress and potential barriers to a successful transition.

*Continued on next page*

*An organization had completed a thorough sustainability audit and identified a plan of action but never implemented the action plan. Three years later, the founder departed and the "developed" successor took over the leadership reins. The successor failed and was removed. Some of the key issues that contributed to the successor's failure were identified in the audit but never addressed. An example was the reluctance of the founder to focus the organization's efforts on key programs. Instead the organization continued to be "all things to all people" finally resulting in a critical financial shortage that was, in part, blamed on the successor when he tried to narrow the scope of services.*

## Departure-Defined Succession- Planning Template *Continued*

- d. Access to development resources for the new executive, such as reading materials and/or leadership training programs to help them better understand the challenges of leading a prior peer group and succeeding as long-term executive.
- e. Depending on the complexity of the challenges, a transition coach may be retained to facilitate a successful executive transition and help manage obstacles.

7. *Approval of Departure-Defined Succession Plan.* This succession plan will be approved by the executive committee and presented to the full board of directors for review and approval.

Signatures AND copies kept of this document by:

- Board President \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Executive \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Human Resources \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Corporate attorney has copy but signature not required.

## Executive Self-Reflection Questions



When an executive has made the decision to depart, the following questions are important for them to think through. The questions and answers will help the executive understand the scope of change and be better prepared for the ups and downs of this major life transition. A life coach, reading William Bridges' *Managing Transitions* and/or talking with someone who has successfully gone through this process can help promote a successful transition for the departing executive and organization.

### *Professionally*

1. Why do I want to make this move?
2. What are the benefits for me in making this move? For the organization? For the community?
3. What are the downsides for me in making this move? For the organization? For the community?
4. What can I do to address the downsides so they don't become barriers to the organization's future sustainability and success?
5. How do I see my connection with the organization and successor? What do I need? Is it realistic? How can I get it?
6. How can I help the new executive be successful? How can I help the board and other key stakeholders?

### *Personally*

1. What do I plan to do when I leave this executive role at (organization)?
2. How is my identity defined by this role as an executive (and founder) of this organization?
3. How do I envision the next phase of my life? What goals do I have in these areas? What barriers might exist that I need to be prepared for?
  - a. Social \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Relationships \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Use of leisure time \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Health \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Travel \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Living location \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Financially \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. Community involvement \_\_\_\_\_

# Executive Sample Job Description



Updated: \_\_\_\_\_

**Job Title:**

*Senior executive*

**Department:**

*Executive*

**Date:**

*November 2010*

**Reports to:**

*Board President*

## *Job Summary*

The executive is the *leader and chief spokesperson for the organization*. The senior executive reports to and is accountable to the president of the board and the board of directors. The executive's primary responsibilities include strategic planning and implementation of the strategic initiatives through tactical actions. The responsibilities should be carried out in accordance with the directions provided by the board of directors and within established guidelines so that organizational, fundraising, budgetary, community relations and volunteer objectives are achieved.

## *Time Responsibilities*

**20%** Serves as the principal professional resource to the board of directors and key committees, assisting them in matters of policy formulation and interpretation. Communicates regularly and openly with the board. Creates a culture of partnership between board and staff based on genuine trust and respect for each others' contributions of time, talent and resources. Implements the policies established by the board of directors through the administration of the organization and its activities. Participates in board meetings, (i.e., providing input, information and feedback as the organization's liaison).

**20%** Manages the operation of the organization, including staff, programs and physical plant. Directs professional staff by delegating responsibilities as necessary to effectively serve the organization's clients and accomplish its goals. Charged with hiring, evaluating, administering employee benefits, and handling other personnel matters. Develops, establishes and utilizes organizational performance measurement standards; reports results to board and staff; and, makes necessary changes based upon results.

**15%** Provides oversight for the financial affairs of the organization. This includes, but is not limited to, preparation of the budget, statements of financial position, and profit and loss statements. Ensures financial policies and procedures are followed. Serves as primary support to the finance committee. Ensures ongoing financial growth of the organization.

**15%** Leads the development and implementation of strategic plans into tactical actions/activities. Presents balanced score card on quarterly basis to board.

*Continued on next page*

# Executive Sample Job Description *Continued*

- 20%** Oversees development and implementation of fundraising plans to secure adequate funding, including preparing and supervising foundation grants and corporate proposals.
- 10%** Chief spokesperson for the organization. Represents the organization to the community and fosters a good relationship and image among the organization, its clients, and the general and philanthropic community in Kansas City.

### *Internal Contacts - Purpose*

Staff– day-to-day communication  
 Board of Directors– partner, inform and recommend

### *External Contacts - Purpose*

Donors, media, service providers, etc.

### *Leadership*

<i>Title of Immediate Subordinates</i>	<i>Number in Position</i>
Clinical Director	1
Director of Quality & Compliance	1
Director of Business & Operations	1
Director of Development	1
Director of Organization Relations	1

### *Total number of employees supervised:*

Directly:	5
Indirectly:	35

### *Minimum Requirements*

Master’s degree (?) in Public Administration, Social Work Administration or Business. Five to seven years demonstrated successful management and supervisory experience. Knowledge of financial statements, budgeting process and accounting procedures. Experience in strategic planning. Strong organizational and analytical abilities.

---

**Board President’s Signature**

**Date**

---

**Executive’s Signature**

**Date**

*The above information is intended to describe the most important aspects of the job. It is not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and skills required in order to perform the work.*

## Important Competencies



Updated: \_\_\_\_\_

- *Visioning* – Visualizes the organization’s future state (structure, culture, leadership, target markets, etc.) and criteria for long-term, sustained business success.
- *Leading and managing change* – Continuously challenges the status quo and leads the necessary changes. Provides information and gathers feedback about changes that allow others to create organizational agility.
- *Passion for mission* – Demonstrates and communicates passion for the organization’s core purpose; identifies with the organization’s mission and inspires others about the mission.
- *Credibility* – Demonstrates honesty, sincerity, humility and respect for individuals while modeling organizational values. Inspires trust in and from others.
- *Achieves results* – Improves and sustains superior business performance, develops and follows through on priorities, delegates appropriately, holds people accountable, makes financially-sound decisions, optimizes resources and initiates efficient work processes.
- *Intelligence and judgment* – Demonstrates capacity to analyze, synthesize and integrate information to effectively identify and solve problems. Makes informed decisions, and successfully addresses complex organizational challenges.
- *Strategic thinking* – Provides focus and long-term direction for constant stream of organizational and individual action.
- *Inspirational leadership* – Develops commitment in others by setting a personal example, demonstrates enthusiasm, empowers workforce and appeals to what motivates them.
- *Customer focus* – Responds to the needs and expectations of clients and donors. Uses an understanding of client and donor needs as the basis for organizational action.
- *Fundraising* – Provides direction and serves as primary contact for foundations, government and donors.
- *Community development* – Develops strong external loyalty to the mission and values of organization, and brings strong community and civic leader relationships to leverage good will and financial support for organization.
- *Financial development/acumen* – Ensures innovative fund development strategies are developed, cultivated and implemented that provide the necessary financial resources to sustain and grow the organization. Ensures generally accepted accounting principles are continually adhered to and related to all budget and financial matters. Understands and can manage operations within budget constraints.
- *Talent management* – Demonstrates the ability to attract, align, develop and retain the diverse talent pool needed to meet and exceed organizational goals.

*Continued on next page*

## Important Competencies *Continued*

- *Interpersonal savvy* – Builds appropriate rapport and constructive, effective relations both internally and externally. Relates well to people of diverse backgrounds and exhibits genuinely warm and approachable behavior. Listens attentively to understand the needs, intentions and values of others.

# Board Membership Matrix



The purpose is to identify the gap between the desired and current board membership mix. The results can be used in the board recruiting process.

Board Members Name	Board Term Ends	Board Experience	Government Experience	Funding Experience	HR Experience	Leadership Experience	Financial Experience	Capital Campaign Experience	Race	Gender