

Leader Development & Emergency Succession Planning

An Organizational Planning Workbook



A TransitionGuides Product

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Leader Development & Emergency Succession Planning

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[*Worksheets can be reproducible masters]



Organizational Planning Workbook

Focus: Leader Development & Emergency Succession Planning



- Purpose:** This workbook has been designed to assist you in creating a plan to deepen and expand your organization's leadership capacity to:
- ❑ Fulfill the mission and competently serve its customers
 - ❑ Attain current and future goals (programmatic and operational)
 - ❑ Sustain and/or enhance the organization's health and vitality
 - ❑ Retain the institutional memory, culture and values that give life to the organization

Rationale: The concepts and strategies in this workbook are founded in practices to sustain healthy organizations. We believe that healthy organizations within the nonprofit sector will have greater capacity to serve communities, affect constructive change and thrive in the fulfillment of mission if they are able to be intentional in the leadership development and talent management of staff and volunteers, as they are with their programs and finances. Key components for healthy organizations include: clarity of mission, strategic direction, values and behaviors that sustain the "life-blood and passion" of the organization, as well as the leadership, staff, financial and other resources needed to provide services to their communities of interest.

A critical challenge within all organizations is how to sustain health over time. How can the organization continue to effectively and efficiently respond to the growing and changing needs of the communities served --- and stay viable? Depending upon the nonprofit's size, budget, relevance to the communities served, stage of development or life cycle, growing and sustaining organizational health may be difficult. However, with effective leadership, an organization can enhance its capacity and develop through difficult times. The creation of a pipeline of effective leaders and managers can heighten an organization's chances of surviving difficult times and thriving in fulfillment of its mission and goals.

It is our desire to help leaders in organizations be thoughtful and intentional in cultivating greater leadership capacity among staff and the board.

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Understanding the Leader Development & Succession Landscape

In most literature that deals with succession planning and talent management, the models represented are heavily weighted toward for-profit corporate models. The interest in creating and sustaining a pipeline of viable leaders (staff and volunteers) within non-profit organizations is beginning to grow. Admittedly the resources to plan and implement leader development strategies may be difficult among non-profits because of competing demands for limited resources. However, the consequences of NOT developing an appropriate pipeline of staff and board leaders to implement key functions and fulfill critical responsibilities may contribute to the demise of some organizations.

What if ...?

What would happen if the Executive Director leaves through an unplanned and unexpected way (say due to health)? Who within the organization is prepared to step into that role and maintain the relationships with funders, community leaders and other stakeholders? Who in the organization would be prepared to provide appropriate oversight and direction regarding the organization's operations, programs and board liaison responsibilities?

Whether the shift in leadership is unplanned/unexpected or predictable and planned, that transition between leaders can leave an organization in a vulnerable state. Loss of confidence in the organization's ability to fulfill commitments, respond to the needs of programs and the communities served, etc. could significantly hamper an organization's reputation and longer-term viability. The ability to recover (more quickly than not) from the shock of leader transition can be supported by having a plan and implementation strategy to have key functions and responsibilities "covered" by an alternate leader if the primary is unable to fulfill his/her responsibilities.

Henry Kissinger said, "The task of the leader is to get [his/her] people from where they are to where they have not been." It is important for leaders to prepare for leadership transitions before one occurs! Planning, persistence and creating opportunities to cultivate and expand the talent within an organization can happen in small incremental ways as preparation for the day when the transition will occur.

Two Philosophies Regarding Succession Planning

Replacement

Traditionally, many of talent management and succession strategies have been built upon a "**replacement**" philosophy. There is validity to this, especially in a nonprofit context, when you are dealing with unplanned, unexpected changes in leaders. The immediate questions of within the organization will be:

- If the Executive, or a person any other key role, leaves unexpectedly ... who knows how to do that function?
- Who understands what the immediate organization/program needs are – and how to meet those needs/commitments?
- If someone else on staff moves to take on these additional responsibilities, what other parts of the organization may suffer due to lack of, or insufficient, attention?

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Leader Development

An emerging philosophy, to address some of these key questions articulated above, is talent management through “**on-going leader development.**” This philosophy emphasizes the need to attend to staff development and board development activities in order to create and maintain a pipeline of people capable of taking on various leadership responsibilities needed within the organization, on a short or longer-term basis. This includes both strategic and intentional focus on:

- ❑ examining current status of skills, competencies and abilities among staff and volunteers (board)
- ❑ creating a plan that covers the key management/program roles (in emergency cases)
- ❑ creating a plan that develops talent over time to step into leader roles (staff or volunteer) when needed
- ❑ implementing strategies to support these plans

In this emerging philosophy of leader development-succession planning, the strategies used to implement these plans need to be woven into the infrastructure of the organization’s systems, policies and day-to-day practices. Resources to sustain a leader development-succession plan should be appropriate and commensurate with the scale of the organization’s budget realities. Crafting a communication strategy for internal and external stakeholders about the leader development plans will help educate, motivate and enroll support for your plans.

Types of Succession Plans

Type	Characteristics	When & Why
EMERGENCY	A replacement approach that prepares the organization for unexpected transitions. In addition to placing an alternate person in a position, it also requires clarifying the lines of authority within the organization (within the context of this new scenario) and communication to educate key strategy (internal & external) stakeholders and to enroll their support with this change.	When a leader (e.g., CEO, other KEY role, Board Officer) departs unexpectedly, usually due to death or illness). This could be used as a short-term “stop gap” measure to sustain viability for short-term illnesses, or for longer-term use when it will take time to replace the person in that role.
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT	A longer-term investment in leader development that is incorporated into the strategic business planning of the organization. It is a proactive approach that broadens leadership capacity through attention to cross-training, and the professional development of staff and board leaders.	An investment in leader development over time that is designed to create and maintain breadth and depth of leadership capacity for important staff roles and for the leadership of the board.
DEPARTURE-DEFINED	An approach often preferred by founders and long-tenured executives where the executive might initiate changes that are preparing for succession privately, and then engage the Board and staff in a more public succession planning process. This may occur 1.5 to 3 years before the executive’s anticipated departure.	This could be a hybrid of the emergency and/or strategic development succession plans. This is used in short- or long-term replacement for planned departures of people in key roles.

Leader development, and succession plans, should be aligned with – and support
- the mission, vision and direction of the organization.



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COMMUNICATE STRATEGICALLY ABOUT YOUR LEADER DEVELOPMENT & SUCCESSION PLANS!

“Communication creates meaning for people. It’s the only way any group, small or large, can be come aligned behind the overarching goals of an organization.”

Warren Bennis, Burt Nanus

Strategic Communications are employed to enlist the aid and support of groups and individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by your mission, plan or project.

How does strategic communication differ from the usual communication in organizations?

Communication as usual often involves the following characteristics:	Strategic Communication:
WHAT General announcements to broad audiences, or parts of the organization Words as primary means of communication Information is often sent out	WHAT Specific messages to specific groups Words, actions and processes are used to communicate Changing attitudes and behaviors, enlisting support
WHO Top management (of the organization, division or project)	WHO Various messengers throughout organization, or among team members
WHEN Occasional	WHEN Continuous (proactive rather than reactive communication pattern)
HOW Established vehicles, one-way, formal communication	HOW New vehicles, creative formats One-way and two-way communication Formal and informal forums

Fundamental Principles

The fundamental principles in communicating strategically involve three things:

- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Telling the truth
- ✓ Helping people to understand your message/concern

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Fundamental Principles of Strategic Communication (continued)

- ✓ **Listen:** Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

Try to understand...

- What are the issues or concerns in the organization?
- How will the plan, or change, impact the organization and other key stakeholders?
- How can the organization (board/staff) do better (internally and externally) in moving forward?

- ✓ **Tell the truth:** Sometimes there will be good news and bad news. Share it. Help formulate good, informed decisions by communicating needed information.

- Identify key reasons for the plan, or the change in strategy.
- Be clear about what support is needed, when and how that support is to be given.
- Explain why there is need for a change; what the change means to the success of the plan, or those who will be affected by it.

- ✓ **Help people to understand your message/concern:**

- Employ the **3 R's** for Results ... **R**elevance, **R**esponsiveness and **R**einforcement.

Relevance:

- Statements are clearly tied to the objectives of the plan or initiative.
- Messages are short, memorable, and energizing to target groups.

Responsiveness:

- Listen to what folks are saying and follow-up.
- Recognize and address concerns and issues.
- Reward successes.

Reinforcement:

- Reiterate the message. (The best form of advertising is repetition; don't be afraid to remind people of your mission, your achievements, and your need for their support.)
- Be consistent with words and actions. (Walk your talk! Do what you promise!)
- Use a range of media or forums to communicate your message. (Face to face communication is especially effective.)

Worksheets to Guide the Development of Your Emergency Succession Plan For the Executive

[Worksheets can be removed and reproduced for ease of use.]



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[Sample Template for Emergency Succession Plan](#) [Based upon model developed by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services]

EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLAN (Agency Name)

Procedure for the Appointment of an Acting Executive Director in the Event of an Unplanned Absence of the Executive Director

<p>1. Rationale</p> <p>2. Priority functions of the Executive Director position at (Agency Name)</p> <p>The full Executive Director position description is attached.</p> <p>Among the duties listed in the position description, the following are the key functions of the Executive Director to be covered by an acting director: <i>(list)</i></p> <p>3. Succession plan in event of a temporary, unplanned absence -- SHORT-TERM</p> <p>a. Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A temporary absence is one in which it is expected that the Executive Director will return to his/her position once the events precipitating the absence are resolved.- An unplanned absence is one that arises unexpectedly, in contrast to a planned leave, such as a vacation or a sabbatical.- A short-term absence is 3 months or less. <p>b. Who may appoint the Acting Executive Director</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Board of Directors authorizes the Executive Committee to implement the terms of this emergency plan in the event of the unplanned absence of the Executive Director.- In the event of an unplanned absence of the Executive Director, the Deputy Director shall immediately inform the Chair of the Executive Committee of the absence.- As soon as is feasible, the Chair shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee to affirm the procedures prescribed in this plan or to make modifications the Committee deems appropriate. <p>c. Standing appointee to the position of Acting Executive Director is _____.</p>	<p>d. First and second back-ups for the position of Acting Executive Director</p> <p>Should the Deputy Director be unable to as Acting Executive Director, the first back-up appointee will be the Program Director. The second back-up appointee will be Chief Financial Officer.</p> <p>In the event the standing appointee, the Deputy Director, is new to the deputy position and fairly inexperienced with (Agency Name), the Executive Committee may decide to appoint one of the back-up appointees to the acting executive position. The Executive Committee may also consider the option of splitting executive duties among the designated appointees.</p> <p>e. Cross-training plan for appointees</p> <p>The Executive Director, with assistance from the Deputy Director, shall develop a plan for training the three potential appointees in each the priority functions of the Executive Director which are listed above (section 2). The training plan will be attached to this document when the plan is completed. The director of human resources shall have the responsibility of handling the logistics of the plan's implementation.</p> <p>f. Authority and restrictions of the appointee</p> <p>The person appointed as Acting Executive Director shall have the full authority for decision-making and independent action as the regular Executive Director.</p> <p>g. Compensation</p> <p>The Acting Executive Director shall receive a temporary salary increase to the entry-level salary of the executive director position or to 5% above his/her current salary, whichever is greater.</p>
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Succession plan in event of a *temporary, unplanned absence* -- **SHORT-TERM** (continued)

h. Board committee responsible for oversight and support to the Acting Executive Director

As with an Executive Director, the Executive Committee of the Board will have responsibility for monitoring the work of the Acting Executive Director. The Executive Committee will also be alert to the special support needs that of the executive in this temporary leadership role.

i. Communications plan

As soon as possible after the Acting Executive Director has begun covering an unplanned absence, Board members and the Acting ED shall communicate the temporary leadership structure to the following key supporters external to (**Agency Name**):

- Government contract officers
 \
- Foundation program officers
 \
- Civic leaders
 \
- Major donors
 \

Others: (specify)

4. Succession plan in event of a *temporary, unplanned absence* -- **LONG-TERM**.

a. Definition

- A long term absence is one that is expected to last more than 3 months

b. Procedures

- The procedures and conditions to be followed shall be the same as for a short-term absence with one addition:
 - The Executive Committee will give immediate consideration, in consultation with the Acting Executive Director, to temporarily back-filling the management position left vacant by the Acting Executive Director. This is in recognition of the fact that, for a term of more than 3 months, it may not be reasonable to expect the Acting Executive Director to carry the duties of both positions. The position description of a temporary manager would focus on covering the priority areas in which the Acting Executive Director needs assistance

5. Succession plan in event of a **PERMANENT** unplanned absence.

a. Definition

- A permanent absence is one in which it is firmly determined that the Executive Director will not be returning to the position.

b. Procedures

- The procedures and conditions shall be the same as for a long-term temporary absence with one addition:
 - The Board of Directors shall appoint a Transition and Search Committee to plan and carry out a transition to a new permanent executive director.

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Emergency Succession Plan Template (continued)

6. Approvals and maintenance of record

a. Succession plan approval

- This succession plan will be approved by the Executive Committee and forwarded to the full Board of Directors for its vote and approval.

b. Signatories

- The Board President, the Executive Director, the human resources administrator shall sign this plan, and the appointees designated in this plan.

c. Maintenance of record

- Copies of this plan shall be maintained by the Board President, the Executive Director, the Deputy Director, the two back-up appointees, the human resources department, and the **(Agency Name)** corporate attorney.

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of CEO due to unplanned absence

Focus: Potential Changes in Organizational Structure & Staffing Patterns

Task: Draw the organizational charts reflecting staffing positions & lines of authority/reporting throughout the organization. Construct one chart that reflects the current staffing patterns & then how that structure will change within the context of an emergency/unplanned absence of the Executive.

Organizational Structure: NOW

Org. Structure for Emergency Coverage

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of CEO due to unplanned absence

[Sample]

Focus: Job Task Analysis for CEO – Clarifying Key Functions & Responsibilities of the Executive

Task: Describe the key functions and responsibilities of the Executive in order to identify which staff member(s) might fulfill these responsibilities in an emergency – for a short period of time; a longer term and/or through a permanent unplanned absence of CEO.

Key Functions of CEO [Sample]		Potential Emergency Staffing	
<p>Among the duties listed in the position description, the following are the key functions of the Executive Director to be covered by an acting director: [sample listing]</p> <p>a. Serve as the organization's principal leader, representative, and spokesperson to the greater community</p> <p>b. Support the Board of Directors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure integrity and strength of Board leadership and address issues around clarity of role, governance, bylaws/policies, corporate structure, and membership ▪ Assist with recruitment and orientation of new Board members ▪ Prepare Executive reports to Board of Directors and Executive Committee and attend various Committee meetings <p>c. Convene and lead the Management Team</p> <p>d. Participate in recruitment, interview, selection and evaluation process for directly supervised staff and other key executive level positions</p>	<p>e. Strategize organizations' short-range and long-range program and project goals, particularly in Organizing and Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify overall resource development goals and fund raising plan ▪ Establish, maintain and cultivate relations ▪ With donors, foundations and other resources to support organizational programs and activities ▪ Maintain accountability for current year operating budget and for financial performance of portfolio 	<p>Coverage Strategies</p>	<p>Issues/Concerns To Discuss</p>

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Critical Relationships to Sustain During unplanned absence of CEO		Coverage Strategies	Issues/Concerns To Discuss
Government contract officers	Others:		
Foundation program officers			
Civic leaders			
Major donors			

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of CEO due to unplanned absence

Focus: Job Task Analysis for CEO – Clarifying Key Functions & Responsibilities of the Executive

Task: Describe the key functions and responsibilities of the Executive in order to identify which staff member(s) might fulfill these responsibilities in an emergency – for a short period of time; a longer term and/or through a permanent unplanned absence of CEO.

Key Functions of CEO	Potential Emergency Staffing Strategies	Issues/Concerns To Discuss/Resolve

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of CEO due to unplanned absence

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Focus: Job Task Analysis for CEO – Clarifying Key Functions & Responsibilities of the Executive

Task: Describe the key functions and responsibilities of the Executive in order to identify which staff member(s) might fulfill these responsibilities in an emergency – for a short period of time; a longer term and/or through a permanent unplanned absence of CEO.

Key Functions of CEO	Potential Emergency Staffing Strategies	Issues/Concerns To Discuss/Resolve

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Critical Relationships to Sustain During unplanned absence of CEO		Coverage Strategies	Issues/Concerns To Discuss
Government contract officers	Others:		
Foundation program officers			
Civic leaders			
Major donors			

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of CEO due to unplanned absence

Focus: Clarifying definitions & lines of authority & communications strategy

Task: Using the sample Emergency Succession Plan, use the worksheet below to identify and resolve issues related to clarifying the implementation parameters for this plan: definitions, lines of authority, compensation, development of replacement & communication strategy.

Definitions: (time frames)

- **Short-term Absence**

- **Longer-term Absence**

- **Permanent unplanned Absence**

Lines of Authority:

- **Who may appoint the Acting Executive?**

- **Who would be first and second back-ups for the position of Acting Executive?**

- **Define the authority and restrictions of the Acting Executive?**

- **What is the Board's role in oversight and support to the Acting Executive?**

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of CEO due to unplanned absence

Focus: Clarifying definitions, lines of authority & communications strategy (continued)

Administrative Issues:

Approvals & Maintenance of Record

- Succession Plan Approval

- Signatories

- Maintenance of Record

Resource Development Needs & Strategies for Implementing Plan

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: ACTION PLAN for Discussing Emergency Succession Planning with Board & Staff

Focus: Replacement of CEO due to unplanned absence



Task: Based upon the progress made during this conference, develop an action plan for introducing Emergency Succession Planning (and perhaps Leader-Development Succession Planning) when you return to your organization. The action plan should include: education (re: succession issues), refinement of plan outline, and how to get plan adopted and ready for implementation.

Additional Worksheets to Develop Emergency Succession Plans For Other Key Staff Roles

[Worksheets can be removed and reproduced for ease of use.]



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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of Staff Position: _____ due to unplanned absence

Focus: Job Task Analysis– Clarifying Key Functions & Responsibilities

Task: Describe the key functions and responsibilities of this Staff Position in order to identify which staff member(s) might fulfill these responsibilities in an emergency – for a short period of time; a longer term and/or through a permanent unplanned absence

Key Functions of Staff Position: _____	Potential Emergency Staffing Strategies	Issues/Concerns To Discuss/Resolve

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Critical Relationships to Sustain During unplanned absence of _____		Coverage Strategies	Issues/Concerns To Discuss
Government contract officers	Others:		
Civic leaders			
Program Collaborators			
Contractors			

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of Staff Position: _____ due to unplanned absence

Focus: Clarifying definitions, lines of authority & communications strategy

Task: Using the sample Emergency Succession Plan, use the worksheet below to identify and resolve issues related to clarifying the implementation parameters for this plan: definitions, lines of authority, compensation, development of replacement & communication strategy.

Definitions: (time frames)

- **Short-term Absence**

- **Longer-term Absence**

- **Permanent unplanned Absence**

Lines of Authority:

- **Who may appoint the Acting _____?**

- **Who would be first and second back-ups for the position of Acting _____?**

- **Define the authority and restrictions of the Acting _____?**

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EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Goal: Replacement of Staff Position: _____ due to unplanned absence

Focus: Clarifying definitions, lines of authority & communications strategy (continued)

HR Issues:

- **Staff Development/Cross-training Requirements** (short-term / longer-term / permanent unplanned absences)

- **Compensation Strategies** (short-term / longer-term / permanent unplanned absences)

Performance Evaluation Strategy

- **Who will evaluate the Acting _____ Appointee?** (short-term / longer-term / permanent unplanned absences)

