



## TOOL KIT #5

# SUCCESSION PLANNING

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### FAQ – ED SUCCESSION PLANNING

#### 1. What is a Succession Plan (and why do we need one)?

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

An effective succession planning process requires collaboration between Board members, the incumbent Executive Director 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 Director transition. The plan will also help ensure a well-defined search process, and provide needed support for the new Executive Director as she assumes her role.

Emergency Planning is one of the most typical issues for which Regional Parent TA Centers are called to help. Engaging in ongoing succession planning can help you avoid an emergency through preparation.

#### 2. What is a Succession Policy?

The first step in Succession Planning is to have a Board policy on Succession. It does not need to be long and complicated.

Here is an example: “The Board will ensure that there is a competent, capable Executive Director in place to manage the daily operations and implement Board policies, goals, and the strategic plan in furtherance of the organization’s mission”.

#### 3. What are the major considerations in an organization’s Succession Plan?

**Timeline:** Is it an emergency or planned? Ideally, the Board Chair and Executive Director should work together to plan the timeline for succession. This can happen through the annual evaluation process.

- **Needs:** Assess your organization’s needs, including your strategic plan and key partners or collaborators in the assessment. Hiring a new ED is a very important decision, so the better the information you have, the better positioned to get the right person to lead your organization into the future.
- **Position:** Review the current position description and revise it to reflect the characteristics that are the right fit for your organization.
- **Internal Candidates:** Is there an internal candidate for leadership? Can a professional development plan be put into place?
- **The Search:** Will it be conducted by the Board Executive Committee, Personnel Committee, or an ad hoc Search Committee? Who will conduct outreach, review candidates, and coordinate interviews? How will you ensure that diverse candidates are part of your pool? Who will review salary surveys to determine compensation? Will you use a search firm? What budget is available to support this process?



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### 4. How can we execute the plan successfully?

If it isn't already, key information should be organized as part of the ED Succession Plan. This includes: policies, procedures, contracts, grants, reporting deadlines, personnel files and development plans, passwords and account numbers, and other key information needed for the organization to function.

Consider whether you want to plan for EDs to overlap. If so, create a defined time period and reasonable expectations for the departing ED's role in training the incoming ED.

Hiring is not the end of the Board's role. The new ED will need time, training, and support. Especially if s/he is following a respected and long-tenured ED, change can be difficult for staff and Board alike. Create a plan for the new ED to succeed, and understand that it will take months to get to peak performance.

*And, finally, remember to report leadership changes to your OSEP project officer!*

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