



StrengthenND[®]

Emergency Succession/Transition Planning with No Formal Plan

Should an organization unexpectedly (***with no plan in place***) be faced with the need to immediately replace the executive director, the following steps should be followed:

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 director is hired.
 - b. **Draft a communication plan for stakeholders, especially donors and clientele.**
 - c. **Agree on a process to hire a new executive director.** 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 success demonstrates the board's commitment to find a qualified replacement and facilitates a smooth transition for the new executive director. Expectations of potential internal successors and candidates should be managed in order to avoid turnover during the hiring process.
 - d. **Identify interim executive director and recommend additional temporary compensation.** In a small organization, this could be a board member or qualified volunteer.
 - e. **Define the interim executive director's responsibilities, authority, and decision-making limitations.** Also define any additional functions that should be handled by a second employee or board member.
 - f. **Identify board support and supervision of the interim executive director.** 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 director.
 - g. **Identify executive director search 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 director search committee facilitates the recruiting and hiring process by completing the following steps:
 - a. **Update the executive director job description to ensure the right person is identified to lead the organization into the future.**
 - b. **Outline and implement the process to recruit and select new executive director.**
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. Organizations should leverage board and volunteer expertise when possible.