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# Greenlights launches interim executive director program

Austin Business Journal - by [Sandra Zaragoza](#) ABJ Staff

It's the one phone call that nonprofit board members dread.

The inevitable call letting board members know that their nonprofit's CEO or executive director is leaving is happening more and more as baby boomers exit the workforce.

Whether they're leaving for another firm or are simply retiring, the departure of a CEO or executive director can be challenging even for the most stable of nonprofits because of the limited number of qualified candidates.

With that in mind, Greenlights for Nonprofit Success, an Austin-based nonprofit that provides education and services to Central Texas charities, has created a pool of interim directors who can be deployed to a nonprofit practically at a moment's notice. The new pool -- comprising seven interim leaders who together have more than 80 years of nonprofit experience -- is part of a growing clutch of services at Greenlights aimed at assisting nonprofits in executive management transitions.

"We want [boards] to know they don't have to rush to post a job. The transition between leaders is actually a huge opportunity," says Tara Levy, senior consultant with Greenlights.

In addition to running a nonprofit, the interim director will provide the board guidance in hiring a new executive director, says Tara Kirkland, director of consulting services at Greenlights.

Nationally, some nonprofits have opted to hire an interim director on a part-time basis to keep costs down.

At Greenlights, the cost of an interim director varies based on the organization's budget and staff size. But in order to avoid any conflicts of interest, Greenlights will make sure that its interim directors do not plan to apply for the jobs they are holding temporarily.

Fayruz Benyousef, partner at Dini Partners, a nonprofit consulting firm, says interim directors can be a great asset during a transition.

"I think it's great to do, as long as the interim directors are well-trained," says Benyousef. "More than anything, they have to be coached in what it means to be an interim [leader] and how to ... hand it off to the pertinent parties."

Levy says Greenlights has been very selective about its first group of interim directors. The seven professionals chosen to be part of the pool all have extensive nonprofit leadership experience and desirable personality traits, according to Levy and Kirkland.

In addition to being vetted, Greenlights' interim directors go through 12 hours of training that focuses on areas such as risk management, risk mitigation and change management.

Nonprofit veteran Kathy McCarrell, who is part of the new interim director pool, says she was attracted to Greenlights because the model offers her ongoing support as an interim director.

"It really sets up the new executive director to succeed," McCarrell adds.