

Sample Guiding Principles for Emergency Succession

This document describes the procedure for appointing organizational leadership in the event of an unplanned absence of the Executive Director. While the Board acknowledges that such an absence is highly improbably and certainly undesirable, it believes that due diligence in exercising its governance functions requires that the Board have an emergency succession plan available for Executive Committee to use as a starting point. These guidelines present the default option to ensure continuity in external relationships and in staff and organizational functioning. The Board or Executive Committee may choose to deviate from these recommendations, but in the absence of a board vote, these guidelines set forth a process for an emergency.

1. Definitions:

Succession planning may be needed in the following circumstances:

- Short-term temporary unplanned absence. A temporary unplanned absence of the Executive Director that rises unexpectedly and is projected to last for 3 months or less.
- Long-term temporary unplanned absence. A temporary unplanned absence of the Executive Director that rises unexpectedly and is projected to last more than 3 months.
- Permanent unplanned absence. A permanent absence is one in which it is firmly determined that the Executive Director will not be returning to the position.

2. Procedures:

- a. Notification to the Board – In the event of an unplanned absence of the Executive Director, the highest ranking, most senior Director will immediately inform the Chair of the Executive Committee of the absence.
- b. Standing appointee – The Director of DEPARTMENT A, or the position of Associate Director (whichever is operable at the time) specifies that he/she will serve as Acting Executive Director in the absence of the Executive Director.

Should the designated Acting Executive Director be unable to fulfill these responsibilities, the first back-up appointee is the Director of DEPARTMENT B. The second back-up appointee is the Director of DEPARTMENT C.

In the event that the standing appointee is new to the position and fairly inexperienced with ORGANIZATION, the Executive Committee may decide to appoint one of the back-up appointees to the Acting Executive director position.

The Executive Committee may also consider the option of splitting the executive duties among the designated appointees.

- c. Cross-training plan for appointees – The Executive Director will implement a plan for training the three potential appointees in each of the priority functions of the Executive Director. The training plan is updated annually.
- d. Authority and restrictions of the appointee – The Acting Executive Director will have the full authority for decision making and independent action as the regular Executive Director.
- e. Compensation – The Board will increase compensation for the Acting Executive Director. Guidelines are that the Acting Executive Director will 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.
- f. Oversight - As with the Executive Director, the Executive Committee of the Board will have responsibility for monitoring the work of the Acting Executive Director and providing oversight and supervision. The Executive Committee will also be alerted to the special support needs of this person in this temporary leadership role.

If the unplanned absence is projected to last more than 3 months, the Executive Committee should give immediate consideration, in consultation with staff, to temporarily fill the management position left vacant by the acting Executive Director. This is in recognition of that fact that for a term of more than 3 months it may not be reasonable to expect the Acting Executive Director to carry out the duties of both positions. The position description of as temporary manager would focus on covering the priority areas in which the Acting Executive Director needs assistance.

- g. Communications plan – As soon as possible after the Acting Executive Director has begun covering an unplanned absence, Board members and the Acting ED will communicate the temporary leadership structure to the following key supporters external to ORGANIZATION:
 - Advisory Board
 - Foundation program officers

- Civic leaders
 - Major donors
 - Membership
- h. In the event of a permanent unplanned absence, all procedure and conditions will be the same with two additions:
- The Board of Directors should appoint a Transition and Search Committee to plan and carry out a transition to a new permanent executive director and
 - The Executive Committee or the Transition and Search Committee should determine the need and, if necessary, appoint an Interim Executive Director.
- i. Confirmation of the plan - As soon as is feasible, the Chair should convene a meeting of the Executive Committee to affirm the procedures described in this plan or make modifications the Committee deems appropriate.