



## Executive Transition

*Here are some resources as we move forward in identifying, selecting and welcoming a new Executive Director:*

- 1. Steps**
- 2. Timeline**
- 3. Tips**

### **1. STEPS**

#### **Step 1: Take Time for Introspection**

*Use the change as an opportunity to reflect on mission and goals, as well as examine what issues may underlie the recent history of executive transition. Who do we need to lead us now?*

#### **Step 2: Establish a Board-Level Transition Committee**

*Appoint a committee to manage the transition process which may take from 4-18 months, from developing a transition plan, securing interim management, proposing appropriate compensation, advising the Board on needs for consultants or search firms, and managing the process of recruiting, screening and checking applicants through getting a signed contract.*

#### **Step 3: Stabilize Daily Operations and Assess Systems**

*Use this exit as an opportunity to get as much information as possible from the departing executive. If necessary, appoint an Interim Director, assure that all systems are properly maintained during the transition period, and address immediate issues that may arise from a review of organizational activities.*

#### **Step 4: Establish a Transition Management Plan**

*The transition committee prepares a timetable and budget for the search which includes details about recruitment, selection, compensation, and development of materials such as an organizational profile, job description, job posting, interview questions, and reference checks.*

#### **Step 5: Develop an Organizational Overview and Executive Director Profile**

*This overview of organizational activities should include history, mission, activities, size of board, budget and staff, and partnerships to help potential applicants understand the organization.*

#### **Step 6: Survey Stakeholders and Develop an Executive Director Profile**

*The Executive Director profile is more than a job description in that it describes the skills,*

*qualities, talents, experience and education needed to take the organization forward. It should be concise and realistic and be a result of conversations between the board and the transition committee. This profile allows the board and committee to hold a common vision of the priority attributes desired in the successful ED candidate.*

#### **Step 7: Develop a Compensation and Benefits Package**

*Compensation should include salary; health life and disability insurance; a retirement program; vacation and sick leave or PTO; time off and funding for continuing education; and any relocation expenses.*

#### **Step 8: Recruit and Screen Applications**

*Conduct the recruitment and application review process in an orderly, fair manner to get the broadest candidate pool and provide a thorough screening of qualified candidates. You may include screening interviews, finalist interviews with the Board, and interviews with key decision makers or stakeholders if deemed appropriate.*

#### **Step 9: Negotiate Contract**

*The Transition Committee authorizes one person to make an employment offer and negotiate any terms. The agreement must be documented, and the new employee should quickly receive copies of any employment materials or handbooks.*

#### **Step 10: Orientation and welcome**

*A new committee should be appointed to introduce the new ED to the community and to key stakeholders. The Board should work with the new ED to clarify board-chair-executive-staff relations, co-create a realistic work plan with performance measures, introduce the new ED to key stakeholders, and establish and implement an evaluation process.*

## **2. Timeline**

### ***When What Person responsible***

Announcement of change ahead - Person

July Appoint Transition Committee - Person

First meeting of Transition Committee - Chair

ED survey

Compensation plan

Finalize Job description

Circulate, post, recruit

Screen applicants

Initial interviews

Finalist interviews

Reference checks on finalists

Round two finalist interviews

Recommendation to Board

Negotiations - Chair

Announcement GL staff

Exit/transition memo  
Welcome

### **3. Tips**

#### ***...tips on the search process***

- Step 1: Committee/resources/budget
- Step 2: Organizational assessment/visioning process/stakeholder input
- Step 3: Job description/compensation package
- Step 4: Create and place job announcement/recruit to the broadest candidate pool
- Step 5: Review and rate all resumes
- Step 6: Conduct interviews and check references with top candidates
- Step 7: Interviews with key decision-makers
- Step 8: Negotiate and hire
- Step 9: Orient and welcome
- Step 10: Roles and responsibilities/accountability

#### ***... tips on what to include in the Chief Executive Profile and/or Job Announcement***

- Describe the organization and its needs
- Identify the principal responsibilities of the next chief executive
- Outlines the required leadership competencies
- Delineate the desired experience and qualifications
- Describe the compensation structure (salary, benefits, etc.)
- Present the procedure to apply or nominate.

#### ***...tips on handling internal candidates***

- Find out right away if there will be any internal candidates
- Do a search even if the internal candidate is exceptionally strong
- Have an immediate conversation with the internal candidates even if the search committee is not yet ready to interview candidates
- Put the internal candidate through all the steps you require of all other candidates
- If the internal candidate is no longer being considered, tell him/her quickly
- If you choose someone else to be chief executive, tell the internal candidate before the others are informed

#### ***...tips on the "Post Appointment" plan***

- Involve a new leadership transition team to work with the new ED
- Provide a formal welcome and orientation
- Have the ED conduct informational interviews with staff, key donors, board, and other stakeholders
- Establish written goals and expectations for the new ED

- Set up regular meetings with the board chair
- Board members should make deliberate introductions to key community leaders so the ED can get networked appropriately
- Create a work plan
- Conduct a 6-week assessment, a 6-month assessment and then a 12 month assessment. After the first year, the ED should be evaluated annually.
- Lay out a strategic planning process – how and when will you involve the ED?
- Consider scheduling a staff retreat so the ED can connect with other staff

### ***...tips for the Departing Executive***

- Provide the board with a *clear picture of what to do during the interim*
- Shift your focus to *short-term actions* that you and the board agree will strengthen the organization before you leave
- Encourage the board to *appoint a transition committee*
- Encourage the board to *conduct an organizational assessment* to focus interim strategy
- *Avoid being actively involved* in selecting your successor
- Encourage the board to *get outside help*, especially if you are a founder
- Accept that *you will have mixed feelings* – talk about them with a colleague
- *Celebrate your accomplishments* - Say goodbye in ways appropriate for you
- Avoid keeping an office at the organization or *taking a role on the board*.

### **Executive Transition Checklist**

Transitioning an employee in an Executive position can be planned, or by a sudden departure. Ideally a transition includes a period of overlap, however maintaining an up-to-date manual/file of the following ensures for unanticipated departures. The following checklist, though not exhaustive, provides an outline of operational resources required for a smooth transition.

- Filing system (where records are kept, how they are filed, hard copies, digital, etc.)
- Policies, procedures and guidelines (print copies, binder, digital copies)
- Passwords and access codes (websites, social media accounts, internet, etc.)
- Banking (financial records, cheques, signing authority, on-line access)
- Personnel policies (manual, forms, resumes, employee files)
- Office (keys, lease, utilities)

- Contact lists (Board, staff, members, donors)
- Funding (grant applications, reports, systems)
- Financial (records, statements, audits, bookkeeper, CRA filings, contracts)
- Benefits plan (provider, access, employee handbook)
- Insurance (Liability, Board)
- Land management (covenants, acquisition documents, stewardship processes)
- Fundraising (events, individual campaigns, on-line options)
- Governance (society incorporation, provincial annual reports, charitable status, CRA filings, constitution, bylaws)
- Suppliers (internet, telephone, office supplies, photocopier, lawyer, accountant)