



# Executive Director Succession Plan

September 2020

## GENERAL OVERVIEW – Succession Plan Best Practices

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Even though there is no clear rule, in general, the selection of a new executive director should not last more than five or six months. Obviously, it is ideal to have a moment for a face-to-face orientation of the new director by the outgoing director, although this may require that the outgoing director come back to the organization to address the tasks of orientation, introduction and handover, possibly with remuneration.

An organization's board of directors generally will form a transition committee to expedite the work. This committee is in charge of coordinating and driving the process, generating draft documents (possibly with the support of staff), coordinating internal and external communication, and often selecting a shortlist of finalists or potential finalists after an initial round of interviews.

Typically, the committee is made up of 5-6 board members and perhaps the outgoing director participates with voice but no vote in the committee's decisions, or is simply consulted extensively by its members. In all cases, it is essential to clearly define the members' precise responsibilities and decision-making powers, and to try to ensure a small, flexible and effective committee.

In general, the outgoing director has much to offer about what type of profile would be best for the organization. The key is to be able to step back from his or her personal involvement in the transition to make a constructive contribution to the process, which requires considerable maturity and ability to take intellectual and emotional distance.

If this can be achieved, the Board should be broad and seek to maximize the outgoing director's input. At times, the outgoing executive director is well positioned to offer their thoughts about some of the pre-selected candidates, taking advantage of the fact that he may know them well and have legitimate opinions. The director should, naturally, avoid sharing any selective or privileged information, taking care that no candidate is on an unequal footing during the application process.

As a general rule, open selection processes are usually considered stronger and more credible since they are broader and more open. At the same time, they can help spread the word in different circles about the organization's work. With few exceptions, there is a risk that, without an open selection process, questions will arise that seriously compromise the credibility of the process and the legitimacy of the new director.

Finally, the organization's Board of Directors should not underestimate the importance of closure and farewell rituals for the outgoing director and for all members of the organization. This is about acknowledging and celebrating their contributions, and ensuring a healthy process of concluding one stage and beginning another. Indeed, solid closure for the outgoing director is fundamental for ensuring the space and climate needed for the new director to get off to a good start.

Depending on the size and scale of what you decide to do, the task of organizing the farewell and recognition activities can be conducted by the transition committee.

**Description of process:**

This plan aims to have a new executive director selected and on-boarded with a thorough orientation no later than March 1, 2021

## **NERHA Transition Plan for the Executive Director Position**

### **Phase 1: Planning and Summary of Roles (Late September 2020 to October 2020)**

The Executive Committee and outgoing director will come to an agreement about this plan including the process, roles and timeline. The Executive Committee will create a transition committee of five to six people from the board of directors.

The transition committee will be in charge of creating the communication plan, job description and other documents needed for the process; selecting the applicants to be interviewed; and creating a shortlist of finalists to be interviewed by the majority of the Executive Committee.

The Board of Directors will be in charge of choosing the new director. The transition committee and the outgoing executive director will create a communication plan (for staff, stakeholders public, etc.

The Board of Directors will re-evaluate activities contained in the 2020 Strategic plan and prioritize which activities can to be deferred to 2021.

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## **Phase 2: Proposed Job Description, Job Announcement, Selection Criteria, etc. and Determination of the Range of Compensation to be Offered (November 2020)**

The ED and Executive Committee will define the desired profile and qualifications. Including, The parameters for the compensation offer to finalist based on information about the relevant labor market and what the organization's financial situation permits.

The ED will create a packet with drafts of the following:

- The job description (for internal use, to be shared with finalists, based on the current job description and the previous job announcement)
- The job announcement with the application requirements
- The selection criteria divided into necessary and desirable (each with a basic definition and weighted, to guide the analysis and evaluation of the candidates being interviewed. This list will guide the selection of the candidates to be interviewed.)

The transition committee will meet to discuss and validate the packet. The delegates will review the packet and will be able to make comments. The transition committee will approve the packet via email or in a face-to-face meeting.

## **Phase 3: Distribution of Job Announcement/ Application Process Started (December 2020)**

The job announcement will be disseminated widely; at the same time, it will be a priority for staff and Board members to identify and invite suitable candidates to apply.

The Transition chair will ask the members to publicize the job opening widely with their contacts  
The transition committee and executive director will coordinate identifying and contacting external allies who can help identify candidates

The staff will be asked to share the announcement widely with their contacts. The executive direction will receive the applications using an institutional email address and will organize the application materials for review by the members of the transition committee.

## **Phase 4: Interviews, References, Final selection (January 2021)**

The transition committee members will review the applications and will indicate their opinions about which candidates to interview. A face-to-face meeting or Zoom call will be held to decide which candidates to interview and to define the questions and dynamics for the interviews.

The committee will decide on the shortlist (two or three candidates). The committee members will check formal and informal references. The transition committee will rank candidates to recommend to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will conduct the interviews of those shortlisted (two candidates).

The Board of Directors will choose the new director. In principle, the decision should be made by consensus, but if there is no consensus, a vote will be held as provided for in the bylaws. If it hasn't done so already, the Executive Committee will determine the parameters for the offer.

The board President will make the offer and negotiate compensation and the start date with the finalist.

## **Phase 5: Onboard and Support the New Executive (February 2021)**

Onboarding and supporting the new CEO is a critical part of the process. Onboarding means making sure that the new chief executive:

- is appropriately introduced to the organization and the community
- receives a thorough orientation
- is provided with the information and support necessary to settle successfully into the role

**The departing executive will conduct an orientation to make sure that the handoff and ramp-up plans for the new executive. The orientation will review all the relevant documents, which may include, for example:**

- History and mission of the organization
- Strategic plan or organizational goals
- Brief summary of the programs
- Organizational chart and job descriptions
- Manual of organizational policies and procedures
- Approved budget and financial reports for the last two to five years
- Grant proposals and grant agreements both current and in process
- Organizational evaluations and assessments
- Financial reports, both organization-wide and by project
- Articles of incorporation/bylaws
- Amendments to the bylaws (or a brief summary)
- Board rules and procedures
- List of board members (indicating officers) and brief biographical sketches
- Conflict of interest policy
- Minutes of the meetings of the board for the last 12 months
- Dates of the next meetings of the board

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The board should initiate an intentional process to forge a powerful partnership with the new executive. Together they should clarify goals, roles, expectations, and performance measures:

- **Goals.** The strategic priorities, especially for the first 12 to 18 months of the new executive's tenure.
- **Roles.** Their respective roles and responsibilities. This should include a refresh of the board's responsibilities vis-à-vis the new ED.
- **Expectations.** The expectations that the executive and board have for each other. Especially their respective contributions toward achieving the strategic priorities.
- **Performance Measures.** The process and criteria for performance evaluations, especially during the executive's first year

TASK	PERSON(S) IN CHARGE	DATE
<b>PHASE 1: Plan and Roles</b>		
Agreement on the Transition Plan		Oct 20
Creation of the transition committee		Oct 20
Develop a communication plan		Oct 20
<b>PHASE 2: Internal Interviews and Job Description</b>		
ED job description will be updated		Nov 20
A review of compensation parameters will be conducted		Nov 20
The current ED will draft a selection packet (job description, job announcement, selection criteria) for applicants		Nov 20
Transition Committee will approve packet and other information and materials.		Nov 20
<b>PHASE 3: Distribution of Job Announcement/ Application Process Started</b>		
Distribution of Job Announcement		Dec 20
Questions for interviews		Dec 20
Establish deadline for receiving applications		Dec 20
Receive applications and send out acknowledgments of receipt		Dec 20
<b>PHASE 4: Interviews, References, Final selection</b>		
Transition Committee meeting: selecting candidates to interview/agree upon interview questions		Jan 21
Interviews – select shortlist		Jan 21
Interviews with the shortlist – determine the compensation package		Jan 21
Review references		Jan 21
Final selection meeting		Jan 21
Offer, negotiation and acceptance of the position		Jan 21
Announcement of final selection		Jan 21
<b>PHASE 5: Onboarding</b>		
ED Orientation Session with Outgoing ED		Feb 21
Board Selection of goals, roles, expectations, and performance measures for new ED		Feb 21