

***Emergency Succession Plan:** Executive Transitions considers it a best practice for nonprofit agencies to have in place an emergency succession plan to cover the sudden and unexpected absences of their executive directors. Provided here is a sample plan modeled on one actually adopted by a San Francisco agency.*

In this model, special emphasis is given to identifying the key leadership functions carried by the executive, identifying the agency managers best qualified to step into the executive role in an emergency, and prescribing the cross-training necessary to prepare the back-up managers to cover the leadership functions. One major side benefit to implementing this plan is a management team with enhanced leadership skills.

EMERGENCY SUCCESSION PLAN **San Francisco Youth Council**

Procedure for the Appointment of an Acting Executive Director in the Event of an Unplanned Absence of the Executive Director

1. Rationale

In order to ensure the continuous coverage of executive duties critical to the ongoing operations of SFYC and its services to clients, the Board of Directors is adopting policies and procedures for the temporary appointment of an Acting Executive Director in the event of an *unplanned and extended absence* of the Executive Director.

While the Board acknowledges that such an absence is highly improbable and certainly undesirable, it also believes that due diligence in exercising its governance functions requires that it have an emergency executive succession plan in place. It is expected that this plan will ensure continuity in external relationships and in staff functioning.

2. Priority functions of the Executive Director position

The full Executive Director position description is attached.

Among the duties listed in the position description, the following are the key functions of the Executive Director to be covered by an acting director:

- a. Serve as the organization's principal leader, representative, and spokesperson to the greater community

- b. Provide financial leadership for the organization in preparing the annual operating budget and in making budgetary adjustments during the fiscal year to maintain a balanced budget.
- c. Create the annual operations plan that sets goals for delivery of program services and that incorporates progress towards longer range strategic goals; adjust the plan as needed.
- d. Assure that contractual obligations with private and government funders are being met; negotiate changes in contracts as needed.
- e. Convene and lead the Management Team
- f. Provide monthly status reports to the Board of Directors on the organization's finances and programs, calling the Board's attention to any significant adjustments that are needed.

3. Succession plan in event of a temporary, unplanned absence -- SHORT-TERM

a. Definitions

- A temporary absence is one in which it is expected that the Executive Director will return to his position once the events precipitating the absence are resolved.
- An unplanned absence is one that arises unexpectedly, in contrast to a planned leave, such as a vacation or a sabbatical.
- A short-term absence is 3 months or less.

b. Who may appoint the Acting Executive Director

- The Board of Directors authorizes the Executive Committee to implement the terms of this emergency plan in the event of the unplanned absence of the Executive Director.
- In the event of an unplanned absence of the Executive Director, the Deputy Director shall immediately inform the Chair of the Executive Committee of the absence.
- As soon as is feasible, the Chair shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee to affirm the procedures prescribed in this plan or to make modifications the Committee deems appropriate.

c. Standing appointee to the position of Acting Executive Director

The position description of the Deputy Director specifies that she shall serve as Acting Executive Director in the absence of the Executive Director.

d. First back-up for the position of Acting Executive Director

Should the Deputy Director be unable to as Acting Executive Director, the first back-up appointee will be the Director of Programs.

e. Cross-training plan for the designated back ups

The Executive Director, with assistance from the Deputy Director, shall develop a plan for training the two potential appointees in each the priority functions of the Executive Director which are listed above (section 2). The training plan will be attached to this document when the plan is completed. The director of human resources shall have the responsibility of handling the logistics of the plan's implementation.

f. Authority and restrictions of the appointee

The person appointed as Acting Executive Director shall have the full authority for decision making and independent action as the regular Executive Director .

g. Compensation

The Acting Executive Director shall 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.

h. Board committee responsible for oversight and support to the Acting Executive Director

As with an Executive Director, the Executive Committee of the Board will have responsibility for monitoring the work of the Acting Executive Director. The Executive Committee will also be alert to the special support needs that of the executive in this temporary leadership role.

i. Communications plan

As soon as possible after the Acting Executive Director has begun covering an unplanned absence, Board members and the Acting ED shall communicate the temporary leadership structure to the following key external supporters:

- Government contract officers
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- Foundation program officers
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- Civic leaders
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- Major donors
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4. Succession plan in event of a temporary, unplanned absence -- LONG-TERM.

a. Definition

- A long term absence is one that is expected to last more than 3 months

b. Procedures

- The procedures and conditions to be followed shall be the same as for a short-term absence with one addition:

> The Executive Committee will give immediate consideration, in consultation with the Acting Executive Director, to temporarily back-filling the management position left vacant by the Acting Executive Director. This is in recognition of the fact that, for a term of more than 3 months, it may not be reasonable to expect the Acting Executive Director to carry the duties of both positions. The position description of a temporary manager would focus on covering the priority areas in which the Acting Executive Director needs assistance.

6. Approvals and maintenance of record

a. Succession plan approval

- This succession plan will be approved by the Executive Committee and forwarded to the full Board of Directors for its vote and approval.

b. Signatories

- This plan shall be signed by the Board President, the Executive Director, the human resources administrator, and the appointees designated in this plan.

c. Maintenance of record

- Copies of this plan shall be maintained by the Board President, the Executive Director, the Deputy Director, Director of Programs, the human resources department, and the agency's corporate attorney.

*CompassPoint Nonprofit Services
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