

CERF+ Leadership Preparedness Planning

September, 2017

There are two parts to this document – plans for an Emergency Succession and a Planned Succession (most likely a planned retirement) for CERF+'s Executive Director (ED).

Emergency Succession Plan

CERF+ defines an emergency as a sudden departure of the ED or departure with short notice (for example, less than six months.)

Possible scenarios include:

- ED's sudden departure due to illness or death
- ED's departure due to another job offer
- ED resigns for any reason, but departs with notice of less than 6 months¹

Addressing Leadership as Result of Sudden Departure of ED (little to no notice) (Oversight: Executive Committee)

- Executive Committee appoints a Temporary Interim Director – likely the Director of Administration or the Program Director – who will provide staff leadership and work with the board until a decision is made about retaining an Interim Director.
- Committee explores options for an Interim Director, who would carry out job of ED for anywhere from three months to a year. Possible candidates may include:
 - Staff Member (if a staff member becomes Interim, then that person's usual duties will need to be covered, at least in part, by retaining part-time help to carry out duties TBD)
 - Current or former board member
 - Professional retained on contract²

Ideal Interim would have knowledge of CERF+ and hopefully some relationship with current staff. Interim Director's primary role would be to carry out the work of the ED as well as to provide support to the board during the search, and help to "on-board" a new Director.

Addressing Leadership with Notice of ED Departure of 3 Months or Less (Oversight: Executive Committee)

- Appoint an Interim ED from among staff (see above) to assume those duties until new ED is retained, or
- Retain a consultant/individual on contract to assume duties of ED on interim, temporary basis (see above) in order to allow Board more time for preliminary planning and search process

¹ Under normal circumstances of a planned retirement (providing the board with more than six months notice), the board will have enough time to carry out planning to retain the next leader. This circumstance is addressed in the section "Planned Succession."

² See additional discussion under Planned Succession section – "Interim Executive Director: Consider this Option?"

Planned Succession

Under a Planned Succession the ED has provided the Board with at least six months notice, if not a year or more. The Board has more time to not only plan and carry out a search for a new ED, but also to address strategic issues for the organization and confirm or change its mission and direction. At this time, and depending on how much notice is provided by the ED, the Board may also want to consider retaining an Interim ED – see section following “Preliminary Planning.”

Preliminary Planning

Carry out Internal Assessments and Planning (Oversight: Planning Committee)

- Revisit and confirm or revise organizational mission, vision and values.
- Organization’s current strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities (SWOT analysis)
- Current strategic plan – does it need to be updated or adjusted.
- Identify areas for improvement.
- Identify opportunities for new developments.
- Discuss organizational culture – pluses and minus; what is important to hold onto and what we can/should let go.
- Review organizational priorities (short and long term) in relationship to experience and skills needed in a new ED.
- Review current staff structure (ideally a new ED should have the ability to develop and re-structure the staff, but considering that the organization currently does not have either a “Deputy Director” or Development Director – some discussion about possible staff needs in the areas of skills would be useful at this stage, especially as it relates to budget and top priorities for the new ED.)
- Review board governance under the modified “Carver” method – keep, change, or adapt new model.
- Review board profile and competencies

Planning for Search Process and Transition

(Oversight: Executive Committee to assign Committees with Full Board Input; Committees oversee areas specific to their mandates)

- Create/assign committees as needed to address Search Process, Legacy Celebration, Welcome of New ED, etc.
- Address Search Process:
 - Discuss and make decision re: hiring of a search firm or individual consultant³
 - Fine tune and detail the Search Process (See Search for Permanent, Full Time Executive Director section below)
 - Review salary of ED – has it maintained competitiveness? (Current practice is to review all staff salaries every 3 years to assure competitiveness. Would only be an issue if there was a significant change in leadership position.)

³ An individual consultant with some experience in executive search processes may be a good alternative to a search firm. A consultant may cost less, be better connected to the craft field, and also could potentially assist with preliminary planning needs.

- Discuss pros and cons of offering a contract and, depending on decision, key components of a contract for a new ED (note – Cornelia does not have a contract, but it is likely that most candidates will expect to receive a contract)
- What should the role of the current ED be in the search process, if any?
- How much, if any, overlap should there be between new ED and outgoing ED? This will need to be budgeted for. To what extent, if any, should the outgoing ED introduce the new ED to donors, partners, and other key constituents?
- Address Outgoing ED's Departure (See section, "Legacy Celebration")
- Identify one-time and long-term budget items, establish priorities, budget for Search and Transition, and identify potential sources for support. Budget items might include:
 - Search/interview process
 - search firm/consultant fees and expenses – if using one
 - travel, housing and meals associated with interviews of semi-finalists and final candidates
 - travel, housing and meals for board members carrying out interviews
 - Relocation expenses for new ED
 - Potential increase in ED's salary/benefits
 - Salary costs of overlap between outgoing and incoming EDs
 - Retirement package for outgoing ED
 - Outgoing ED celebration event(s)
 - New ED welcome event(s)
 - Additional board meeting during transition year and/or first year of new ED
 - New Director's/Transition Fund" – a fund for new director's first 2-3 years intended for director to:
 - do travel beyond usual budget to meet donors, partners and key constituents;
 - costs associated with planning and/or testing new ideas;
 - changes/improvements to operations; and
 - new program start up costs.
- Address Transition of new ED (see section, "Welcome of New Executive Director")

Interim Executive Director: Consider this Option?

Under any scenario of Succession (including a Planned Succession), it may be wise to first hire an Interim Director. Here are some possible considerations or situations:

- Organization decides to move office from Vermont in order to retain experienced leadership.
- Organization has immediate short-term needs that require skills significantly different from long-term needs.
- Organization needs more time for preliminary planning, especially if it's an Emergency Succession, or a Planned Succession of less than a year.
- Organization decides to explore other operating models, for example, pursuing a relationship with another organization.
- Search process does not produce a strong candidate.

Search for Full Time, Permanent Executive Director

Oversight: Executive Committee

(If a Search Consultant is retained, most of the work identified will be done by and or lead by that firm/individual under the guidance of the Search Committee).

1. Appoint a Search Committee. (Composition of the Search Committee would include current trustees, ideally with organizational leadership experience, and potentially one staff member, one or more former board members and possibly a community observer, eg., an artist, contributor, or someone with deep knowledge of CERF+.)
2. Identify short-term needs of organization and decide how those needs will be met (carried out by staff and led by interim director; becomes part of directives for new director; or retain consultant to fulfill those needs)

Oversight: Search Committee

3. Make decision re: hiring a search firm or individual consultant. NOTE: If a search professional is retained, the process will be lead by the firm and adjusted accordingly.
4. Identify critical competencies AND qualities of an ideal ED.
5. Review/rewrite job description: Consider long term needs of organization. Discuss position and organizational need with staff, trustees, partners and selected funders. Identify salary range and benefits and other terms of the contract.
6. Develop budget for search (see list above)

Oversight: Executive Committee with Fund Raising Committee

7. Identify potential funders for search/transition and pursue support for these one-time costs.

Oversight: Staff with Search Committee

8. Prepare communications plan for search (see Communications).
9. Oversight: Search Committee
10. Identify/clarify role of staff in search process – both administratively and in interviews.
11. Develop list of key individuals and groups who will be helpful in identifying/distributing information about position opening.
12. Identify materials desired of candidates and finalists. (e.g., cover letter and what it should address, resume, references up front – or wait until finalists are identified, writing samples or other types of work product, etc.)
13. Identify materials about CERF+ to provide semi-finalists/finalists (eg., printed materials, research, financial statements/audit, strategic plan, staff bios, search committee bios, etc.)
14. Develop processes for receiving resumes, acknowledging receipt of applications, distributing resumes to search committee, scoring and comments form for applications (best to do this on Google Docs or something comparable), and rejection letters.
15. Announce search via nonprofit job listings and key individuals and groups. Have trustees, staff and other “family members” send personal notes to best prospects for distributing information about the position.
16. Search committee reviews applications via “score card,” and phone discussion – or search firm provides process for review.
17. Prepare interview questions for each stage of interviews (Skype, in-person with semi-finalists, in-person with finalists)
18. Carry out phone/Zoom (or current technology) interviews with top 5-10 candidates.

19. Search committee identifies semi-finalists. Package of materials sent to all candidates. Search committee carries out in-person interviews (3-5). (These interviews might occur off site in a central, accessible and cost effective location.)
20. Search committee identifies finalists (2-3) for final interviews, which would be on-site and include meetings with staff members. (The final interviews could also include discussions (in-person or by phone) between finalists and two or three key CERF+ supporters – this could be partners, artists and/or major donors or foundations. Search committee would follow up for their input which becomes part of the final review, along with feedback from staff.)
21. Search committee identifies lead candidate for presentation to the board. This likely will need to be presented to the board via email and conference call, but if final decision is near a board meeting – discussion and final vote could happen at the meeting.
22. Successful candidate is offered job. Other candidate(s) are contacted by phone. Contract is negotiated.
Oversight: Staff
23. Successful candidate is announced to funders, artists, partners and colleagues, other constituents, and the media. (See Communications.)

Communications Plan

Oversight: Staff

A strong communications plan for any of these scenarios will not only inform the CERF+ community, but also help to strengthen existing relationships and increase the potential of success for the incoming Director. Regular communications and transparency are important during major periods of transition as a way to maintain confidence, especially among donors, foundations, artists, and partners.

If ED provides Board with more than a year's notice, public announcement should be withheld until about a year (or less) before her departure.

With time – for example with a Planned Succession, more consideration can be made in assembling and refining the various lists and identifying priorities for making the announcement.

Most important, in a planned succession, the ED will be able to make personal phone calls (or have one-on-one meetings) with key “friends” of the organization, primarily major contributors, partners and other key constituents to announce her departure on a more personal basis. These personal contacts should be made in a timely manner to immediately precede the public and media announcement. Confidentiality may be requested until the public announcement is made.

1. Initial personal announcement re: ED departure via phone (or email where necessary) by outgoing ED and/or Board Chair to:
 - a. All current board trustees
 - b. All major donors (individual and institutional)
 - c. Primary partners, ACC and other key constituents
 - d. Selected, key media
2. Media release with personal note sent via email to:
 - a. Everyone listed above
 - b. All former board trustees
 - c. Grantees and other artists
 - d. All contributors and other institutional donors
3. Media release distributed to media and posted on Facebook, website, and other social media.
4. Staff adjusts/organizes lists for ongoing announcements re: search for new ED
5. Second media release distributed to announce Search Committee and Process and Interim Director (assuming this information is not available at time of first release announcing EDs departure.)
6. Announcement of search to targeted lists.
7. Announcement of new ED. (This announcement should be done in person via phone (or email if necessary) to list above under #1 before making announcement more broadly.)
8. Contact key media for interviews/post video interviews on website.
9. Develop welcome events for new ED.

Pivot & Thrive: Leadership Transition

Legacy Celebration Specific to Cornelia Carey

It is important to both acknowledge the accomplishments of Cornelia as its long-time director and to help the organization and its constituents transition to the next leader. As a national organization with an office located in a rural environment, that celebration will likely occur in a number of different ways. Plans for this event, or series of events, may be overseen by a board/staff Transition or Legacy Celebration Committee.

Welcome of New Executive Director

Like the Legacy Celebration, it will be difficult to have one welcome event considering the national nature of the organization. However, a series of “Introductory” or “Welcome” events could be created to help the new ED meet core constituents over the first year of her/his tenure. This work can be overseen by a Transition committee made up of board and staff.

With a planned succession, board meetings could be scheduled (or re-scheduled) in locations with strong showing of funders, partners, craft organizations and other constituents. This would allow the board to host events to introduce the new ED.

NOTE: The Search Committee, Transition Committee or Executive Committee should assume responsibility for encouraging ALL Board Members to individually welcome the new ED – ideally with phone calls, or if possible, in person.

On Boarding a New Executive Director

1. In consultation with the outgoing ED, determine in advance the cross-over period between the outgoing and incoming EDs.
2. Staff provides ED with documents including strategic plan, research, reports, donor lists, financials, etc.
3. Board (working with current ED, Interim ED and/or staff leadership) provides new ED with priorities for the first 3-6 months.
4. New ED quickly sets up individual meetings with all staff, trustees, major donors and key partners.
5. For new ED coming from outside the craft field, a plan is devised by a combination of board, staff and partners with new ED to introduce him/her to the larger field, its issues, and current trends.
6. Board works in partnership with ED to identify 6 month, one year and possibly 18 month to two-year goals. These may be tied to executing the existing strategic plan, to evaluating staff and organizational needs, to making connections with funders and other constituents, and beginning to identify new priorities.
7. Executive committee should meet with new ED by phone (or at board meetings) at key intervals – for example, 1st three months, 6 months, one year. Decide with the new ED what is feasible and will be the most useful to both the ED and to the Board.

Optimizing New Executive Director's Success for Organization's Long-Term Future

1. Have key relationships with the outgoing ED been “transferred” to others in the organization before hiring a new ED? (While it’s difficult to transfer relationships, involving others (staff and board) with interactions with donors and partners well in advance of a search can be helpful in making the transition function in a smoother and more effective way.)
2. Are we looking for a manager, a fund raiser, a visionary or some combination? What are our priorities? Have we been clear about this from the beginning and does our search process and job description reflect the type of leader we are searching?
3. Have we prepared ourselves to shift loyalties to a new ED?
4. How will the outgoing ED make her departure so that it both supports the incoming ED AND allows the incoming ED to establish his/her leadership; build strong relationships with staff, board and partners; and advance the programming and operations of the organization?
5. How can we as an organization best prepare for change?
6. How do we balance providing direction for the organization’s new ED while also creating opportunity for new ideas and vision for its future?
7. How can fresh perspectives and ideas be best captured while also staying grounded in the mission? How will the organization address the response to new ideas from a new director, “But, we haven’t done it that way” - ?
8. Is it clear to both Board and ED the nature of their relationship? How will trust be cultivated?
9. Are we – both staff and board – prepared for a greater time commitment not only during the pre-planning and search phase, but also in the first couple years of the new ED’s tenure?

CERF+ Executive Director Succession Plan - Sample Calendar

# of Weeks/Months from New ED Start Date	Task
18 - 24 months	Preliminary Planning
9-12 months	Identify Search Committee members (and other committees as necessary, eg, Legacy Celebration and Welcome committees
9-12 months	Search committee convenes to detail process and make decision re: search firm or individual consultant
8-11 months	Hire search firm or consultant or create plan for administration of search process
6-9 months	Write and finalize job description
5-8 months	Announce search
4-7 months	Review applications
3-6 months	First round of interviews via Skype
2-5 months	Semi-finalist interviews
2-4 months	Final interviews
1-3 months	New Director hired
0 months	New Director begins work