



PLAN FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF NONPROFIT LEADERS

While it may seem like jumping the gun, your nonprofit should start planning for leadership succession *in advance* of actually passing the torch. This involves both choosing who these new leaders will be, as well as preparing them with the best possible leadership skills.

Most nonprofits **do not have** leadership succession plans. But anything can happen: executives can move on to different opportunities or personal circumstances can emerge unexpectedly at a crucial point in fundraising. Organizations need a solid leadership succession plan in order to prevent potential crises resulting from life's curveballs.

Moreover, identifying and training your next generation of leadership helps prepare your organization for the future, allowing subsequent leaders to develop key skills and become invested in your nonprofit for the long term. In creating a succession plan, you contribute to the longevity of your organization.

While the board of directors is typically in charge of assigning new executives, every employee has valuable input as to what is needed in your organization's leadership. Since each staff person knows intimately their own positions and experiences as employees at your organization, they are well-suited to contribute to the conversation about the kind of leader they think would be most effective at helping them continue their work. Regardless of your position in your nonprofit, you can make a difference in determining your organization's future.

HOW SHOULD YOU GO ABOUT CREATING YOUR SUCCESSION PLAN? START WITH THE FOLLOWING:

CONSIDER ALL FUTURE POSITIONS.

All positions are essential for the successful operation of your organization. Start by making a comprehensive list of your organization's various positions and their responsibilities. Make sure these are up-to-date. In order to ensure that there are no holes in the organization in case someone steps down, create a manual of specialized tasks so that they can be quickly learned by another staff person. If possible, each task should be learned by at least two people in your organization.

COLLABORATE ON A LIST OF TRAITS OF AN IDEAL EXECUTIVE.

In conversation with your board and other staff members, determine the attributes you would like to see in your organization's next director. There are specific traits that correlate with strong nonprofit leadership which you may want to highlight:

- **Aligning values:** Your nonprofit's future leader should understand and passionately believe in your organization's mission.
- **Fundraising chops:** Your future leader should be skilled at fundraising to keep your organization thriving.
- **A good listener:** The best leader will ask for feedback and take it seriously.
- **Up for challenges:** Leaders face many challenges while running an organization, and a great leader will be persistent, motivated, and high-spirited in the face of a tough situation.
- **Emotionally intelligent:** Your next leader should be [self-aware and flexible](#) and should regularly practice empathy and self-management.

MENTOR AND TRAIN YOUR FUTURE LEADERS.

There are leaders and potential leaders throughout your nonprofit and not just on the executive level. Offer them mentorship opportunities to gain insights and develop skills. Trust them with new challenges rather than delegating the same tasks daily. Make sure that when important decisions at the organization are made, your future leaders are included in understanding those decisions.

KNOW AND RESPECT THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION'S NEXT GENERATION MAY WORK DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU (AND THAT'S OKAY!)

In less than a decade, millennials will make up [75% of the workforce](#). It would behoove your nonprofit to start upgrading any outmoded structures in order to best facilitate your next generation's leaders—many of whom may already be in your organization—as well as ensure a long life for your nonprofit.

Does your nonprofit have a succession plan? What do you do to prepare your next generation of leaders? Leave a comment and join in the conversation!

Source: <https://themodernnonprofit.com/plan-next-generation-nonprofit-leaders/>

