

## Governance Policies and Procedures

<b>Policy Name: Executive Director Absence and Succession Planning Policy</b>	
<b>Policy Number: G 3.4</b>	<b>Policy Type: Board Officer’s Roles and Accountability</b>
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### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ABSENCE AND SUCCESSION PLANNING**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Succession planning is critical towards ensuring organizational stability and leadership continuity. It is an ongoing and core governance responsibility vital to the success and viability of Ontario Library Association (OLA). A succession planning policy for the Executive Director (ED) position is both a risk mitigation strategy and a sustainability-planning tool and as such, should provide a process that recognizes, selects, develops and retains top leadership talent.

Whether a transition occurs due to an unexpected vacancy or the anticipated departure of a long-standing leader, a plan will help weather the challenges of a leadership transition, and perhaps create opportunities for transformative change. Although the board already monitors the strategic plan on an ongoing basis, it should pay particular attention to it in the context of succession planning. The board needs to determine the strengths and characteristics of an Executive Director who is required to navigate the challenges in the current environment with a focus on OLA’s strategic direction.

Research has shown that a culture of development within an organization sustains the level of performance and ensures the retention of key talent. Succession planning is the systematic process for ensuring leadership availability, continuity and appropriate development of the association’s leadership talent.

#### **PURPOSE:**

The Executive Director plays an essential role in the success of the association and having the right person in the role is critical. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the continuous coverage of duties necessary for the ongoing operations of OLA, by providing a proactive, orderly plan for transition from the current leadership to a new Executive Director. It is an outline or description of the process for the recruitment, hiring, integration and supervision of a new ED. It establishes principles, role clarity and accountabilities to support positive leadership transitions, foster relationships between the outgoing and incoming leaders and build organizational capacity. It should also serve to focus board attention on leadership team development through reports and

communications about staffing and succession plans for management positions.

**Definitions:**

**Temporary Absence:** One in which it is expected that the ED will return to his/her position once the events precipitating the absence are resolved.

**Unplanned Absence:** One that arises unexpectedly, in contrast to a planned leave, such as a vacation or sabbatical.

**Short-Term Absence:** Designated as three months or less.

**Long-Term Absence:** Designated as more than three months.

**Permanent Absence:** One in which it has been firmly established that the incumbent ED will not be returning to the position.

**Selection Committee:** A committee established by the OLA Board of Directors. It will be composed of the Board President, members of the board, and others who have expertise and experience in Executive Management recruitment.

**Policy Statements**

1. If required, and to ensure a continuum of operations without disruption during the selection process, an Acting Executive Director will be appointed.
2. The process for selection of an Executive Director will be an open competitive process with both internal and external candidates being given equal consideration.
3. The selection process will be clearly communicated to the membership, identifying a timeline and the name of a contact person for any information.
4. The selection process will be informed by a leadership needs assessment to formulate a candidate profile, based upon the strategic direction.
5. The skills and talents of the incumbent, which may necessitate other organizational changes, shape the ED's position. These may include the creation of new positions and/or the realignment of current positions.
6. The board-appointed Selection Committee will make their recommendations to the entire Board of Directors, for approval of the final selection.
7. Resources such as the use of a consultancy firm with the appropriate knowledge, expertise and experience in hiring executive leadership, may be used to assist in the selection process.

**PROCEDURES:**

**A. The Board of Directors' Role**

Board members will have an understanding of the mission, programs and values that drive the Association. Integral to OLA are the key operating values that must be adhered to and lived out during the hiring process and the transition. The board should have a firm grasp of the financial position of the organization, its key funding sources and what fundraising activities will be required in the near term.

Since the board is legally responsible for appointing a new Executive Director as well as providing organizational oversight, it is important it initiates succession planning and considers implementing it as an ongoing agenda item. For many board members, dealing with ED succession may be a new experience. That said, it is important for the board to have the necessary knowledge and skills in order to lead the organization through the transition.

The Selection Committee will manage the search process, keep the board advised of the progress and make recommendations to the board for its consideration. A strong Board President will ensure the board members take active role in the selection of the ED and make an informed decision on the successful candidate.

Choosing a new ED typically requires making decisions that involve a significant amount of subjective judgment. Therefore, it helps to have a robust process in place to guide the decision-making.

## **B. The Outgoing Executive Director's Role**

The outgoing ED normally has an important role to play in the hiring process and the transition to a successor. This includes helping the board define key skills, competencies and qualifications for a new leader. The current ED can help evaluate the job position to advise the board on what strengths are needed for the future position.

The role of the outgoing ED during the transition period should be developed in consultation with the Board President, communicated to the board, and timelines established. Potentially he/she could stay on in a fundraising or consulting capacity, to mentor their new replacement and/or introduce the new ED to key stakeholders. In these instances, however, the outgoing ED shall not be involved in the management of the OLA.

**Legacy Document:** Finally, the outgoing ED should develop a legacy document containing key information for the new leader, ensure that key management positions have current job descriptions and a there is a proactive, career development plan in place. The legacy document should include key issues facing the organization, key external relationships and any other relevant information needed by the new leader.

## **C. Selection Committee Role**

### **a. Search Process**

1. Review the current board's expertise, roles and responsibilities to determine if additional talent is needed in the formation of a Selection Committee. If required, bring back former Presidents or key members for the recruitment process. Consider what resources or training would be helpful to board members.
2. Conduct a thorough analysis of the association's environment, mission, vision, values and strategic vision. Review the current strategic plan with specific emphasis on the goals or strategic results to be achieved in the next two to three years. It is important for the organization to have a clear sense of its strategic direction before it begins a hiring process.

3. Review and ensure the job description reflects the current set of duties and responsibilities for the ED position; review the present salary range and benefit package, and the terms and conditions of the contract to be offered and negotiated upon; decide upon other compensation issues such as relocation expenses.
4. Develop an ED Leadership Profile based on OLA's strategic priorities with defined competencies, qualifications, managerial skills, experience and leadership priorities for the position. Important categories of experience, skills and qualifications that should be considered, may include:
  - Management (human resources, financial, and program)
  - Revenue development and fundraising abilities, e.g., grant opportunities
  - Marketing and public relations skills
  - Sector specific knowledge
  - Strategic thinking and communication skills
  - Leadership skills
5. The Board President will:
  - Interview key stakeholders in the community to determine their recommendations and comments. Stakeholders include funders, peer association leaders (regionally and nationally), government representatives, former board members, and community opinion leaders.
  - Interview and seek staff input either as a group or in individual meetings to collect their perspective on what leadership model would work best.
6. Giving due consideration to the organization's financial situation, and the time and workload commitment involved, it may be a wise investment for the board to consider using the services of a recruitment firm to assist the Selection Committee.
7. Consider the organization's key partnership and collaborations and determine any impact that a potential candidate may have on established or future relationships.
8. Determine if an interim appointment is needed to assume the duties of the ED if, in the judgment of the board, it is necessary for the short-term transition.
9. The Selection Committee will act as a screening committee with the following additional responsibilities in the search process:
  - Complete the details of the search process, e.g., mailbox for receiving of resumes
  - Consider adding an external, senior management person (e.g., ED of a like Association) with recruitment expertise to the committee, if needed
  - Establish a budget and timeline for the recruitment process. (NB: It usually takes four to six months for adequate recruitment and contingencies)
  - Create a plan for advertising the position and develop a candidate information package.

- Ensure the board is informed on the progress of the search process
- Develop a process to screen and review all resumes received
- Prepare an announcement/press release.

10. Develop a communication plan for the process both internally (e.g., regular updates to staff) and externally.

#### **b. Selection Process**

1. Develop interview questions, an interview protocol and ranking criteria.
2. Implement a selection process to interview up to 5 (five) candidates.
3. Interview the final candidates
4. Complete reference checks on each finalist
5. Prepare a recommendation to the Board ranking a maximum of three candidates to the full board for their decision and approval.
6. The board chair will be authorized to make the offer to the selected candidate.
7. Announce the appointment of the new Executive Director to the membership and external stakeholders using the prepared announcement/press release.

#### **Probationary Period**

The probationary period will be a minimum of six months. In advance, the board, or committee of the board, will establish a set of clearly written, six-month and annual performance objectives for the incoming ED. These objectives may be mutually developed with the new ED, but must be fully understood by the board and the ED. Using a carefully planned orientation process, the board shall design the first day, the first week, the first month and the first six months of expectations and activities to guide the new ED.

The ED will be evaluated on these performance objectives, which will act as a guide for both the board and the new appointee. A written appraisal of the ED's performance during the probationary period will be recorded in a formal document and a copy will be made available to the ED.

The Board President will be responsible for developing an orientation of the new ED to OLA, to the board and to key stakeholders. If the person is from outside of the region, then the board should be prepared to assist with introductions and meetings. Research has shown that successful integration of the ED takes between 12 and 18 months with the first 100 days being critical.

#### **Short Term/Unplanned Absence/Emergency Succession Plan**

The Executive Director's position is a central element to the success of OLA. Therefore, ensuring the functions of the position are well-understood and shared among the management team is important for organizational stability and leadership continuity in the event of an unplanned or extended absence. While this situation may be extremely unlikely, it is important that at these times, the Board of Directors recognize that an emergency backup succession plan is necessary to minimize disruption in programs and operations and to the greatest extent possible, maintain business as usual.

An emergency succession plan addresses the following priorities:

- Identification of an Acting ED to assume executive leadership functions for a limited period of time
  - Generally, a senior manager, who has been kept duly informed regarding ED and Board issues and processes, with access to current work plans, documents and other pertinent information, would fill the position for a defined period of time. However, the Executive Committee of the Board may also choose to temporarily reassign duties amongst management, or hire an external, temporary interim ED.
  - The Executive Committee should, on an annual basis, discuss with the ED, who within the senior management team is able and sufficiently informed, to be able to provide substitute leadership to OLA during a transition or unexpected leave period.
- Clarifying the lines of authority within the OLA following a leadership transition.
  - A review of the ED's key functions and responsibilities and identify in advance one or more senior management persons who have the skills to temporarily carry-out those duties
  - The board shall review salary compensation and provide an adjustment for increased responsibilities during a transition.
- Creating a plan, to communicate and engage support of internal and external stakeholders, of the transition.
  - A response within the first 12 to 36 hours is critical to staff morale and productivity. The Board President shall meet with the staff to:
    - Announce the interim position
    - Explain the Board's role; and
    - Outline expectations for the transition time frame.

### **Emergency Succession Procedure**

1. The Management Team, or a designated staff member, will immediately inform the Board President of the unplanned absence.
2. The Executive Committee will appoint an Acting Executive Director with the following authority:
  - **HR Management:**  
The Acting ED Is authorized to hire and terminate management staff after consultation with the board.
  - **Financial Management:**  
The Acting ED will have cheque-signing authority and is authorized to expend resources in consultation with the board treasurer and president.
  - **Public Policy:**  
The Acting ED will take public policy positions on behalf of OLA with the Board President's approval.

- **Media Communications:**  
The Acting ED is authorized to speak on behalf of the organization or designate a staff member.
- **Contracts:**  
The Acting ED is authorized to enter into and execute contracts after consultation with the Board chair and/or Board treasurer.
- **Program:**  
The Acting ED is authorized to develop new programs and assume or assign new program responsibilities on behalf of OLA, in consultation with the management team and board as necessary.
- **New Collaborations/Partnerships:**  
The Acting ED is authorized to enter into partnerships or develop collaborations with external parties in consultation with the management team and board as necessary.

### **Oversight and Support for the Acting ED**

As with the ED, the Board President and Board of Directors will have the responsibility for monitoring the work of the Acting ED.

- The Acting ED will provide regular updates and meet in person or by phone, with the Board President as deemed necessary by the President.
- The President will stay aware of the special needs of the Acting ED serving in this temporary capacity, and act to address them.

The President shall determine the time and place, early in the annual board cycle, for an orientation session and delivery of an orientation package for board members.

The Executive Director will coordinate the orientation session and package for the board members.