

Choosing a Professional Interim Executive Director

One of the most challenging tasks of a nonprofit board is to navigate a change in the Executive Director (ED) or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organization. Whether your organization is facing the retirement of a long-term or founder ED/CEO, or you have had a succession of people in the position, this transition is an opportunity to reassess and refocus. In this transition, the primary role of the board is to lay the groundwork for a new leader and set a leadership agenda for the future.

For many boards, this is a tall order. A professional interim executive director can help you make this challenging time one that energizes your organization and moves it closer to your vision.

A professional interim executive director is someone who:

- Specializes in the process of leadership transitions
- Brings an independent and objective vision to your organization
- Conducts a thorough Organizational Assessment
- Is not looking to be your next ED/CEO

Hiring an Interim Executive Director allows an organization the time and space to make sure that the transition in leadership is one that propels you forward instead of dragging you down. A leadership change inevitably means some shifts of direction and focus, which is potentially disorienting to staff and stakeholders. The challenge for the board is to turn this from a threat to an opportunity. A professional interim executive director allows the transition to take place in a positive way by:

- Identifying critical areas of management and staffing that need immediate attention
- Absorbing the shock of the transition
- Allowing the Board to stay focused on governance in the transition
- Assessing all options for the organization's next step
- Helping the Board identify the characteristics needed in the next ED/CEO
- Creating a richer pool of applicants by making the job more attractive to permanent replacements
- Acting as a "closer" in the hiring process, supporting the board so that the candidate they want will take the job
- Reassuring the community and stakeholders that the Board is on top of the transition

A transition in your ED/CEO is a seminal opportunity to dig deep into the workings of the organization; evaluate the resources of staff, facilities, board, and finances; and create a plan for how to move forward. A professional interim executive director will help you stabilize your organization; consider all the alternatives that can reinvigorate your people, processes, and programs; and design a plan to best secure your future.