

Council Director Succession and Transition Planning



What is Succession Planning?

Successfully managing the departure of a Council Director in tandem with the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of a new executive is a process that typically requires strategic planning. Boards can get ahead of the game by thinking through the desired course of action when a Council Director transition occurs – a process referred to as succession planning. The practice of succession planning ensures that the executive transition process is clear, planned, minimizes impact on day-to-day operations, and allows for smooth onboarding of a new Council Director.

Hiring and supporting the Council Director is one of the most crucial responsibilities of a nonprofit board. When a Council Director resigns or transitions from the organization, the Board of Directors is responsible for hiring a new Council Director, as well as facilitating a smooth transition of leadership responsibilities.

To support Boards and transitioning Council Directors navigate this process, we wanted to highlight five key planning needs:

- 1) Laying the groundwork with an IDEA lens;
- 2) Succession and transition planning;
- 3) Preparing to hire a new Council Director;
- 4) Interim leadership considerations;
- 5) Administrative and account transitions.

Laying the Groundwork with an IDEA Lens

Before effectively implementing the operational side of succession planning, consider what groundwork needs to be addressed prior to a Council Director transition. Council boards have a responsibility to review these considerations with a focus on inclusion, diversity, equity and access. [Click here to review important considerations in laying strong groundwork.](#)

Succession and Transition Planning

It's important to create easily understandable succession plans that will outline the steps needed to streamline leadership transition periods. Organizational shifts can be challenging to navigate – they often require changes in protocol and responsibilities, as losing a member of the team can potentially interrupt operations. But with intentional and strategic forward planning, your council will be able to weather the inevitable challenges of leadership transition, maintain operations, and build sustainability.

Keys to strong succession planning include:

- **Clearly defined and communicated responsibilities:** It's important that responsibilities of the Council Director, Board of Directors and other staff members are clearly outlined and communicated *before* a transition begins. This can be achieved through regular strategic planning, goal setting and performance management processes for Council Directors and staff.
 - Template job descriptions and performance management tools are available on the Council Portal on the [Human Resources](#) page.
- **Determine best case scenarios versus emergency succession planning:** It's important to have two plans of action – one plan to implement when there is ample notice for recruitment and onboarding and a second plan for a transition with little notice.

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- **Continual reflection on the Council's strategic priorities and organizational health:** The Board should periodically revisit strategic planning, including succession planning so that adjustments can be made as needed and more accurately reflect the current organizational landscape.
- **Compensation Planning:** As mentioned as a necessity in [laying strong groundwork](#), compensation planning should be at the forefront of any succession planning. Stay informed of compensation benchmarking to inform succession planning, utilizing resources available on the Council Portal, to include the [Candid \(formerly Guidestar\) Nonprofit Compensation Report](#).
- **Leadership Development Strategy:** For councils that have additional staff, it is important to build an internal talent pipeline. This pipeline should be developed with an eye for developing future leaders both in the short-term, if needed, and for long-term sustainability.
- **Gradual transition of Council Director responsibilities:** When appropriate, providing opportunities for the talent pipeline to engage in critical Council Director functions allows for a smoother transition in both regular and emergency succession planning.

For succession planning resources, guidelines and strategies, review the following sites to plan strategically for a smooth transition:

- [Succession Planning for Nonprofits - Managing Leadership Transitions](#)
- [Transition Plan Template for Executive Directors](#)
- [5 Expert Steps for a Nonprofit Executive Transition Plan](#)
- [CEO Succession Planner](#)
- [CEO Succession Workbook](#)

For an easy place to start, check out our [succession planning template](#) to plan for who will be responsible for the regular responsibilities of the departing Council Director, identify important upcoming deadlines, plan for outstanding projects, and document key contacts and Girls on the Run accounts.


There may be emergency or sudden transition situations where you do not have time to develop a plan ahead of a Council Director's departure. In the event of an unplanned departure, Girls on the Run HQ has a comprehensive [GOTR Staff Orientation and Onboarding Topics](#) document that can be adapted for both transition and onboarding purposes. We encourage you to reach out to your council's Regional Director at councilsupport@girlsontherun.org for additional support on developing a succession plan in sudden transition situations.

Preparing to Hire a New Council Director

Girls on the Run HQ is launching the Council Leadership Initiative (CLI), a staff recruiting program designed to provide councils with resources, tools, training, and support to advance inclusive hiring practices and increase diverse staff representation. To align with the organization's strategic imperatives, Girls on the Run HQ has established a goal of 50% of new hires through the initiative identifying as BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) in FY2022 and FY2023 through the CLI.


The CLI has three tier levels of support available to Councils. For Council Directors, HQ provides full recruitment support by request - see Tier 3 below.

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Tier 1: ACCESS to BambooHR

- ★ Access to BambooHR, GOTR HQ's applicant tracking system, for hiring committee + 30-minute BambooHR training



Tier 2: Access to BambooHR + GUIDANCE from GOTR HQ

- ★ Access to BambooHR® + 30-minute BambooHR training
- ★ 30-minute best practices conversation with GOTR HQ (HR and Belonging team or Council Development team)
- ★ Candidate selection support
- ★ Office hours



Tier 3: Access to BambooHR + full recruitment SUPPORT from GOTR HQ

- ★ Access to BambooHR® + 30-minute recorded BambooHR training
- ★ 1-hour consultation with GOTR HQ
- ★ Candidate review support
- ★ Phone screen support
- ★ Interview preparation and scheduling
- ★ Final interview round participation (as needed/requested) by CD team member
- ★ Final offer preparation + support
- ★ Office Hours

Please Note: When Councils are hiring for additional staffing needs, Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports will be available beginning Spring 2022.

In addition to support through the CLI, the Council Portal has comprehensive hiring resources to include job descriptions, recruitment and hiring guides, interview prep resources, and more. You can access these resources on the Council Portal in [Operations > Human Resources](#). To get started with CLI for support with your Council Director hiring needs, email humanresources@girlsontherun.org.

Interim Leadership Considerations

If there will be a gap in leadership between the current Council Director leaving and a new Council Director being hired, the Board needs to decide what interim leadership will look like for the council. There's a lot to evaluate to ensure operations are maintained. Review the Council Director succession plan to determine what responsibilities need to be maintained in the interim and as appropriate incorporate insight and recommendations from your current Council Director before their departure. Some considerations to explore include:

- Will a Board member or multiple Board members serve in interim leadership roles to support staff?
- Will the Board hire an external interim Council Director?
- Will the current staff members share any needed responsibilities while hiring?
 - GOTR HQ does not recommend that one internal staff member serves as an interim Council Director, particularly when an internal staff member is interested in applying for the permanent Council Director position.

To determine the best interim leadership fit for your council, we encourage you to reach out to your council's Regional Director at councilsupport@girlsontherun.org for additional support.

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Administrative and Account Transitions

Once the Board has developed a succession plan, connected with Girls on the Run HQ to start the Council Director hiring process, and determined an interim leadership structure, there are a couple additional checklist items to complete when working through a transition:

- All exiting Council Directors must complete the [Departing Staff Form](#). Please send this to your Council Director to complete prior to their final day with council.
- To assess your departing Council Director's overall experience with the council and identify opportunities to improve staff retention and engagement in the future, an [exit interview](#) is encouraged when appropriate.
- If a Board member will act as interim or if staff need additional systems access, please complete the [Incoming Staff Form](#) to ensure everyone has the needed GOTR systems, technology and Council Portal resource access for a smooth transition.
 - Completing the Incoming Staff Form will ensure either a Board or staff member will have important national reporting module access in Pinwheel, in addition to access to other important systems and resources. Each season Girls on the Run HQ collects data from councils to measure our impact, track progress towards goals, identify best practices, plan for the future, and help the organization manage risk. Please review the reporting calendar and details about seasonal reporting requirements on the Council Portal in [Operations > Reporting](#).
- Update the primary contact for your council in key accounts:
 - [Update the primary contact](#) in your council's Pinwheel account to ensure continuity of communication and important information from Girls on the Run HQ.
 - Update the primary contact in Stripe to ensure the new or interim Council Director can access important payment information.
 - Update the primary contact for your website domain (e.g., GoDaddy) if not managed by ERS to ensure that future website needs can be accommodated.
 - **IMPORTANT NOTE: both Stripe and website domain providers (e.g., GoDaddy) are not managed by Girls on the Run International. If the former primary contact leaves and the new primary contact does not have their user/email information, Girls on the Run International will be unable to help recover this information. Councils will need to work directly with Stripe / GoDaddy to recover this information which is often very time-consuming and difficult. Timely transition is critical to avoid any issues.**
- Review the [full technology checklist](#) for all onboarding/offboarding considerations.
- Questions? Please do not hesitate to reach out to your council's Regional Director (councilsupport@girlsontherun.org). In addition to Council Director succession planning and hiring, Regional Director staff are available to support with strategic planning, crisis management and provide consultant expertise on areas such as fund development, programming and staffing models. We are here to support you every step of the way.