

Interim Questionnaire

1) Do you have a plan for leadership during the transition?

It normally takes 4 to 6 months to complete a search for an executive director—much too long to be without a designated individual doing that job. So it's crucial to have a concrete plan for this period. One of the most important characteristics for this interim leader is that s/he be an honest broker for the organization with no conflicted loyalties.

2) Can a board member step in?

Although this may seem like a logical step, it is usually a mistake for a board member to join the team. The separation of management and governance is what keeps a nonprofit healthy. Mixing those roles has consequences for all and can be very confusing to the staff.

3) Can a member of the staff step in?

This creates a very complicated dynamic with the staff because a colleague has abruptly become their boss. For the individual assuming the role, it can be demoralizing if they are interested in the permanent position and then don't get it. Their authority is unclear and they are unable to fully take charge without repercussions.

4) How is the morale of the staff and how well equipped are they to handle the transition?

Often the staff are well aware of issues that caused a departure. If they have longstanding concerns about organizational stability or dysfunction, you may see resignations, loss of productivity, and even hints to other stakeholders about their discontent.

5) Are you worried about the organization's productivity during the transition?

The period between executive directors can be a time of opportunity. Many important goals can be achieved during this time, although perhaps not those that you had initially envisioned. An IED is in the best position to help you identify and realize these goals so that the organization can continue moving forward and even become stronger during the interruption in ongoing leadership.

6) Is the board aligned around what qualities the next executive director should possess?

Given their own diverse interests and areas of expertise, it's not surprising that board members often diverge as to qualities that are most important in the next executive director. One of the IED's most important functions can be to work with the board to identify the "must have" qualifications for the next executive director to help align the board with the organization's needs and priorities.

7) Has the organization had an executive previously or is this a new role?

Often when organizations are moving from a founder to its first external executive director there is a need for someone who can help frame the position, work with staff to become comfortable with the new role, and support the search effort. Even following a professional ED, a reimagining of the role and its impact can be a critical opportunity for board and staff. An IED specializes in this role. We will also ensure that the board understands what the change in leadership means to the organization and what kind of candidate will be best equipped to fulfill their requirements.