

## Worksheet: Preparing for a New Board Chair – Executive Director Relationship

All nonprofit organizations experience leadership transitions at both the board and staff level. This is typically an organizational pivot point, whether onboarding a new board chair or a new chief executive. The organization's success depends on the chair and executive director building a strong relationship. But few resources exist to help with this process.

This worksheet can help build a strong and effective relationship between the board chair and chief executive. It is designed for the Executive Director and Board Chair to complete together.

### 1. Frequency of meetings

The preferred frequency for the regular incoming board chair and executive director to meet:

- a. Weekly for the first \_\_\_\_\_ months
- b. Consider biweekly after the first three months.

### 3. Preference for types of meetings:

For regularly scheduled meetings between the incoming board chair and executive director, we prefer (select all that apply):

- (a) in-person
- (b) video conference
- (c) phone.

For unscheduled meetings and conversations between the incoming board chair and executive director we prefer (select all that apply):

- (a) in-person
- (b) video conference
- (c) phone.

The best way to schedule meetings is (select all that apply):

- (a) phone
- (b) text message
- (c) email
- (d) online poll

### 4. Preference for responsiveness:

The incoming board chair and executive director have agreed on the following mutual responsiveness standards (specify the number of hours or days).

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- Voicemail: \_\_\_\_\_
- Email: \_\_\_\_\_
- Text: \_\_\_\_\_
- Social media chat: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Availability

The incoming board chair and executive director agreed to call each other no earlier than \_\_\_\_\_ and no later than \_\_\_\_\_. Generally speaking, the best time of day to call the executive director is \_\_\_\_\_ and the best time of day to call the incoming board chair is \_\_\_\_\_.

Additionally, there \_\_\_\_\_ (is or is not) the expectation that they will respond to non-emergency emails or texts outside of these hours.

### 6. Difficult Conversations

The executive director and incoming board chair prefer to have difficult conversation (select all that apply):

- (a) in-person
- (b) video conference
- (c) phone

The executive director and incoming board chair have agreed to NOT have or initiate difficult conversations by (select all that apply):

- (a) email
- (b) text
- (c) voicemail
- (d) social media chat

### 7. Who does what?

The following list outlines specific governance and operational tasks required to run your organization. Your board chair and executive director can review this list together and determine whether each item is responsibility of the (a) board/board chair, (b) executive director/staff responsibility; (c) shared or (d) more conversation is needed. For any tasks that are "shared" discuss and document which portions of those tasks are the board chair's responsibility and which of those tasks are the executive director's responsibility. This will help to further clarify roles when their activities are shared and reduce ambiguity or confusion.

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Activity	Board Chair / Board	Executive Director / Staff	Shared	Convo Needed
Board sustainability				
Building a competent board				
Developing future board leadership				
Engaging the board in planning				
Ensuring effective planning				
Ensuring legal and ethical integrity				
Protecting assets and providing financial oversight				
Selecting the executive director (ED/CEO)				
Succession planning				
Supporting & evaluating the ED/CEO				
Counseling board members not meeting their obligations				
Assembling the board packet				
Disseminating the board packet				
Assembling the executive committee packet				
Disseminating the executive committee packet				
Making decisions regarding insurance				
Running the board meetings				
Running the Executive Committee meetings				

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<b>Activity</b>	<b>Board Chair / Board</b>	<b>Executive Director / Staff</b>	<b>Shared</b>	<b>Convo Needed</b>
Ensuring the quality and effectiveness of programs				
Managing organizational matters				
Staff orientation				
Staff recruitment				
Staff supervision				
Counseling underperforming staff or contractors				
Determining a staff member's actual compensation (other than the ED)				
Determining pay scales for staff salaries				
Filing required documents (990, state registrations, etc)				
Hiring, supervising, supporting, and (if necessary) terminating staff or contractors				
Making IT decisions				
Managing the relationship with insurers				
Spending funds allocated in the budget				
Creating the board meeting agenda				
Board recruitment				
Determining organization's mission & purpose				
Ensuring required documents are filed				

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(990, state registrations, etc)				
Board orientation				
Building external relationships and serving as an advocate				
Commitment to the mission				
Strategic plan implementation				
Enhancing the organization's public standing				
Ensuring adequate financial resources are available				
Fiscal stewardship				
Following the highest ethical standards, ensuring accountability, and complying with the law				
Healthy, functional organization				
Leading and managing fundraising				
Organizational growth and sustainability				
Resource development				
Strategic planning & program evaluation				
Supporting the board				
Managing the bank account				
Serving as the organization's spokesperson				

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<b>Activity</b>	<b>Board Chair / Board</b>	<b>Executive Director / Staff</b>	<b>Shared</b>	<b>Convo Needed</b>
Signing contracts on behalf of the organization				
Policy implementation				
Mission impact				
Monitoring and strengthening programs and services				

**8. Fiduciary, Strategic and Generative Questions**

During your regularly scheduled meetings, the board chair and executive director should dedicate 20 to 30 minutes to discuss one fiduciary, generative or strategic question. These questions are designed to deepen your relationship, align your strategy and pre-empt difficult situations. The questions below can get you started.

- What changes in board operations would make the greatest impact?
- Five years from today, what will our key constituents consider the most important legacy of the current board?
- What if staff or contractors approach the board chair or other board members about to complain about the executive director?
- What would we do with a one-time, non-renewable gift of \$50,000 (or \$500,000) that would create the greatest impact?
- How do we currently ensure financial accountability at the board level?
- What have we learned from the pandemic that will strengthen our board or organization?
- How do we know we’re achieving our mission?
- What should the executive director evaluation look like?
- What support does the executive director most need to excel?
- What support does the board chair most need to excel?
- In what ways does our organization lead? In what ways does it follow?
- Why does our organization still exist?