

(SAMPLE) Nonprofit CEO Transition Task Force: Roles and Responsibilities

(Note: This sample shows how a task force can be formed to guide a CEO transition when the outgoing CEO stays on. It assumes both roles will be active in the organization for a period of time. It has been adapted from Fresh Lifeline for Youth's (FLY) board work in supporting FLY's CEO transition.)

Context and High-level Role of the Task Force

Over the next several months, **[ORGANIZATION]** will be preparing for the transition of its CEO, **[OUTGOING CEO]**, to the organization's new leader. During this time of transition, **[ORGANIZATION]** will establish an ad hoc CEO Transition Task Force (Task Force), whose role is to create a smooth transition between **[OUTGOING CEO]** and our new leader. The Task Force will both create a transition plan to guide this transition process, and once our new leader is officially acting as the agency's CEO (projected for **[TRANSITION DATE]**) and the **[OUTGOING CEO]** as Founder, the Task Force will support them both as they settle in their new roles over approximately **[X NUMBER]** months. At this point, the Task Force will disband. The broader board and staff beyond the Task Force will participate in the transition plan, but the Task Force will be on point to execute this plan.

Composition of the Task Force

The Task Force should include one or two key board officers, one to three other board members who lend particular skills to the process, and members of the executive team. **[ORGANIZATION]**'s executive administrator, while not officially on the Task Force will provide logistical support. As a part of the process, the transition team will solicit, as needed, input from other key senior leaders and a select few external stakeholders who are confidentially in the know about the upcoming transition.

At this point **[ORGANIZATION NAME]** anticipates the team will be:

[LIST OF MEMBERS WITH NAMES, TITLES, AND ROLES]

Task Force Scope of Work

There are a number of ways the Task Force might work together, but regular and clear communication, along with productive working sessions, will be important. We anticipate that members of the Task Force will be meeting at least once per month, or as needed by **[OUTGOING CEO]**, our new leader, or the board.

In the first month, the Task Force's will establish a transition plan; note, this plan will be dynamic and should be considered a living document that is updated throughout the transition process.

A key part of this plan will be a communication timeline (i.e. who is told what, when, and how). Strategically, the transition plan may also be shared with funders who have already made significant investments in **[ORGANIZATION]** and who might be willing to provide funding for the transition itself (funding might support a "transition consultant," ad hoc PR support, etc.).

A transition plan should include a workplan and timeline with the following elements and considerations:

- **Release of CEO duties for outgoing CEO:** A key priority is to clearly articulate our best thinking as to the role of the outgoing CEO during the transition period. This should include key areas of work, where **[OUTGOING CEO]** is inserted and, importantly, not inserted in the day-to-day work of the agency. It will also allow the team to think through strategically when and how **[OUTGOING CEO]** should best share and ultimately release some of the CEO duties/responsibilities leading up to the formal transition of the CEO title in order to minimize any short- and long-term disruption to the agency.

- **CEO Job Description and Professional Development Plan:** Updating the CEO job description and reflecting on areas of learning and growth for our new leader will allow **[OUTGOING CEO]**, our new leader, and the board to be intentional about the six-month lead up to the formal change to maximize opportunities for our new leader to continue to grow, develop, and be supported.
- **Communications/PR:** The transition comes with an exciting opportunity to announce our new leader through traditional and social media. In partnership with the **[ORGANIZATION]** communications team, the Task Force should create a communication plan and a message strategy that identify key internal and external stakeholders, when they should be told of the news and how, and when the announcement itself should go public. The team will also help ensure that the communication plan best positions our new leader for success internally and externally, factors in fundraising needs and goals, and overlays with our new strategic plan. This plan should be shared internally with staff and board members to ensure consistency of messaging.
- **Internal change management:** Inevitably, transitions come with anxiety, stress, and/or destabilization. **[OUTGOING CEO]** and our new leader will be managing this with staff, but the Task Force (and broader board) can play an important role both in supporting **[OUTGOING CEO]** and our new leader in turn, and in directly supporting staff (as appropriate) to reassure them of the positivity of the transition and of the board's confidence in our new leader as the new leader. The team may also be used by **[OUTGOING CEO]** and our new leader as a sounding board/thought partner as they think through the initial staff structure our new leader will need to support the initial stage of tenure as CEO.
- **The transition of key external relationships:** The Task Force can take this transition as an opportunity to introduce/re-introduce our new leader to key partners or even new partners (e.g., this is a good reason to reconnect with loyal donors or potential new donors). Given **[OUTGOING CEO]**'s ongoing role, this will likely look different than it does in other organizations where the relationship needs to be fully "handed off." The Task Force should work with **[OUTGOING CEO]**, our new leader, and the development team to create a plan for each key partner and funder.
- **Farewell events/welcome events:** A proper celebration for **[OUTGOING CEO]** is important, not just to celebrate their tenure with **[ORGANIZATION]** but also to communicate to internal and external stakeholders the positive tenor of the transition. At the same time, welcoming our new leader to the role is also important. Farewell and welcome events should not be mixed. There is no one way to do this (a few larger events vs. many smaller) and the Task Force can work with **[OUTGOING CEO]**/our new leader to determine the way that will feel good and authentic to each of them and to the organization. The Task Force will also determine what the appropriate timing is for various events given that **[OUTGOING CEO]** is not leaving the organization initially but transitioning into a new role
- **Communicating with the broader board:** While the Task Force will be most involved in planning/supporting the transition, the full board needs to be engaged throughout the transition. Board members can support the transition by helping our new leader with funder relationship transitions, supporting staff with whom they have close relationships, attending farewell/welcome events and activities, etc.
- **Supporting our new leader as a new leader:** Finally, and importantly, the Task Force's role does not stop with the official transition—it extends into our new leader's tenure as a new leader of **[ORGANIZATION]**. In order to set up our new leader for success, some onboarding tasks will include:
 - Establishing solid lines of communication between our new leader and the board/board chair (and determining how communication with **[OUTGOING CEO]** will fit into this, given their new role)
 - Outlining initial performance goals and evaluation process for our new leader
 - Identifying professional support desired by our new leader (e.g. mentor or coach, training), by board members or others

This list is just a starting point; the Task Force may determine that it has other important roles to play throughout this process.