

How to Support New Leaders of Color: A Transition Timetable

Preparing for the transition	Leaders of colors' experience of the transition, and the supports funders can provide, change throughout leaders' early tenure				
<p>Board members and leadership team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify the organization's racial equity commitments and invest in them at the staff, executive, and board levels Engage in intentional, multiyear recruitment and transition planning processes that incorporate racial equity Prioritize racial equity and DEI during the recruitment process Co-create clear expectations for how the board and leadership team will support the leader during the early transition years Add a specific, separate budget for incoming leaders to invest in their professional and skills development Plan to partner with staff to communicate the rationale and process for the transition Identify internal and external mentors and supporters who can connect incoming leaders to key stakeholders, funders, and resources 	1st year of transition		2nd year of transition		3rd+ years of transition
	Current felt experience of leadership transitions				
	What current leaders of color <i>thought</i> it would look like ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting forward a new strategic vision Building trust-oriented relationships with team, board, and funders (and even predecessor) Having agency to make changes in organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the new vision Building a cohesive team Gaining external traction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining traction and buy-in after early wins Building out areas of innovation connected to new vision Leading a new vision resulting in better outcomes 	
	What it <i>actually</i> looks like ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending a lot of time assessing current org state and inherited issues Triaging existing organizational issues, often related to racial equity Focusing unexpectedly on increased philanthropic fundraising expectations Proving leadership capabilities, with minimal support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triaging organizational and team issues related to inherited challenges Addressing internal detractors and resistance to change Meeting fundraising and business development pressure Addressing inherited challenges stifling progress on new strategic vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just beginning to assert new perspectives and strategic vision Recruiting the right people to support the vision Still having to prove leadership capabilities and address detractors 	
	Primary feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation Self-doubt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation and loneliness Trapped between putting out fires and implementing vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme burnout 	
	Supports funders can provide				
Unrestricted grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early flexible (unrestricted) funding to provide time and space, and signal confidence to the field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiyear funding for new vision Reduce grant reporting/admin burdens Grants for internal racial equity work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiyear funding for new vision Grants for internal racial equity 		
Platforms and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funder communications to raise the profile of the leader and organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connections to peer funders or key partners that can advance the vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elevating leaders' early successes to peer funders and field for follow-on support 		
Peer exchange, mentorship, executive coaching, and well-being activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive coaching (focus on self) Connection with peer leaders of color Mentoring support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with peer leaders of color Executive coaching (focus on change management); mentoring support Discretionary funding for well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive coaching (refine leadership) Ability to mentor new leaders of color Discretionary funding for well-being 		
Targeted supports for leaders, boards, and teams (based on interviews; illustrative, not prescriptive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fractional COO or chief of staff to manage day-to-day operations Legal and HR support to revamp the organizational structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fractional COO or chief of staff to help execute vision Strategic planning to support vision Legal and HR support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and staff training support to enhance team skill sets Marketing and communications support Organization-specific needs 		

Source: [Avoiding the Glass Cliff: Advice to Board's on Preparing For and Supporting a New Leader of Color](#), BoardSource and the Building Movement Project, 2022; [Avoiding the Glass Cliff resource page](#), BoardSource; Monika Kalra Varma, "[Beyond the Glass Cliff: Reimagining Executive Transitions in the Sector](#)," Philanthropy New York, April 26, 2023; Bridgespan interviews..