

**ANCS Executive Director  
Departure Defined Succession Plan**  
*Draft January 2023*

One of the primary duties of the ANCS Board of Directors (“the board”) is to hire, support, and retain the individual in the position of Executive Director (“ED”) for the school and to insure the ED is effective in the role. ANCS has enjoyed a long stretch of stable leadership of the school due in large part to strong governance and a commitment to planning for the future. Over the past decade, ANCS has been named Georgia “Charter School of the Year”, met or exceeded the goals of its charter and had its charter renewed, built financial reserves, and established itself as a leader in collaboration between charter and traditional public schools. The purpose of this departure defined succession plan is to prepare ANCS for the time at which the ED leaves his position and the school so that the plan can be implemented without delay to help insure the continued success of ANCS under new leadership.

### **First Steps Upon Decision of ED to Leave ANCS**

#### ***Address the personal and professional barriers for the departing executive.***

1. Review and update the departure defined succession plan as needed on an annual basis. (Governance Committee)
2. Have a “trust and transparency” conversation between the ED and Board Chair, at least once per year.
3. Identify personal planning needs for departing ED, such as relocation and/or family situation.
4. Agree on any parameters of recognition of ED’s legacy at ANCS.
5. In collaboration with the ED, the board should identify strategies and boundaries to facilitate a successful transition.
6. Clearly define any need for the outgoing ED to support his successor for a period of time post-transition and any compensation for such support.

### **Search and Transition Costs**

The board--either through a board task force or through a board-appointed search committee--will develop a budget for search and transition costs. They will need to determine any expense needs above and beyond the current annual budget and present this to the Finance and Operations Committee after which a search and transition budget will be presented to the full board for approval. Costs to be considered include:

1. outgoing ED bonus package (if any)
2. advertising or search firm fees,
3. signing bonus, relocation costs, or increased salary for new ED, and contingent bonuses to keep key leadership team members during the transition process.

Currently, a starting budget of \$10,000 is available in reserve funds to be used for search and transition costs. If additional resources in excess of that amount are deemed necessary by the task force or search committee, such funds may be allocated by a vote of the Finance and Operations Committee.

### **Search Process**

The board has outlined a search process and will review and update the process annually.

Questions to consider:

- Is there a board-appointed search task force? If so, who is on it?
- The board chair shall appoint a member of the board to chair and select members of the search task force.
  - In addition to the search task force chair, members of the search committee shall include:
    - At least one additional board member
    - At least one member of the K-8 leadership team
    - At least one faculty/staff member
    - At least one parent/caregiver
- Will the board seek to hire an executive search firm from the start or rely on the recommendation of the search task force as to how best to proceed?
- What will the scope of the search task force's (or search firm's) responsibilities and authority in the search process be? What are critical aspects to the search process?

The search task force shall manage the search process and recommend 2-4 finalists for consideration by the full board. As discussed by the full board, the search task force will:

- Determine how to proceed with any internal candidates qualified and interested in the ED position prior to posting.
- Discuss the feasibility of using a recruitment firm or consultant to help with the process. The budget will be reviewed for designated funding for this process. If planned departure is expected, the annual budget should include funding in anticipation of this expense.
- Establish a budget and timeline for the process.
- Create a marketing plan for advertising the position. This would include creating a PDF about ANCS and the ED position and identifying where to post the position, including whether to advertise nationally. Potential places to post/circulate position include:
  - ANCS website and social media
  - Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA)
  - Atlanta Public Schools Office of Charter and Partner Schools
  - Diverse Charter Coalition
  - Leadership Atlanta
  - redefinED
  - CultureEd Collective
  - CREATE
  - Georgia School Jobs
  - Edgility
  - National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
  - LinkedIn
  - Local school leader network

- Complete a criminal background check, credit check, and reference check on each finalist.
- Set up an ANCS email account to receive all resumes and applications.
- Establish process to screen and review all submitted resumes.
- Develop ranking criteria and selection process to interview candidates.
- Develop interview protocol and process for selected candidates and selection process for identifying finalists to submit to the full board.

The search task force will keep the board informed on the progress, candidates and the interview process. The board will determine how regularly and in what way the task force should provide updates. The board chair shall keep the faculty and staff informed of the process so that there is regular communication and updates to them through email and face-to-face meetings as needed. Additionally, the board chair will keep the full school community updated on the process through email and/or community meetings as needed.

***Analyze ANCS's immediate needs and get feedback on these needs from the full board, leadership team, teachers/staff, and representatives from ANCS families.***

- A. Use these questions/actions to guide this step:
  - i. Conduct a review of key organizational documents to determine if still relevant.
  - ii. Gather feedback from stakeholders on the following questions:
    - a. As you look at ANCS's mission, what are the organization's greatest strengths and areas for improvement in fulfilling this mission?
    - b. What major upcoming issues might impact the ANCS's ability to successfully fulfill its mission?
    - c. What changes might be needed to address those issues?
  - iii. Key Organization Considerations
    - a. Are the key external relationships held by more than one key staff member? How well does ANCS collaborate with other partners, schools in the community?
    - b. ANCS's finances should be extensively reviewed with a goal to ensure a strong financial position prior to a leadership transition. Does ANCS have financial reserves (unrestricted funding, if possible) in line with its reserve fund policy?
    - c. Is there an opportunity to share leadership responsibilities throughout the organization and reduce dependency (and workload) on the executive? Where are the opportunities to develop future leaders?
    - d. Review the most recent board assessment and determine what changes are needed in either board composition and/or the skill set of next ED to support ANCS's strategic plan.
  - iv. Identify any new ED competencies desired
    - a. What are the top three to five objectives and/or challenges outlined in the current strategic plan that fall under the ED's core responsibilities?
    - b. Based on these objectives and/or challenges, is there an impact on the ED's job description? Discuss as a task force.

**Update the ED's job description to ensure responsibilities and hiring requirements promote the organization's sustainability.**

Matching ANCS's needs with the leadership competencies desired in the next ED is one of the most important steps of succession planning and ultimately the search phase. This process provides an opportunity to update the ED job requirements and responsibilities.

- a. The position description should be reviewed on an annual basis, and should reflect ANCS's strategic plan and priorities.
- b. At the time of a defined departure, edit and refine the then-current job description, with the intent of matching organizational needs with leadership competencies desired in the next ED. It is critical to distinguish any job differences between the departing executive and the replacement executive and to clearly communicate the rationale for any differences.
- c. The Task Force will propose a draft of the updated position description to the full board for review and input prior to posting for the position.
- d. The ED is evaluated on an annual basis by the board. The ED's salary is determined based on a market comparison conducted by the board annually.

**Review and Approval of Job Description, Qualifications, and Compensation**

The search task force will take the revised and updated job description to the full board to review and provide input prior to the job being posted. This document should outline what skills, experience and background, expertise, management and characteristics they are seeking in the next ED. The board will also need to establish a salary range and benefit package for the position based on a market review and in consideration of ANCS's budget.

**Search Timeline**

A comprehensive search should take from 90 to 180 days from start of the search to hire date (not necessarily start date). The search task force should develop an estimated timeline to help guide its implementation. Working backwards from the current ED's departure date, suggested high level tasks for the search committee may include:

- *At least 6-12 months before departure date:* Search task force formed and updates search process plan (job description, etc.), creates a budget, and gets board approval on requested budget changes. After the board reviews the job description, the Task Force will publicly post the position and begin recruiting, according to budget approved by board and current succession plan.
- *At least 4-6 months before departure date:* Form an interview panel; determine standard interview format and questions. Interview candidates until one or more potential successors are found to recommend to board. Invite the finalists to meet with various members of the school community including the current Executive Director, K-8 leadership team, select faculty and staff, full board, and parents/caregivers.

- *At least 90 days before departure date:* Make offer to and negotiate terms with the board selected-candidate with the goal of having an acceptance 2-3 months in advance of departure date.

**Selection Process by Board** The final candidates shall be recommended by the search task force to the full board. The search task force will develop interview questions and an interview protocol to share with the full board.

The board will need to decide whether they are paying for out of town candidates' expenses and what will be reimbursed. They will also need to design criteria and ranking process to guide the conversation after the interviews.

After approval of a candidate by the board, the board chair should be authorized to make the offer to the selected candidate. Communication to the other candidates should also be undertaken by a board member on the search task force.

### **Communication Plan**

Communication that is timely, meaningful, and transparent is a key function of a healthy organization and is integral to the success of a transition. A communications plan can help alleviate concerns about the ANCS's future direction and sustainability during the ED transition.

When the ED is planning on leaving ANCS, he or she should first communicate this desire to depart to the board chair as soon as is practicable. The ED and board chair will work together to determine when to share the decision more widely and will work together to develop a communications plan to notify the broader community. Key supporters to notify could include, but not be limited to: ANCS faculty/staff and parent community, APS and GaDOE, auditor, legal counsel, insurance agent, banker/lender, GA Charter Schools Association, neighborhood associations, community partners (e.g., Zoo Atlanta).

The board chair and search task force may determine that periodic updates about the search process are necessary to some or all of the individuals and groups listed above and will make that determination together.

Once a new ED has been hired, the faculty/staff will be informed in person by the board chair and the new ED will be formally introduced to them. A joint announcement from the board chair and new ED will be sent out within 24 hours of the meeting with the faculty/staff and that announcement will include an opportunity to meet the new ED in person at some point in the near future. A press release announcing the new ED will be created by the board chair and new ED and distributed via email to the other individuals and organizations listed above with follow up phone calls to any of the individuals or groups who received phone calls announcing the current ED's coming departure.

## **Transition Committee**

As the search process nears its conclusion, the board may appoint board members and any key faculty/staff members to an ad-hoc Transition Committee to oversee the tasks essential to a successful transition in leadership at ANCS. The members of this committee may include:

- A member of the board's governance committee and one or more additional board member
- Director of Finance and Operations and one or more additional member of the K-8 leadership team
- One or more members of the faculty/staff from each campus

Duties of this committee may include:

### **1. Assure healthy closure with the departing ED**

- a. Acknowledge achievements and legacy; goodbye rituals
- b. Provide opportunities, especially to staff, for coming to terms with the loss of their leader and for visioning what they want in their next leader
- c. Elicit ED's advice on transition for new ED
- d. Timeline and process for transfer of key ED duties to staff, board and successor
- e. Clear definition of future role of departing ED, if any, with ANCS

### **2. Plan transition activities**

- a. Determine if any outside consultation is needed in the transition
- b. Communicate the transition plan to key internal and external stakeholders
- c. Assure proper involvement of staff in transition activities

### **3. Assure a healthy beginning for the new ED**

- a. Orientation to ANCS programs, systems, people, and stakeholders (introductory meetings, emails, or phone calls arranged with each person/group on key supporters list)
- b. Establishment of solid lines of communication between board and ED
- c. Delineation of initial performance goals for ED
- d. Identification of professional supports desired by the ED, e.g. mentor or coach, training
- e. Specification of performance evaluation system for ED and evaluation dates

### **Promoting Successful Transition of New ED**

The board chair and successor ED should agree on and implement a transition plan for the first 90 days on the job. The 90-day transition plan should include:

1. A plan for orientation of the new ED to ANCS.
2. The board's written goals and expectations of the new ED for the first 90 days and 12 months and the mechanism for feedback and progress monitoring of performance.
3. Participation in a formal orientation program as well as meetings with board members, staff, funders and volunteers.
4. A structured feedback mechanism with pre-identified key stakeholders to assess progress and potential barriers to a successful transition.
5. Access to development resources for the new ED, such as reading materials and/or leadership training programs.
6. The role of the departing ED, including the specific period of time for which the departing ED will provide support to the new ED and the specifics and scope of support (such as making introductions to key stakeholders, providing assistance or counsel with any ongoing projects or issues, etc.)

### **Approval of Defined-Departure Succession Plan.**

This succession plan will be approved by the governance committee and presented to the full board of directors for review and approval.