

CEO Emergency Succession Planning and Long-Term Talent Development Strategy

Definitions:

1. **Emergency Succession Planning:** Making sure that there is a written plan which enables the board, school staff, and families to be clear on which staff would be responsible for key responsibilities and which staff would report to the board in the event that a sudden emergency prevented the CEO from continuing in his or her role.
2. **Long-Term Talent Development Strategy:** While this can be as specific as agreement on a future successor for the CEO and a timeline for the transition, for most organizations we work with, it is a more general planning process to ensure that the organization has in place policies and practices to build the next generation of leadership.

To ensure schools can consistently provide strong results for students and families, CEOs and boards **MUST** ensure that their organization has a written emergency succession plan and a set of policies and approaches that are building the future generations of leadership of the organization, even from the organization's earliest years.

The remainder of this document outlines BoardOnTrack's recommended process for creating the emergency succession plan and for ensuring that long-term succession is receiving adequate attention, given the pressing needs of managing and governing a charter school.

Emergency Succession Plan

This plan clarifies who would be responsible for managing which aspects of the school and who would report to the board, in the event that the CEO becomes suddenly unavailable to do his or her job.

Procedure for Plan Development

1. The creation of an emergency succession plan originates with the CEO.
2. The CEO should draft a plan, share this with the CEO Support and Evaluation Committee or Taskforce¹, receive feedback, and revise as necessary.
3. The revised document should be shared with the full board for an official vote to accept the emergency succession plan.

¹ BoardOnTrack recommends that the CEO Support and Evaluation Committee or Taskforce be comprised of two to four board members and include the board chair. It can often be (but is not required to be) comprised of the officers of the board or committee chairs.

Creating a Draft Emergency Succession Plan

1. Take the CEO job description (after confirming that it truly reflects the CEO's major responsibilities) and list the categories of the main responsibilities, with notes on the key pieces of each.
2. Assign each category of responsibility to specific staff members. Ideally, responsibility for the entire job would rest with one successor, in an emergency, but often this is not feasible. If it is not, BoardOnTrack recommends that you divide the responsibilities between no more than two or, if unavoidable, three people. An example template is below.
3. After you have completed this process of outlining responsibilities and assigning them to one to three staff members, we recommend that you consider carefully what skills or background knowledge these staff members might need to develop in order to fulfill these succession responsibilities successfully. Then create action plans for meeting these learning needs. An example of this type of consideration and planning is summarized in the rightmost column on the example table below.
4. As you create your emergency succession plan, there are a few key questions that you should be sure to address:
 - Are all the responsibilities the CEO currently fulfills clearly delineated in the CEO job description? If not, it is time to revise it to document them. (The Board and CEO might consider making high level task lists, calendars, and “where is everything?” lists to capture what the leader does—see *Succession Planning Article*).
 - Do the designated successors have the skills and knowledge they will need? If not, how will they get it?
 - Do the designated successors have the necessary relationships with the key constituencies (students, families, staff, donors, authorizers, community leaders, etc.)? If not, how will they develop them?
 - Has the succession plan been made clear to senior staff? (While it can be uncomfortable to discuss emergency succession, key staff must know what they are responsible for if something comes up).
 - When will the plan be reviewed each year to make any necessary updates? (BoardOnTrack recommends you do so at your September or October board meeting each year.)

Example Responsibility Categories for Assignment to Emergency Successors with Key Learning Needs and Action Plans

	Key Responsibilities	Designated Successor	Learning Needs and Action Plan
Academic Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and manage performance of the Principal instituting accountability systems to ensure that charter promises are met and exceeded. Develop and lead process for assessing the needs of the instructional program, and planning, implementing, and evaluating short- and long-term academic goals. Supervise the processes for recruitment, selection, initial training, ongoing professional development, and evaluation of teachers and staff. 	Rhonda (Principal)	<p>Hiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CEO has always done the hiring; Rhonda should participate with him this year so she would be ready to fulfill this role under the succession plan. <p>Charter Terms/Accountability: Rhonda is not familiar with our charter terms or authorizer; she should review the charter agreement and discuss it with the CEO; she should host and be in the debrief for this year's authorizer visit</p>

	Key Responsibilities	Designated Successor	Learning Needs and Action Plan
Mission, policy, and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps the Board determine BoardOnTrack's values, mission, vision, and short- and long-term goals. • Helps the board monitor and evaluate BoardOnTrack's relevancy to the community, its effectiveness, and its results. • Keeps the board fully informed on the condition of BoardOnTrack and on all the important factors influencing it. • Identifies problems and opportunities and addresses them; brings those which are appropriate to the board and/or its committees; and facilitates discussion and deliberation. • Informs the Board and its committees about trends, issues, problems and activities in order to facilitate policy-making. Recommends policy positions. • Keeps informed of developments in public education reform, the charter school movement, not-for-profit management and governance, philanthropy and fund development. 	Rhonda (Principal)	<p>Experience Working With Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhonda has had little experience working with this or any other board. She should begin attending board meetings. She should begin working with CEO to create and deliver the monthly reports on academic progress and school culture to the board.

	Key Responsibilities	Designated Successor	Learning Needs and Action Plan
Management and administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides general oversight of all BoardOnTrack activities, manages the day-to-day operations, and assures a smoothly functioning, efficient Charter School. • Assures program quality and charter school stability and sustainability through development and implementation of standards and controls, systems and procedures, and regular evaluation. • Assures a work environment that recruits, retains, and supports quality staff and volunteers. Assures process for selecting, development, motivating, and evaluating staff and volunteers. • Recommends staffing and financing to the board of trustees. In accordance with board action, recruits personnel, negotiates professional contracts, and sees that appropriate salary structures are developed and maintained. • Specifies accountabilities for management personnel and evaluates performance regularly. 	<p>Rhonda (Principal): oversees and manages instructional staff</p> <p>Sam (Director of Finance and Operations): oversees and manages administrative and operations staff</p>	

	Key Responsibilities	Designated Successor	Learning Needs and Action Plan
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes programs and services that are produced in a cost-effective manner, employing economy while maintaining an acceptable level of quality. Oversees the fiscal activities of the charter school including budgeting, reporting and audit. Works with board to ensure financing to support short- and long-term goals. Assures an effective fund development program by serving as the chief development officer or hiring and supervising an individual responsible for this activity. Helps guide and enable the Board, its fund development committee(s) and its individual board members to participate actively in the fund development process. Helps the board and its development committee design, implement and monitor available fundraising plan, policies, and procedures. Participates actively in identifying, cultivating and soliciting donor prospects. Assures the availability of materials to support solicitation. Assures the development and operation of gift management systems and reports for quality decision-making. 	Sam (Director of Operations and Finance)	Fund Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This would be a completely new area for Sam He should “ride along” with the CEO on at least three major donor visits this year and host two The CEO and Development Committee chair should make sure Sam is introduced to all of our \$1,000+ donors Sam should serve on the board committee planning the gala

	Key Responsibilities	Designated Successor	Learning Needs and Action Plan
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps the board articulate its own role and accountabilities and that of its committees and individual members, and helps evaluate performance regularly. Works with the board chair to enable the board to fulfill its governance functions and facilitates the optimum performance by the board, its committees and individual board members. With the board chair, focuses board attention on long-range strategic issues. Manages the board's due diligence process to assure timely attention to core issues. Works with the board officers and committee chairs to get the best thinking and involvement of each board member and to stimulate each Board member to give his or her best. Recommends volunteers to participate in the board and its committees. 	Sam (Director of Operations and Finance)	<p>General Governance Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sam should complete the webinar strand on general charter school management on the BoardOnTrack website <p>Relationship with the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sam should start attending board meetings regularly and should take the lead in facilitating this year's budget development process

	Key Responsibilities	Designated Successor	Learning Needs and Action Plan
Community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates the integration of BoardOnTrack into the fabric of the community by using effective marketing and communications activities. Acts as an advocate, within the public and private sectors, for issues relevant to BoardOnTrack, its services, and constituencies. Listens to students, parents, volunteers, donors, and the community in order to improve services and generate community involvement. Assures community awareness of BoardOnTrack’s response to community needs. Serves as chief spokesperson for BoardOnTrack, assuring proper representation of BoardOnTrack to the community. Initiates, develops, and maintains cooperative relationships with key constituencies. Works with legislators, regulatory agencies, volunteers and representatives of the charter community to promote legislative and regulatory policies that encourage a healthy community and address the issues of BoardOnTrack’s constituencies. 	Rhonda (Principal)	<p>Exposure to the community/experience representing the school publically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhonda should present the family information sessions that proceed the lottery this year She should “ride along” with the CEO on at least three meetings with local politicians or community leaders this year

Long-Term Talent Development Strategy

The most important role a board can play in developing a long-term succession strategy is to ask smart questions that help the CEO to articulate what the organization is doing to grow future generations of leadership. These questions include:

- What, if any, part of the interview process for teachers or other staff is intended to gain insight into their capacity for and interest in future leadership?
- When your CEO looks at their staff, how would he or she divide them into three tiers:
 1. Those with strong leadership potential that should be invested in.
 2. Those who may have leadership potential, but more probing is necessary to clarify the extent of their potential.
 3. Those who do not possess significant leadership potential.

How does your organization assess which staff members are in which groups?

What is your CEO's plan for each of these groups?

How does your school reward/invest in those with high potential?

- What are the leadership opportunities that your school has created to allow teachers to explore their potential and to grow as leaders of adults? (E.g., grade team or department level chairs, enrichment coordinator, summer academy administrator, Saturday school administrator, etc.)
- How is your CEO feeling about his or her own career progression? What does the CEO imagine doing professionally in three to five years? (It is worth revisiting this question every year as part of the CEO's annual review.)

Recommended Action Steps

1. The CEO writes a report outlining his or her thoughts on longer-term succession management. This document should contain answers to the questions above and other relevant information.
2. The CEO then shares this document with the CEO Support and Evaluation Committee or Taskforce, receives feedback, and revises as necessary.
3. The revised plan is shared with the full board for an official vote to accept the intent of the succession management plan, and the creation of specific goals and expectations for the CEO that may emerge from this process.