



# READY, SET, GO!

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It's time to get started with  
succession planning

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# 70%

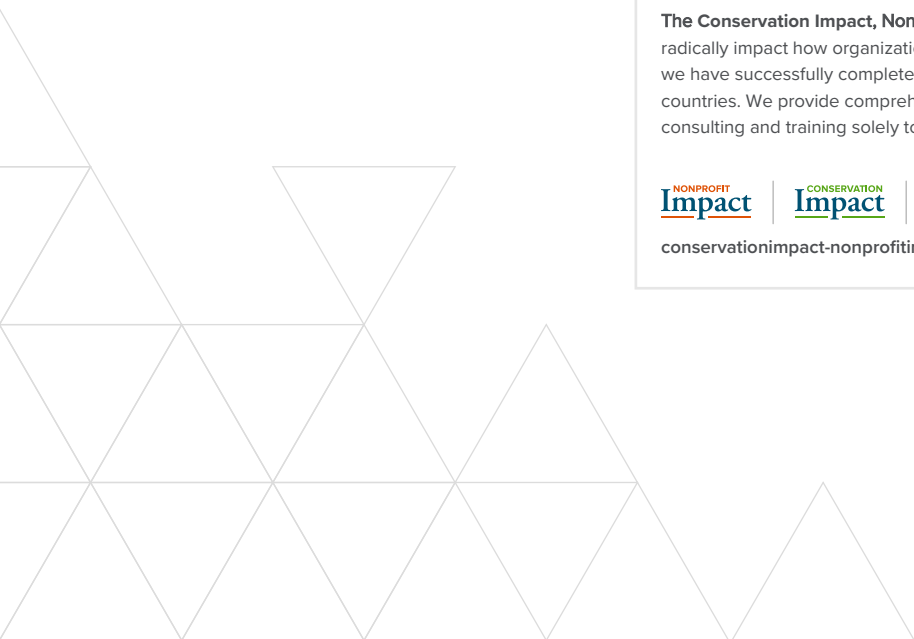
That's the projected rate of turnover in nonprofit executive directors over the next five years. No wonder so many organizations are talking about succession planning!

**P.S.** Thinking of becoming a nonprofit CEO? We haven't forgotten about you. Go to page 8 and start developing your professional development plan.

If you're ready to stop talking about succession planning and start acting, then you're in the right place. We wrote this e-book especially for nonprofits based on our 20 years of experience working with groups around the country. These tools and templates will help you assess and address your succession planning needs.

The Conservation Impact, Nonprofit Impact, and Impact Lab family of companies' mission is to radically impact how organizations fulfill their missions and achieve results. Founded in 1996, we have successfully completed more than 1,100 projects with 710 clients in 45 states and 5 countries. We provide comprehensive planning, marketing, and organizational development consulting and training solely to nonprofits, government agencies, and foundations.

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# Succession Planning Assessment

Your nonprofit’s succession planning needs depend on a number of factors. Read the statements below and circle the number that best reflects how true each item is for your organization.

- Strongly agree ①
- Agree ②
- Neutral ③
- Disagree ④
- Strongly disagree ⑤

My nonprofit's CEO will definitely be with us for at least the next 5 years.	1 2 3 4 5
My nonprofit systematically cultivates the leadership and management skills of all staff.	1 2 3 4 5
My board of directors is well-prepared to successfully manage a CEO search process.	1 2 3 4 5
If my CEO retired tomorrow, my nonprofit's most important relationships (with donors, partners, etc.) would be just as strong three months from now as they are today.	1 2 3 4 5
My nonprofit's day-to-day operations wouldn't skip a beat if our CEO or another key staff person left us unexpectedly.	1 2 3 4 5

Total Points	Stages	
20+	Green Light	Congratulations! Your nonprofit is well-prepared for succession. See pages 8-10 to start strengthening the leadership and management capacity of all your staff.
11-19	Yellow Light	You probably have a basic emergency succession plan in place. That's a great start! See pages 6-7 to learn more about defined-departure succession planning.
5-10	Red Light!	Stop reading and go call your board chair right now. Seriously. It is imperative that you create an emergency succession plan ASAP! When you get off the phone, turn to page 4 to kick start your succession planning work.



# Red Light!

## Draft an Emergency Succession Plan

Emergency succession plans are just that—plans created to help an organization cope with a sudden or unexpected absence of leadership. Every nonprofit needs an up-to-date emergency succession plan – even if your current CEO plans to stay on the job for the next 10 years.

### Emergency Succession Plan Next Steps

Already have a basic emergency succession plan in place? Set a goal to accomplish these tasks over the next six months:

- ▶ Create an inventory of your organization's key organizational documents, passwords, and financial information
- Identify areas of CEO responsibility where others can be cross-trained
- ▶ and set up a cross-training schedule

An emergency succession plan doesn't have to be long, but it does have to be clear. At a minimum, it must answer three key questions:

1. Who will serve as interim CEO?
2. Who will be in charge of what?
3. What will we communicate and to whom?

for three different scenarios:

1. Short-term unplanned absence: when the CEO intends to return within the next three months
2. Longer-term unplanned absence: when the CEO intends to return following an absence of longer than three months
3. Permanent unplanned absence: when the CEO does not intend to return to the position





This workplan template outlines the key steps and tasks you must complete to develop an emergency succession plan. Set some deadlines, assign the tasks, and get started.

Step	Tasks	Responsible	Deadline
Create an ad hoc committee to draft emergency succession plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Add topic to board agenda and get approval</li> <li>▶ Select members and chair</li> <li>▶ Create meeting schedule</li> <li>▶ Assign tasks and deadlines</li> </ul>		
Designate interim CEO and back up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Update CEO job description as needed</li> <li>▶ Research interim CEO options (current and past staff, board, outside party)</li> <li>▶ Research compensation</li> <li>▶ Discussion options</li> <li>▶ Make and document decisions</li> </ul>		
Clarify board and staff responsibilities during interim period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Identify a board member to serve as point person during the interim period</li> <li>▶ Define responsibilities board members will take on (especially related to communications, financial oversight, and supervising the interim CEO)</li> <li>▶ Define responsibilities staff members will take on</li> <li>▶ Draft guidelines for how the board will manage a longer-term absence that becomes a permanent absence</li> </ul>		
Create communications plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Create list of key funders, partners, vendors, etc. to be notified of interim period</li> <li>▶ Assign responsibility for developing and delivering communications</li> <li>▶ Document any specific timelines or protocols</li> </ul>		
Pull it all together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Finalize emergency succession plan</li> <li>▶ Review document with board and get approval</li> <li>▶ Review plan annually and update as needed</li> </ul>		





## Yellow Light:

# Create a Departure-Defined Succession Plan

A departure-defined plan outlines how your nonprofit will manage a leadership transition that has a well-defined timeline, such as when a CEO announces her intention to retire in a year or two. A departure-defined plan is usually what people have in mind when they talk about succession planning.

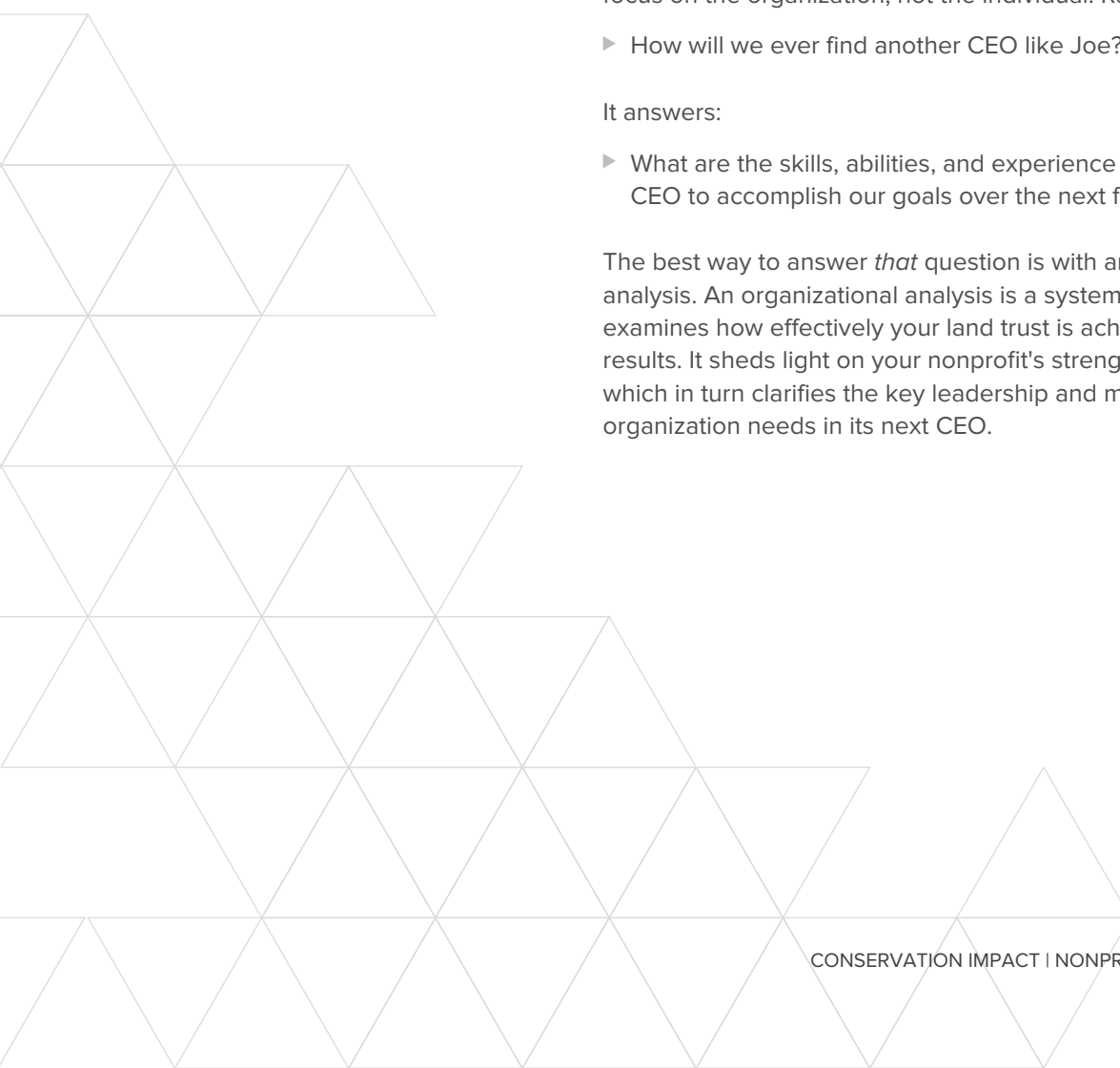
The key to developing a strong departure-defined succession plan is to focus on the organization, not the individual. Rather than trying to answer:

- ▶ How will we ever find another CEO like Joe?

It answers:

- ▶ What are the skills, abilities, and experience we need in our next CEO to accomplish our goals over the next few years?

The best way to answer *that* question is with an objective organizational analysis. An organizational analysis is a systematic, objective process that examines how effectively your land trust is achieving mission-related results. It sheds light on your nonprofit's strengths and weaknesses, which in turn clarifies the key leadership and management skills your organization needs in its next CEO.



This workplan template outlines the key steps and tasks you need to complete to develop a departure-defined succession plan. Set some deadlines, assign the tasks, and get started.

Step	Tasks	Responsible	Deadline
Complete organizational analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Decide who will do the analysis</li> <li>▶ Conduct interviews and research</li> <li>▶ Complete the analysis</li> <li>▶ Review analysis and make decisions regarding priorities for executive director position</li> </ul>		
Develop CEO profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Draft position overview</li> <li>▶ Develop list of essential duties and responsibilities</li> <li>▶ Define minimum and preferred qualifications and experience</li> <li>▶ Research salary information and set salary range/benefits</li> </ul>		
Create search committee job description and work plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Define committee's role and responsibilities</li> <li>▶ Identify essential skills and expertise needed by committee</li> <li>▶ Define committee membership</li> <li>▶ Create work plan and timeline</li> </ul>		
Define recruitment strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Determine scope for search (local, regional, national)</li> <li>▶ Decide whether to manage search process internally or externally</li> <li>▶ Develop list of best recruitment strategies</li> </ul>		
Define screening and selection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Outline screening and selection process</li> <li>▶ Identify who will screen candidates</li> <li>▶ Draft interview strategy (how many rounds, who will be involved, etc.)</li> <li>▶ Decide how to communicate with candidates who will manage communications</li> <li>▶ Meet with board to decide how it wants to make final hiring decisions</li> </ul>		
Plan closure and transition management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Define how and when staff will be involved in the process</li> <li>▶ Discuss how to honor the outgoing executive director and assign responsibility</li> <li>▶ Define the outgoing CEO's role during the search process, onboarding, and post-transition</li> <li>▶ Develop communications plan to share transition news with key constituents</li> </ul>		
Plan onboarding phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Define the board's role in onboarding</li> <li>▶ Assign responsibility for developing first-year performance expectations</li> <li>▶ Identify orientation needs and assign responsibility</li> </ul>		
Review and approve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Finalize departure-defined succession plan</li> <li>▶ Review document with board and get approval</li> <li>▶ Review plan annually and update as needed</li> </ul>		

# Green Light:

## Grow Your Own (Or Yourself!)

Designated succession planning means proactively cultivating staff to fill future leadership and management needs. This powerful, but underutilized, approach can focus on developing a specific successor or on developing the skill and abilities of all mid-level staff (grooming vs. farm team).

Whether you are a staff member who one day wants to be a nonprofit CEO or a current executive director or board member who wants to cultivate potential successors, use this check list to get started.

### Future nonprofit CEOs:

Read each statement below and rank how strongly it applies to you

- Strongly agree ①
- Agree ②
- Neutral ③
- Disagree ④
- Strongly disagree ⑤

### Current executive directors/board members:

Use the checklist to identify key professional development priorities for individual staff members

### Land Trust CEO Check List \*

I care deeply that my work makes an impact and feel that the nonprofit sector offers the best way for me to make that impact	1	2	3	4	5
I am a strategic thinker – able to see the big picture and how different parts of the system connect and interact	1	2	3	4	5
I know my own strengths and weaknesses and understand how they complement the strengths and weaknesses of those around me	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that I can work in partnership with a board of directors to lead a nonprofit in achieving its goals	1	2	3	4	5
I see fundraising as an opportunity to invite investment in our organization's mission and long-term impact and I am comfortable asking for money	1	2	3	4	5
I can develop and manage effective teams that succeed in implementing assigned tasks	1	2	3	4	5
I know what being a nonprofit CEO entails, including all the relevant laws, regulations, and rules	1	2	3	4	5
I can develop an organizational budget and I understand the basics of financial reporting and mid-long term financial planning for a nonprofit organization	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the differences between managing programs, projects, people, and ongoing operations and am confident in my abilities in each of these arenas	1	2	3	4	5
I can build and maintain long-term loyal relationships with supporters, partners, and community members	1	2	3	4	5

\* The CEO check list is based on learning objectives from Conservation Impact's new "Reshape the Future: Be a Nonprofit CEO" program. For more information, please visit: <http://conservationimpact-nonprofitimpact.com/impact-lab-training/>



## Conversation Guide

After assessing your professional development priorities, engage others to start taking action. This conversation guide can help you get started.

For current CEOs/board members:	For future nonprofit CEOs
Step 1: Reflect and Clarify Intentions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Do you see a spark you want to cultivate?</li> <li>▶ Are you trying to retain a great staff person you're afraid of losing?</li> <li>▶ Do you see this person as a possible successor?</li> <li>▶ Something else?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Are you trying to learn if they will support your professional development?</li> <li>▶ Are you positioning for a different job?</li> <li>▶ Are you trying to let them know that you're bored or underutilized?</li> <li>▶ Something else?</li> </ul>
Step 2: Arrange the Meeting	
<p>Reference your intentions, for example:</p> <p>“Hi Maria! I want to set up a time for us to meet one-on-one. You've been with the organization for 4 years and we're really happy with your work. I'm a big believer in retaining top staff so I want to talk about your plans for the future to see if there are ways we can support your professional development.”</p>	<p>Reference your intentions, for example:</p> <p>“Hi Jill. I want to set up a time for us to meet one-on-one. I've been with the organization for 4 years and I really want to spend my career doing this work. I'm happy with my job, and I'm not looking to go anywhere, but in 3 or 4 years, I'd really like to be in a leadership position. I want to share my professional development goals with you and see if there are ways you can support me in pursuing them.”</p>
Step 3: Prepare an Agenda	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ What questions do you want to answer?</li> <li>▶ What decisions do you want to make?</li> <li>▶ What points do you want to communicate?</li> </ul>	
Step 4: During the Meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review and adapt agenda as needed</li> <li>▶ Keep an open mind and use your active listening skills</li> <li>▶ Focus on learning how you might move forward together – not problem solving</li> </ul>	
Step 5: Ending the Meeting;	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recap your understanding of the conversation</li> <li>▶ Confirm any next steps</li> <li>▶ Express gratitude</li> </ul>	

## Professional Development Plan Template

Use the template below to define your professional development goals and how you will pursue them, check for agreement, and manage and monitor progress.

<b>Name</b>			
My Goals			
<b>Short-Term (1-2 years)</b>	<b>Mid-Term (2-5 years)</b>	<b>Long-Term (5+ years)</b>	
<b>Existing Strengths and Abilities</b>		<b>Strengths and Abilities to Cultivate (in priority order)</b>	
My Action Plan			
<b>Strength/Ability</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>	<b>Steps</b>	<b>Schedule</b>



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