Embrace the Future: Succession Planning for Nonprofits Organizations
2016 Program Guidelines

Background

The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta embarked on a learning journey about the relationship between succession planning and long term sustainability in nonprofit organizations in 2013. As a sector, we have been anticipating a wave of executive transitions for 15 years. Executives wrestle with a number of personal and organizational readiness questions – as well as environmental factors from the economy – in determining when the successful handoff to a new leader can happen. Though slowed by the recession, projected rates of executive turnover remain high, and research shows many boards of directors are under-prepared to select and support new leaders.

Embrace the Future: Succession Planning for Nonprofit Organizations

In the summer of 2015, the Community Foundation launched a program for a cohort of 15 nonprofit organizations through which board and staff leaders learned about all aspects of succession planning. The Foundation partnered with BoardSource to offer this program, and we are thrilled that every nonprofit that participated in the program developed a Succession Plan Policy, an Emergency Succession Plan and a Departure-defined Succession Plan. Organizations that participated in the 2015 program include:

- Center for Black Women's Wellness
- Child Development Association
- CHRIS Kids
- Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy
- Mary Hall Freedom House
- Our House
- Project Community Connections
- Senior Connections
- SisterLove
- Synchronicity

Here is what some of the participating organizations had to say about the program:

> *"Succession plans are vitally important to organizations, but most are not doing enough to prepare for changes in leadership. We found Embrace the Future to be incredibly useful on many levels. It aligned perfectly with our strategic plan to develop 'best in class' policies to meet the needs of our organization, and we now have a clear succession strategy in place."*

> *"This has been learning experience for board and staff alike and we've learned many lessons along the way – the most significant being that we will not be successful in our execution without proper planning, commitment, participation and professional expertise. We believe we now have a process in place to identify areas of concern and opportunity and to leave a "roadmap" for the future."*

> *"Embrace the Future was beneficial on many levels for our organization, and two things stand out—it helped deepen the CEO/Board Chair relationship by providing a safe space for the conversation, and it allowed both the paid leader and volunteer leader to discuss issues within peer groups. Fabulous experience!"*

> *"The program provided tools that were immediately put into practice, to ensure seamless transfer of knowledge, protection of organizational history and clear pathways for the board in the hiring process. This also created a wonderful road map for our future, should there ever be an emergency or planned departure. As a founder, this makes me feel much more confident that our organization's activities could move forward with new leadership, should/when that is appropriate."*

The Community Foundation is pleased to offer *Embrace the Future: Succession Planning for Nonprofit Organizations* again in 2016 in partnership with BoardSource. Effective nonprofit boards understand that Executive Director/CEO departures are inevitable; whether it is an emergency transition or a planned transition. These exceptional boards collaborate with the Executive Director/CEO to identify key strategies, information and tools in advance in order to prepare for the executive's transition, whenever it might occur. Through this program, nonprofit executives and board leaders will learn about the essential elements of succession planning, resulting in the development of a Succession Plan Policy, an Emergency Succession Plan and a Departure-defined Succession Plan. The Community Foundation is covering the costs of the program. *Participation in this program is limited to 15 nonprofit organizations.*

Program objectives for participants

1. Gain an understanding of the various types of Succession Plans.
2. Understand the rationale of why succession planning is critical to ensuring sustainability.
3. Learn about barriers to effective succession planning and strategies for overcoming these barriers. Participants will assess their organizations for presence of barriers and take action.
4. Participate in a structured education and task oriented process that will result in a fully developed organizational specific Departure Defined Succession Plan. Participants will be guided through completing task assignments such as:
    a. Defining organizational specific succession planning objectives.
    b. Reviewing organizational readiness – identifying strengths and gaps.
    c. Facilitating discussion with Board and senior staff.
    d. Completing the executive's checklist and core responsibilities.
    e. Identifying top strategic objectives and necessary leadership skills.
    f. Creating internal and external communication plans.
    g. Developing internal succession plan operations strategy and timelines.
    h. Evaluating sustainability factors – board, staff, stakeholders, budget and programs.
    i. Incorporating all factors into the creation of a succession plan policy and detailed plan.

BoardSource

With more than 25 years of hands-on experience working with nonprofit boards, BoardSource has become the go-to resource for funders, partners and nonprofit leaders who want to magnify their impact within their community through exceptional governance practices. BoardSource supports a community of more than 100,000 individuals with customized diagnostics, live and virtual trainings, membership programs and a comprehensive library of governance resources and publications that include original content. Its staff and affiliated pool of associates and trainers conduct consulting and training engagements around the country on behalf of the organization.

Dr. Robin Hindsman Stacia is a senior governance consultant at BoardSource. Based in the Atlanta area, Robin has over 17 years of experience as a nonprofit consultant. She has expertise in board governance and board development. She has particular experience assisting nonprofit boards and chief executives with leadership development and executive coaching, retreat facilitation, building cultural competency, team building, assessments, visioning and strategic planning, as well as designing and delivering customized training programs. Robin has worked with a variety of organizations in the education, health care, religious, and social service sectors.

Program Details

Requirements and expectations of participating nonprofits:

1. Each organization is required to have two attendees participate in each of the four in-person sessions (detailed schedule below): the organization's staff leader (executive director, CEO, etc.) and a board leader (board chair, vice chair or chair of the governance committee). The two individuals identified in the application are required to attend each of the sessions; no substitutes are allowed throughout the program.
2. Participants will receive assignments to be completed in between each of the in-person sessions and prior to the commencement of the one-on-one coaching.
3. Each organization will need to establish a Succession Planning Committee that will include the two in-person session attendees and additional appropriate staff and board members. This committee will support the completion of assignments throughout the program's duration. Organizations will be asked to identify committee members at the time of acceptance to the program.

4. All members of the Succession Planning Committee will be expected to have viewed the 2016 Executive Transition & Succession Planning webinar linked on the Foundation's website prior to the first in-person session. Some introductory reading materials may also be sent out prior to the first session.
5. Organizations will be expected to draft a Succession Plan Policy, an Emergency Succession Plan and a Departure-defined Succession Plan prior to accessing the consultant for one-on-one coaching/consulting. Participating organizations will be expected to complete their one-on-one coaching and succession plans no later than February 28, 2017.
6. Participants will be required to provide a short report to the Foundation by March 31, 2017. More details regarding these reporting requirements will be provided at a later time.

In-person session details:
All sessions will take place at the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta (191 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 1000, Atlanta, GA 30303); parking will be validated for those who park in the 191 Peachtree parking deck.

- Thursday, August 18, 9AM-12PM
- Tuesday, September 27, 9AM-12PM
- Monday, November 7, 9AM-12PM
- Tuesday, December 13, 9AM-1PM

Eligibility

Participation in the Embrace the Future program is open any organization that meets the following eligibility criteria:

- Must have annual operating expenses greater than $500,000 as reflected in the most recently filed I.R.S. Form 990;
- Must have at least five full-time paid employees *(please note that contractors or consultants do not count toward this requirement)*;
- Must have a strategic plan that covers the entire current fiscal year;
- Must have a staff leader (executive director/CEO/president) who is not leaving the organization within the next 12 months;
- Must have a board chair who is not transitioning off the board within the next 12 months.

Additionally, organizations that are engaged in significant organizational projects – e.g. developing a new strategic plan or implementing a major capital campaign – are not eligible for this program as participation in the program requires a significant investment of time on behalf of the organization's board and staff leaders.

Application & Review process

- **Application Deadline:** Noon, Tuesday, July 19
- A complete application consists of the following:
  - Completed Organizational Profile and Common Grant Application on the Community Foundation's online portal (click here for details)
  - Completed application form and required attachments submitted to NonprofitEffectiveness@cfgreateratlanta.org

  Incomplete applications will not be considered
- Applicants will be notified of approval or denial by Friday, July 22.

Questions?

If you have any questions, contact Lita Pardi, senior program officer, at 404.526.1131 or lpardi@cfgreateratlanta.org.