



UPPER PENINSULA LAND CONSERVANCY

Policy 7D: Transition Planning

*Standard 7, 2017 Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices;
2021 Accreditation Requirements Manual*

Board Approved: May 10th, 2022

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for regular review of organizational transition plans and requirements for accompanying procedures, so that they align with Land Trust Alliance **Standard 7A**:

“Develop a written process or plan to provide for continuity in the leadership and management of the land trust’s functions”

INTRODUCTION

Succession is a topic best broached when no one is anticipating a change in leaders. As organizations in the business of perpetuity, we must embrace the inevitability of transition. Ensuring that the Conservancy is prepared for transition is essential as leadership transition is a crucial moment in an organization's life - a moment of great vulnerability as well as great opportunity for transformative change. It's a moment every organization will face sooner or later. Planning for transitions can help the Conservancy prepare for and manage time-consuming and difficult aspects of transitions, such as communications around departures and hiring replacement talent. It can also help avoid common risks associated with emergency and unplanned transitions, including loss of critical information and expertise unique to individual leaders.

DEFINITIONS

Planned Transition: *Given adequate foreknowledge and time, planned transitions for key leadership ensure the organization continues to implement its strategic vision with minimal disruption when the transition finally occurs*

Unplanned Transition: *Emergency succession plans focus on managing sudden interruptions in key leadership by arranging for temporary coverage, replacement where necessary and securing critical information and organizational capital*

Short-Term Absence: *a planned or unplanned absence of less than three months*

Long-Term Absence: *a planned or unplanned absence of more than three months*

Permanent Change in Executive Director: *a planned or unplanned absence wherein the Executive Director will not be returning to their position*

REFERENCES

Please refer to the accompanying Procedure, Procedure 7D: Transition Planning, for guidelines regarding execution of this policy.



UPPER PENINSULA LAND CONSERVANCY

- *Third Sector New England: Template emergency succession plan*
 - *Land Trust Alliance Field Guide: The key to managing leadership transitions*
 - *Land Trust Alliance Express Toolkit on Succession Planning*
 - *Land Trust Alliance Saving Land Spring 2011 “The Retirement Bomb”*
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POLICY

Summary:

Ensuring that the Conservancy is prepared for a leadership transition - whether Board, Executive Director, key staff or volunteers - is an essential responsibility of the Board. It is the policy of the Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy to incorporate planned and unplanned absences of key leadership into multiple avenues of organizational policy, recordkeeping, and staff development. It is further the policy of the Conservancy to establish and annually review an emergency succession plan in the event of an unplanned short- or long-term absence or change in key leadership. Succession planning and transitions should be built into strategic plans as well as annual work plans and budgets.

Ensure Board and Staff Readiness

Board and Staff shall commit to transition planning as an integral part of day-to-day management and risk management. The Board shall annually review and approve of an emergency succession plan.

Dedicated Task Force

If there is a need to implement a transition, the Executive Committee shall either act as or form an ad-hoc leadership transition team and shall be empowered to enact the appropriate succession plan. An outside consultant may be hired by the Board to facilitate the transition and planning process.

Understand Requirements of Leadership

General policies and procedures of the Conservancy should take into account appropriate actions to ensure smooth transitions of leadership and continuity of knowledge. In the event of a leadership transition, the leadership transition team shall work with appropriate staff to review job descriptions and map critical functions, work activities and work responsibilities within the organization. Doing so may identify opportunities for restructuring and reassignment as part of planned transition. It may be possible to identify potential successors and assess gaps in their skills and experience so that candidates may be strengthened through tailored training, job rotation and mentoring.

Invest in Leadership Development

An essential part of the planning process is to acknowledge that leaders are replaceable and that the Conservancy's success need not and should not hinge on the work of any individual, no matter how skilled, charismatic or dedicated. Leadership transition in any aspect of the Conservancy - Board, staff, volunteer - is dependent on the ability of new leaders to step into their predecessors' shoes and succeed.



Appropriate training, cross-training, and leadership development opportunities for staff and Board shall be made available in advance of a transition occurring.

The Board shall create structural governance systems to enable directors to orient and train to leadership roles prior to election as an officer or appointment to committee chair. Supervisors shall encourage leadership development and professional growth amongst staff by creating decision-making teams that include junior staff members and by identifying in-house opportunities for staff to acquire new responsibilities. Job responsibilities may also be written to include cross-training so that different staff are able to take responsibility for essential functions in the event of a gap in coverage or need for transition in duties.

REVISIONS

This policy should be reviewed by the Board on an annual basis. Any amendments must be approved by vote of the Board of Directors and will require a simple majority to be changed.

The Board may make reasonable exceptions to the policy in particular cases by Board vote with simple majority, and will document the reasons accordingly in the minutes of the meeting where the decision was made and copies will be placed within the appropriate files in accordance with Recordkeeping policies.