

# Common Ground

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## Why and How to Hire an Interim Executive Director

Leadership change is often marked with emotion, tension, and stress. If the director's departure is forced, emotions may be particularly high for staff and board members.

Externally, some funders, donors, and volunteers may take a "wait and see" approach, putting their support on hold. This can put a strain on resources, further taxing your nonprofit.

Research suggests that a skilled interim executive director (ED) helps nonprofits to emerge stronger, more fiscally sound, and with higher levels of optimism. She takes the helm and lays the groundwork for the next leader's success by:

- ▼ Serving as a bridge, giving the board time to conduct a thoughtful search process.
- ▼ Managing the day-to-day by examining the organization objectively, leading anxious staff, reassuring wary funders, and keeping finances and revenue generation on track.
- ▼ Helping the board clarify its vision and future leadership needs.
- ▼ Modeling excellence in management and leadership.
- ▼ Mentoring the new ED once appointed.

Some tips for hiring an interim ED are:

- ▼ Begin with the end in

mind. Your board should determine what's most critical to the nonprofit's success over the next few months.

- ▼ Identify urgent issues or challenges facing your organization.
- ▼ Review the departing ED's job description, determine priorities for the transition, and draft an interim job description.
- ▼ Seek an interim ED with solid skills in management and transitions. This is more important than familiarity with your nonprofit or its field of work.
- ▼ Keep in mind that the assignment is temporary (usually four to eight months). The individual shouldn't be a candidate for the permanent position.
- ▼ Realize that, due to the unique demands of the role, interim EDs are usually paid higher on an hourly basis than permanent EDs. But, they may be part-time or receive reduced benefits because of their temporary status.

INTERIM CONTINUED ON P. 12



Jeanie Duncan (left) shares a moment with Ashley Brooks, executive director of the Women's Resource Center of Greensboro, at the N.C. Center's conference. Don't miss your Public Policy Forum for Nonprofits on May 29 and NC Nonprofits Day at the legislature on May 30! Photo: JLS Photography