
Envisioning the Future

Strategies for Executive
Leadership Transition

LIFE **40**
AFTER

PROJECT CASE STUDY

National
Family Planning
& Reproductive Health Association

Envisioning the Future

Strategies for Executive
Leadership Transition



PROJECT CASE STUDY

Case Study Team:

Clare Coleman, President & CEO, NFPRHA

Lily Davidson, Senior Director of Operations, NFPRHA

Daryn Eikner, Vice President of Service Delivery & Operational Support, NFPRHA

Yordanos Gebretatios, *Life After 40* Project Manager, NFPRHA

Joan Henneberry, Managing Principal, Health Management Associates

Gina Lasky, Project Manager, Health Management Associates

Jackie Laundon, Junior Associate, Health Management Associates

Robyn Odendahl, Associate, Health Management Associates

Illysa Schragar, Executive Office Manager, NFPRHA

National
Family Planning
& Reproductive Health Association

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Site Selection Methodology	2
About Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania (FHCCP)	2
About Infant Welfare Society of Chicago (IWSC)	2
Vignette Sites: South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina, and Health Imperatives (Massachusetts)	2
Importance of Planning for Leadership Transition	3
Three Phases of Leadership Transition	3
Phase 1: Identifying the Right Strategy	4
Catalyst for Change	4
Preparing for Change.....	6
Succession Plan Development	8
Culture of Organization.....	9
Role of Health Care Context.....	10
Lessons to Share from Phase 1	10

Phase 2: The Search	11
Methodology	11
Roles in Search	11
Timeframe	12
Board Bylaws and Policies	13
Lessons to Share from Phase 2	13
Phase 3: Endings and Beginnings	14
Transition Process	14
Knowledge Transfer	15
Leaders with Experience Outside of Health Care	15
Leadership Transitions Are Not Purely Operational	16
Long-Term Leader Departures	16
Lessons to Share from Phase 3	16
Conclusion	18
Endnotes	18

Introduction

The National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA) designed the *Life After 40: The Family Planning Network and the ACA* project to ensure publicly funded family planning providers that comprise NFPRHA's membership can adapt to health care reform and the broader changes in the evolving health care climate. First conceived during the 40th anniversary year of the Title X program in 2010, the project gets its name from the question, "After 40 years of setting the standard for family planning care, how must Title X health centers respond to the changes in the health care environment to ensure vitality and sustainability of the critical programming?"

As part of the *Life After 40* project, NFPRHA has developed a series of case studies on a wide array of service delivery topics to provide practical guidance to the family planning network. The case studies feature NFPRHA members that are taking innovative approaches to implement change and highlight lessons learned.

This case study examines executive leadership transitions that demonstrated a best practice in planning as well as lessons learned from specific examples of completed transitions in leadership. Throughout the case study, the term "executive leadership transition" will be used to describe the process that an organization uses to plan for and eventually implement the transition of executive leaders. The term is interchangeable with "succession planning." The focus on executive leadership transitions as part of the adaptation to health care reform is grounded in three primary trends:

1. Many family planning organizations have leaders who are retiring, and there is a cohort of strong leaders with institutional knowledge leaving the field at the same time.
2. For some organizations, the breadth of change required to adapt to the evolving health care environment will require new forms of leadership.
3. Many family planning organizations have not formally planned for leadership transition.

Site Selection Methodology

The Life After 40 project staff led a team of consultants with expertise in health care, Title X, and leadership transition experience. The process for selecting sites for the case study was guided by information gathered through NFPRHA member surveys and staff knowledge. The case study team generated a preliminary list of organizations that met one of the following criteria:

- The site experienced a recent executive leadership transition.
- The site was planning for an executive leadership transition.
- The site developed a leadership succession plan as part of a larger strategic planning process.

All sites that met at least one of these criteria and also had interest in participating in the case study were briefly interviewed to discuss the specific leadership transition process. These interviews reviewed a more detailed set of criteria, including:

- Whether sites had followed best practices in leadership transition, including formal planning for a transition, effective transfer of institutional knowledge, internal leadership development, and other strategies.
- The tenure of previous or existing executive leaders. The goal was to find sites with varying leadership tenure to ensure a mixture of scenarios and thus greater applicability of findings.
- The capability of sites to fully participate in the study in terms of time to devote to a site visit, access to members of the board of directors, materials to share regarding leadership transition planning, and staff members (senior leadership and staff) who could discuss the leadership transition process.
- Whether the lessons learned regarding the leadership transition appeared applicable and useful to the broader family planning network (e.g., reason or cause of the transition, process

used, and practical lessons that could be shared with other organizations).

The case study material was developed using information from phone interviews, in-person interviews with key staff over two days, and a review of tools and resources related to leadership transition. Additionally, the team conducted a limited review of the literature on leadership transition planning in health care and nonprofit settings.

Ultimately, two sites were chosen for this case study, the Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania (FHCCP) and the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago (IWSC). FHCCP provides an example of an ongoing leadership transition planning process. IWSC offers lessons learned in an executive leadership transition and serves as an example of a planned shift in leadership focus and organizational positioning. An additional three sites were chosen as vignettes to provide examples of specific kinds of leadership transition, including leadership change in the government sector, leadership change as part of a merger, and leadership transition involving an interim leader. The vignette sites were briefer, more focused interviews and did not include an onsite visit. Each site and vignette exemplifies a component of leadership transition and highlights how the seismic changes within the health care environment are only heightening the need for thoughtful and strategic planning for leadership transition—whether an organization anticipates leadership change soon or not.

About Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania (FHCCP)

Located near Harrisburg, PA, FHCCP was founded in 1973 to build and support community-based health networks through partnerships, education, advocacy, and effective resource allocation. FHCCP is a private, nonprofit organization with a mission to improve health, prevent

disease, and promote wellness. FHCCP supports and oversees a 28 county network of organizations, all of which provide health services to their communities. Such services include preventive care, women's health and family planning services, WIC programs, and HIV/AIDS support and care. FHCCP has an annual budget of \$11.5 million and employs 50 staff. FHCCP also provides direct services in select communities through five Council-owned "Tapestry of Health" sites that offer a range of health services.

About Infant Welfare Society of Chicago (IWSC)

IWSC has served mothers and children for more than 100 years. IWSC provides quality, community-based health care to women and children who are un- and under-insured and otherwise lack access to basic medical services. The health center provides pediatrics, dental, optometry, counseling, family services, Literacy Encouragement for Education Readiness (LEER), and women's health services. IWSC has an annual budget of \$8 million, employs 125 staff, and has 13 Auxiliary Chapters that fundraise or volunteer time for the health center. IWSC is currently applying to become a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), which would require expanding services to a broader population.

Vignette Sites

The vignette participants are the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (Bureau of Maternal and Child Health); Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina; and Health Imperatives in Southeastern Massachusetts. Advice and perspectives from these organizations are shared throughout the case study to demonstrate unique leadership transition strategies or additional examples of core elements of planning for leadership transition.

Importance of Planning for Leadership Transition

Planning for executive leadership transition is a vital aspect of organizational management that can protect an organization's mission, improve its financial viability, provide strategic direction, and support organizational operations. To ensure consistency and objectivity in the process, a thoughtful and deliberate plan should account for variables such as whether the search process and desired characteristics of the incoming leader fit within the organization's vision for the future.

This case study focuses largely on the nonprofit sector with a particular emphasis on the role of the board and the importance of developing a transition plan. Despite this focus and the differences that may exist for government sector agencies, there are important lessons throughout the case study that can be incorporated into the unique process in each sector.

In nonprofits, executive leadership transition is a primary responsibility of the board. Many organizations delay the discussion of leader transition on the assumption that discussing a plan is somehow a commentary on the current leadership rather than a routine aspect of organizational governance. However, there are key organizational opportunities within the planning process including:

- Engagement of board members and senior leadership in discussion of key operational decisions that enhance the organization and will support the leader selection process.
 - Involvement of the current leadership (both executive and senior) in developing a plan that incorporates historic wisdom and organizational culture.
 - Acceptance of the process and clarity of roles among the board and staff members during a transition process which promotes organizational stability, continued quality of care and other mission-critical functions.
 - Support for a transition process through stakeholder feedback and engagement.
 - Ultimately, a well-executed search process and transition.
- Some leadership positions are appointed by elected officials and thus are done largely outside of the department or unit being lead.
 - It is also more likely for leader transitions in government to occur through promotion from within. Many government agencies spend time developing leaders and allowing upcoming leaders to “practice” or “cover” leadership duties as a way of learning the next position.

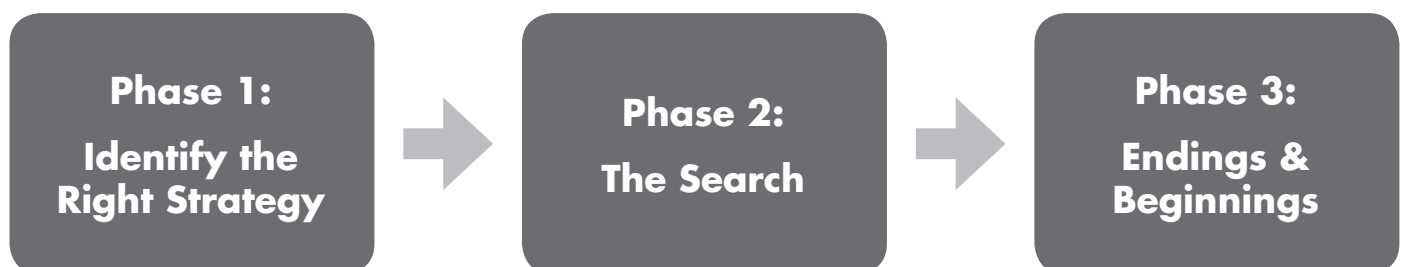
Public sector leadership transitions occur quite differently than nonprofit or private sector transitions. The differences in the process include:

- An outgoing leader usually leaves the position before the search process begins, which often results in a period of time with a vacancy in leadership.
- The search process is standardized regardless of other circumstances due to state hiring practices.

Three Phases of Leadership Transition

The case study process revealed that the organizations studied went through three distinct phases while engaging in leadership transition: identifying the right strategy, the search, and endings and beginnings.

Using specific examples from nonprofit and government of how the transition process unfolds, the case study is designed to guide NFPRHA members on how to think about the process of leadership transition and provide steps to develop a thorough plan. The companion workbook complements the case study and provides hands-on tools for applying concepts explored here and contains examples of what other organizations have done to prepare for changes in leadership. The case study will reference specific tools in the corresponding workbook to facilitate usability.



Phase 1: Identifying the Right Strategy

Phase 1 presents an opportunity for the organization to pause, assess, and be deliberate in the planning and selection of the next phase of leadership. In this phase, key decisions are considered and discussed, which provide a foundation for the implementation of the process. The factors considered in this phase are: contextual changes in the environment, the current and future needs of the organization, the specific characteristics needed in a new leader, the leadership capacity of the staff within the organization, and the capacity and resources of the board.

Catalyst for Change

The catalyst for change from the outgoing leadership can influence the leadership transition process and the type of strategic planning required. Most of the transitions in this case study involved retirement of long-term leaders who have led their organizations for decades. Additionally, changes in the health care environment and the impetus for family planning and sexual health to keep pace with health reforms informed the specific plans for leadership transition.

FHCCP is an example in which retirement was the reason for leadership transition. Cindy Stewart, the current president and chief executive officer (CEO) of FHCCP, has led the organization since 1999 and in that time has crafted a strong and well-defined organizational culture. In 2013, Cindy shared with the board her intent to retire in 2015. At the time of her announcement, both Cindy and the board of FHCCP understood the significance of the impending leadership transition and impact her departure would have on the organization given her longevity in leadership and the strong culture directly associated with her leadership. In addition, board members had recently witnessed through

another organization how events, such as emergencies involving a leader, can be detrimental. For these reasons, FHCCP initiated a formal process for transition planning. The board requested that Cindy craft a succession plan that would be used for her own transition as well as all future transitions for the position of president/CEO and the other senior leaders. In this decision, the board formally acknowledged the longevity among many senior leaders (some with more than 20 years of experience) at FHCCP, and thus the organizational need for transition planning more broadly.

For IWSC, the catalyst for leadership transition developed gradually as the reality of health care reform implementation set in. IWSC Board and the previous executive director engaged in a review of the strategic plan for the organization, and the process led to greater awareness of the changes in health care surrounding IWSC. Contextual elements related to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as well as a transition of Illinois Medicaid to a managed care financing model prompted rich discussion about the future of health care and how IWSC fit within the greater context. As a result, the board hired a consultant to provide education about the changes nationally and in its state to help inform a strategic vision.

One conclusion from this analysis was that IWSC was not as well prepared for the implementation of the ACA as the board hoped. Specifically, the board believed IWSC would require a greater focus on partnerships with both the local community and other health systems in order to participate in Medicaid's managed care structure. In addition, they believed IWSC must broaden its services in order to serve more clients and increase revenue. The board determined that IWSC would need to develop greater capacity for the

future, reposition itself regionally, and develop new sources of revenue.

The previous executive director had a long history with the organization as a leader and former board member and had kept the organization “humming along” ensuring the provision of quality care to vulnerable populations. The board believed that this period of steady management of services needed to shift towards a new phase focused on growth, repositioning, and program development to keep pace with the changing environment. As a result, the executive director announced his retirement and worked with the board to begin an executive leader transition process. The board also created a five-member search committee including former board chairs and the current board chair.

The board set out to hire a leader who could champion this next phase of organizational development and create a vision for IWSC that expanded its reach and ensured its financial stability and programmatic longevity despite changes in the health care environment. In addition, the board made a structural change in the position, deciding to create a CEO position rather than replace the position of executive director, a significant change for IWSC. In the executive director model, the board chair was directly involved in running the health center. In shifting to a CEO model, the board shifted all operational responsibility to the incoming leader. This resulted in changes for the organization and for the board in management responsibilities, requiring a revision to the bylaws.

The shift from executive director to CEO has occurred for many nonprofit organizations in the past few decades. Traditionally, nonprofits were run by executive directors and private sector businesses were run by CEOs

in part to distinguish how nonprofit organizations were different in structure from for-profit businesses. The title of executive director also often indicated that the board had maintained some degree of direct operational role and involvement in the activities of the organization. However, for some

nonprofit organizations as they grew and changed, there were increasing reasons to reduce board involvement in the day-to-day operations, including that they were volunteers, and that it created conflict and/or confusion in leadership decision-making and responsibility. Both roles have important advantages

and disadvantages, and it is important that organizations determine which role and title best represents the needs of the organization. The IWSC experience highlights the importance of considering these aspects of governance as part of the leadership transition process.

Merger as a Catalyst

The converging trends of health care reform and the retiring of long-term leaders in family planning are driving many leadership transitions. For Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina, the changes in the broader health care landscape prompted the outgoing CEO, Janet Colm, to think carefully about the long-term sustainability of her organization. Janet founded and led Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina for 32 years. Factors such as the complexity and level of infrastructure development required by the ACA, the need to develop new partnerships, and the regional political climate all pointed toward the need for greater financial strength. At the same time, the PPCNC Board started to think about the next phase for the agency as a result of Janet's approaching retirement. These converging forces ultimately led to a merger with Planned Parenthood Health Systems, a four-state affiliate headed by another long-time CEO, Walt Klausmeier.

As part of the planning process for the merger, both CEOs decided they would step down together and the newly formed organization, Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, would have a new CEO. However, following the merger agreement, the two CEOs found that it was more challenging than expected to combine two organizations when both leaders were so strongly committed to their previously separate entities. As a result, Walt suggested that they both step into CEO emeritus positions and hire an interim CEO to facilitate the remainder of the merger leading to the January 1, 2015, launch of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic. Janet had attended a workshop on succession planning and remembered that interims can be a good way for organizations to transition to new leadership following a founder and long-term leader and quickly agreed.

A key aspect of this approach was that the two organizations did not have to perform a formal search for an interim director, a process that would have been extremely challenging in the midst of a merger. Both leaders had a shared contact they trusted and respected, and this person was available to step in as the interim CEO. Clearly, the trust and previous relationship with the interim CEO is part of what made the transition process successful.

Once the interim CEO took over the merger priorities, the role for the emeritus CEOs shifted to focus on specific transitional elements to support organizational preparedness. For Janet, these included transitioning donors to the new merged organization and assisting a health center with completing renovations to meet new standards. In addition, she has been working with her staff on preparing for the transition and conceptualizing the emerging "we" of the new organization as well as clarifying roles for individuals who will experience significant change.

Preparing for Change

FHCCP was in the midst of planning for executive leadership transition at the time of this case study. As a result, the lessons to share from FHCCP focus on the intentionality of planning and offer an example of how an organization followed a planning process.

Planning for Leadership Transition is Strategic

FHCCP's initial steps for developing a formal written plan was to review the literature on succession planning and use a readiness assessment tool to identify aspects of the planning process that were missing or in need of modification (see **Workbook Tool #1**). Following this initial review, the CEO and board realized the breadth of the endeavor and began a process of thoughtful analysis of components of the transition. Although

the initial goal of the board was to create a document specifically outlining the process for leadership transition at FHCCP, the final outcome was far more significant and long-lasting. The more the elements of a plan were considered, the more the CEO, board, and senior leadership realized the need was greater than succession planning.¹

FHCCP's experience reflected what the literature on nonprofit leadership suggests — effective leadership transition planning is a board process.² FHCCP learned that the board needed to “own the process” as well as the ultimate plan. It also learned that leadership transition should be based in deliberate and thoughtful transition planning and organizational assessment. Conversations about key considerations were important in and of themselves, and informed the development of the specific plan for leadership transition.

For FHCCP, this process did not mean that the strategic plan for the organization needed to be modified, although this could be the case for other organizations. Vision and strategy were clear for FHCCP, at least for the remainder of the outgoing CEO's tenure. The board anticipates an incoming CEO to bring vision to the position and work with the board and staff to reach that vision. FHCCP found that the current strategic vision and goals were needed to inform the plan but not drive the process — this allows for new ideas, vision, and strategy to come with the incoming CEO.

The box below summarizes the kind of key decision points and fundamental conversation topics that facilitated transition planning at FHCCP (see **Workbook Tool #2**).

Table 1: Conversation Topics for FHCCP's Leadership Transition Plan

1. What are the types of leadership succession (transition) you need to plan for (emergency, retirement, senior leadership, etc.)? (see **Workbook Tool #3**)

Each requires:

- a. communication plan;
- b. staffing plan;
- c. recruitment plan; and
- d. onboarding plan.

2. Who will be the interim CEO? (see **Workbook Tool #4**)

- a. Board member or staff member?
- b. Should it be someone interested in the job?
- c. Is there compensation for the interim?
- d. When should they be appointed?

3. Determine how the strategic plan will be impacted. Will you recruit for the current plan or will you recruit for a future plan? What is the vision for the position?

- a. Involve key community stakeholders and staff members.
- b. Identify key programs, critical relationships, and supportive services – associations, memberships, etc. (e.g., impact on Title X family planning programming).

Table 1: Conversation Topics for FHCCP's Leadership Transition Plan

4. What are the characteristics of the leader needed for this organization?
 - a. How does the changing health care environment inform the characteristics needed (e.g., ability to partner, understanding of health care reform, etc.)?
 - b. Involve staff members in identifying leadership qualities and organizational needs.
 - i. Develop a job profile.
 - ii. Examine responsibilities and create a job description.
 - iii. Explore education requirements.
 - iv. Explore knowledge/experience needed.
 - v. Explore personal traits/values desired.
5. Who will be involved in our recruitment team?
 - a. Search firm or management from within? Can current CEO assist (pros/cons)? Does the board have resources to do within? Does the organization have resources for search firm?
 - b. What will be the board composition in recruitment?
 - i. Consider board governance and bylaws.
 - ii. Consider board governance in relationship to a board member applicant.
 - c. Involvement of key stakeholders (staff, external partners, others)? Process for this?
 - d. Determine size and composition of the team.
 - e. Conflict of interest – how to mitigate any potential risk?
 - f. Create confidentiality agreements. **(see Workbook Tool #19)**
 - g. Determine timeline and budget. **(see Workbook Tool #13)**
6. What is the organizational culture?
 - a. Is it strong and clearly identified by staff?
 - b. Does it impact the process? How?
7. Is the search internal (closed) or external (open) or sequential?
 - a. Assess the leadership capacity within the organization for internal recruitment.
 - b. Assess the leadership already known to the organization in the local or regional area.
 - c. Consider the needs of the organization and new leader as identified above including health care context.
8. What is the recruitment process?
 - a. Resume review.
 - b. Initial interview.
 - c. Final interview.
 - d. Additional engagement.
 - e. Vetting process – reference checking, credit report, criminal clearances, credentialing.
 - f. Who will negotiate the offer/contract – including salary?

Table 1: Conversation Topics for FHCCP’s Leadership Transition Plan

9. Orientation and onboarding
 - a. Who from the board will be involved?
 - b. How proscribed are the expectations?
 - c. How to communicate the selection and introduce the new leader to the community?
 - d. Establish a regular communication with the board – who, when, and how?
 - e. Crossover with previous leader?
 - i. How is that structured?
 - ii. Who will determine the engagement?
 - iii. What funding is needed for overlap in contracts?
10. How will evaluation of the plan take place and who will be involved?
 - a. Timeframes for re-assessing plan and making adjustments.

The following examples highlight how the conversation topics in Table 1 shaped decisions for the specific FHCCP succession plan.

Internal/External Search

FHCCP decided to start with a closed search including internal candidates and partner/regional candidates (see **Workbook Tool #17**). If a suitable candidate could not be chosen in this closed search, then the plan expanded to a full national search (see **Workbook Tool #18**). FHCCP’s internal staff leadership development program was a strong factor in this decision. The program has increased staff capacity for advancement in the organization, and FHCCP believes this has resulted in strong internal candidates. Furthermore, the organization had gone through an open search process before, and had been frustrated and disappointed because after investing several thousand dollars in a search firm, the outcome resulted in identifying a candidate who was “known to FHCCP,” thereby influencing the choice to begin the search internally. The board also strongly believed that there were numerous potential candidates or “local talent” within the existing network who would be familiar with the specific regional issues and needs. Overall, the board believed that it was in the best interests of the organization to have

someone who understood the region and FHCCP specifically (see **Workbook Tool #20**).

For organizations that promote internal applicants, it is important they consider how to handle situations in which an internal candidate is not selected. This can be a delicate issue, so it is important for leaders and the board to discuss this possibility and devise a plan prior to when the situation arises. It is hard for organizations to have some of their best internal staff resign or become disengaged as a result of not being selected.

Timeframe for Search and Retirement Date

FHCCP decided that the current CEO would facilitate the search process working with the board search committee members and the vice president of human resources. This decision was made carefully and with the confidence that the current CEO would not interfere with the search committee’s or the board’s selection. A year was determined to allow enough time for the succession plan to be followed and account for the possibility of an internal and external search process. In addition, FHCCP wanted to capitalize on the timeframe to allow staff to be engaged in the process and to “get all that they needed” from the CEO prior to her departure.

Succession Plan Development

As reflected by the detailed conversation topics in Table 1, FHCCP engaged in an iterative process, utilizing various methods to develop a plan. In the early phase of development, the CEO conducted a review of the literature on succession planning to guide initial questions and tasks required to develop a written plan. This process led to a realization of the broader strategic process and need for the discussion described above.

Another stage of the process included engagement of FHCCP leadership and staff in designing aspects of the plan. This required thoughtful consideration of topics such as coverage, identifying missing aspects of the plan, consideration of stakeholders and community partners, and specific elements of each executive-level position. Emergency planning became a larger and more complex aspect of the plan than anticipated. One vice president found it similar to disaster planning, saying, “You don’t expect to use it and it is hard to plan for, but needed.” Although emergency transition planning was not the initial goal, it became a meaningful phase of the process.

Through the development of the emergency plan, FHCCP's executive team realized there were key operational components of their individual positions that others were unaware of had not been documented elsewhere. These key work functions included specific activities of each position, personal relationships with community partners, and the best way to communicate with certain partners. In addition, the senior leadership and staff realized that in the event of an emergency transition, it would be vital to have a well-prepared and detailed communication plan to ensure a consistent message was provided to partners and community members. As a result, FHCCP developed a detailed communication plan and concrete guide for staff (**see Workbook Tools #5 and #6**). Succession planning conversations resulted in an acknowledgement of the importance of documenting institutional knowledge and ensuring that there was redundancy in operational knowledge to ensure organizational stability.

The engagement of staff across the organization was another valued layer of the planning process for FHCCP. Cindy involved staff in discussions regarding the leadership transition by surveying staff for the “must haves and desired haves” of a new CEO and encouraging them to think beyond current leadership characteristics (**see Workbook Tools #7 and #8**). The Tapestry of Health directors held similar conversations with their staff and provided feedback to the CEO and board. All of this feedback informed the final list of CEO characteristics that were included in the incoming CEO position description (**see Workbook Tool #14**). The CEO and board's inclusion of staff expectations and the transparency around the process furthered the staff's trust in the board. Additionally, staff commented that it was reassuring to involve the human resource department in the implementation of the succession plan and the recruitment of a new CEO. Staff believed that the vice president of human resources had a clear sense of the internal workings of the organization and would

be capable of identifying resumes that fit with the organizational environment.

The staff understood that the process for the development of the plan would have a broader impact and “forced them to grow” and consider the culture outside the organization. It also expanded their thoughts about an incoming CEO and what leadership characteristics were both desirable and needed. In particular, the process helped the staff think about what they needed in the future from a leader that may be different from the current leadership. For some staff, it also helped them to be more thoughtful about the current transition process. For example, considering whether staff were unintentionally “waiting” on decisions until the transition was completed or considering what an incoming CEO would want staff to focus on prior to their selection or arrival.

In the final stage of plan's development, a key consideration was the nature of the document itself. It became important for FHCCP that the process and final succession plan approved by the board was not static but rather was a living document. In order to support reassessment of the plan, specific review periods were written into the final document to allow for adjustments to the plan based on lessons learned and changes in organizational need. At the time of the site visit, FHCCP had already identified a need to change the composition of the search committee in the next draft of the plan.

Culture of Organization

Organizational culture is a significant component of FHCCP and thus was an important consideration in the leadership transition process. FHCCP is proud of its openness to new ideas, a core value of its culture. For 15 years, FHCCP engaged the Denison Model³, which is a data-driven model for organizational culture and change management. FHCCP has adapted the language of this model, and uses periodic surveys to assess the

organizational culture to continue to enhance growth. It was vitally important to the outgoing CEO, the board, and the staff that an incoming CEO understand the model and the current culture. The staff had a sense of ownership in the culture, yet were aware that a new leader may want to change the culture entirely. However, they all agreed that the incoming leader needed to start with a clear understanding of the environment prior to making changes.

An additional aspect of the culture was the commitment to internal leadership capacity assessment and development. In previous years, FHCCP developed a Professional Capacity Development Plan (**see Workbook Tool #11**) for staff to enhance leadership skills and work on advancement within the organization. The program was developed after experiences in which internal candidates for FHCCP positions were overshadowed by external candidates. The leadership decided it was important to develop strong candidates from within and to facilitate leadership capacity. All staff are informed of the program during the interview and hiring process and reminded of it during annual evaluations. Anyone can be involved in a development plan after being with FHCCP for one year and plans are customized to build on strengths of the individual staff member while building specific skills to meet the staff member's goals. Individuals in the program work closely with one vice president in the desired area of focus and meet regularly with the current CEO for mentoring and coaching. Staff members are compensated for completion of specific deliverables.

Interestingly, the process of planning for executive leadership transition enhanced and changed this program. As part of the succession plan development process, FHCCP decided they needed to more formally assess leadership capacity among all staff. The CEO developed an Employee Capacity Assessment (**see Workbook Tool #10**), which is a quadrant-matrix model for assessing staff on desire for promotion, cultural

competence (organizational culture), and technical skill. With a total of eight quadrants, the executive leadership developed specific strategies for each quadrant to engage staff in leadership development. For example, the executive leadership intentionally focuses on those with talent who may not yet be interested in promotion. The matrix provided a common language for the executive leadership to discuss the “leadership bench strength,” assess the organization, and enhance the strategy for leadership development.

Role of Health Care Context

Although many at FHCCP initially commented that the broader health care context did not inform the succession planning process, each interview highlighted ways in which the greater context did impact the process. Foremost for FHCCP was the Pennsylvania regional transitions replacing long-term leaders of family planning organizations. FHCCP has a sense that a “brain trust” is leaving the field and many new leaders are from outside of this specific area of reproductive health or even outside of health care entirely. There is also growing acknowledgment that the selection of many leaders across the country with backgrounds outside the field indicates that the work of these long-term organizations is evolving and will be significantly different in the future.

The context of change was a central aspect of the decision to start with a closed search and capitalize on the “local” talent which did have historical knowledge as well as the capacity to lead through change. The concerns about institutional knowledge also facilitated more discussion and documentation of operational components of FHCCP and specific leadership tasks. It changed the way in which the organization thought about public presentation and the need to enhance visibility of specific program directors rather than only the CEO. This was a particularly significant change within Title X programming. The

changing context also informed revision of the CEO position description and desired characteristics. The board needed to understand the regional and national landscape well enough to be able to introduce and explain important nuances, particularly if the incoming CEO came without this background. Finally, the changing context required the board to be more forward thinking about the future of the organization as an aspect of the leadership transition planning and selection.

Lessons to Share from Phase 1

See Leadership Transition as Strategic

The process of assessment, discussion, and deliberate decision-making is essential for effective leadership transitions. There are numerous successful methodologies for leadership transition including hiring a search firm, a closed search process with selective recruitment, and organization-run search processes for open and or closed searches. However, it is important that the choice of methodology be based in a strategic context and fit both the developmental phase of the organization and its current needs.

Assess the External Environment

For the organizations in this case study, the seismic changes in health care heavily influenced the leadership transition planning consideration and/or impetus for change. The need to reposition services, expand services, and or reconsider funding sources were essential factors to consider. An assessment of the trends and forces shaping the future direction of the field at the regional and national levels can help inform the skills needed in an incoming leader (see **Workbook Tool #12**). It can also provide information to inform the strategy or methodology chosen for the search process.

Assess the Internal Environment

A number of assessments internally can also facilitate an effective leadership transition plan (see **Workbook Tool #9**). An objective evaluation of the

developmental phase of the organization can inform the key decisions for leadership transition as well as inform qualifications needed in the next leader. For example, a small and relatively new organization may need to plan for greater knowledge transfer and onboarding for operational components of the transition or may need to identify leadership that can help to build the organizational structure, culture, and operations. On the other hand, a well-established organization with well-defined processes and operations may need more visionary leadership and the plan may be more focused on standardizing the process of leadership change for the long-term. Additionally, the depth and quality of the leadership capacity within the organization can directly inform the decision for an internal versus external search process.

Develop a Written Plan

The documentation of the plan is important because it improves transparency of the transition plan for all levels of the organization and provides a set of guidelines for the board. The written plan can be adapted and changed over time. Having an agreed-upon process that is formally approved by the board helps staff adhere to the plan and reduces individual influence or course change in the selection phase. In addition, as organizations develop a formal plan for executive leadership transition, it may be a good time to also prepare for emergency and unplanned transitions if a process does not already exist.

Anticipate Other Organizational Needs

A leadership transition plan may uncover other needs in the organization, such as emergency preparedness or employee assessments. The process itself may create additional work and additional areas of focus — much like a strategic planning process might — and therefore, an organization should anticipate the impact of those discoveries.

Phase 2: The Search

Phase 2 is the implementation of the search itself. Search activities include creating the job description, communication around the job announcement, reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates, and ultimately choosing a leader (see **Workbook Tool #24**). Additional search activities can include adjusting board bylaws related to the search process, timeframe considerations for incoming and outgoing leaders as candidates are narrowed down, and how to engage senior staff in this element of the transition.

Methodology

Factors such as the cost of a search firm, internal resources to conduct the search, and an internal versus external search process all directly inform the specific methodology chosen (see **Workbook Tools #21-23**).

In addition, specific methodologies may require different kinds of change management and other aspects of planning. There are no “right” answers regarding search methodology as different approaches will be successful in different settings. What matters most is choosing an approach that fits with the goals of the board, the needs of the organization, and the resources available. Another potential variable for the board to consider is the degree to which they need senior leadership or other staff member engagement. Organization-run search processes may use senior leadership in the plan development or specific members as part of the search process as described with FHCCP. When search firms are engaged, they often assist boards in determining the degree of staff inclusion in the process as well as interview senior leadership as part of the search process. When senior leaders are involved, their role is to inform the board, answer any pertinent operational questions, and to support the board process. The degree of staff involvement with the search process

is determined by each board and will be based on the specific factors surrounding the transition.

Agencies interviewed for this case study also indicated that boards may want to consider the amount of communication provided to senior leaders and the broader staff regarding the search process. Many interviews highlighted the importance of transparency about the process; however, this is again an organization-specific assessment that will be demonstrated by a vignette in which reduced communication was an effective strategy. Factors that may inform this decision include the organizational culture of communication, the goals of the transition, the board and current CEO’s assessment of the need for change management, and the degree of change anticipated in the transition of leaders. Some interviews suggested that as the degree of change increases and the board anticipates a significant change in leadership style or strategic direction with the incoming leader, it may be more important to communicate with senior leaders and staff as a way of preparing for the change ahead. IWSC interviews highlighted the importance of communication to reduce operational uncertainty during the transition and to support the incoming leader through more coordinated transition planning and preparedness.

IWSC engaged a search firm as its methodology because it wanted expertise and assistance in selecting a leader fit for the changing environment in health care and believed that a search firm could facilitate a broader search for the right person. Cost was a consideration in the decision to use a search firm. The board was aware that search firm costs vary considerably depending on the way they offer services and the way they bill clients for those services. Retained search firms, which provide search services as a package, typically charge up to a one-third of the

estimated annual compensation that a candidate is expected to receive in their first year, plus expenses related to the search.⁴ The decision to invest in a search firm was based on an assessment of IWSC resources and expertise for conducting a successful search without a firm, including the significant costs in staff and board resources of conducting the search themselves versus the cost of the search firm.

IWSC used two criteria for choosing a search firm: expertise and cost. It took several months to identify the appropriate search firm. Search firms vary in their specific approaches and philosophies, so it is important for the board to consider how the firm’s approach fits with the broader goals of the transition as well as the specific organizational culture. The search firm that IWSC selected specialized in nonprofit management and specifically focused on finding a leader who could navigate the changing health care landscape. IWSC’s search firm interviewed the board members and eight members of the senior leadership team to determine the needs for a new leader, prepared a job description, and assisted the board with the process, including helping to review more than 150 resumes and narrowing the field to six to eight candidates.

Roles in Search

It is important that roles in the search process be clarified (see **Workbook Tool #16**). For example, smaller or relatively newer organizations that have not seen leadership changes may need to focus on clarifying that leadership selection is a board activity and decision. This can be hard for staff who are accustomed to more active engagement and want to be directly involved in selecting the next leader.

The role of the outgoing leader will also vary. Often leaders and boards believe that the outgoing leader should have a minimal role in the search phase of the leadership

transition. Outgoing leaders may have assisted in Phase 1 with planning and strategic considerations; however, they are often not included in the search activities. Despite this common practice, there are some organizations for which the outgoing leader plays a role in the search process. Whatever the approach, it is crucial that the roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of those roles be clear.

A central activity is creating a communication plan to keep staff informed about the search process. Leadership transition is anxiety-inducing and can create a sense of instability for staff. One of the consistent themes for staff in the sites was the importance of understanding the search process and how it was being implemented. Transparency about the process and regular updates on the progress facilitates excitement about the outcome as well as steadiness in the

transition. For organizations engaging a search firm, simply keeping staff members apprised of the progress is useful—for example, letting them know that candidates have been narrowed down and the board is starting interviews.

Timeframe

The timeframe chosen for the leadership transition requires careful consideration and needs to be a deliberate decision. A lengthy transition can be beneficial; however, the outgoing leader and the board need to consider the reasons and impact of the timeframe for transition (see **Workbook Tool #15**). More lengthy transitions – a year or more – may place pressure and responsibility on senior leadership for operational decisions, timing of other organizational changes or initiatives, program development or adjustment, and financial planning. It is beneficial, therefore,

to assess staff resources in the decision regarding timeframe, which might include an assessment of upcoming initiatives and how to reallocate resources to ensure there is adequate support for maintaining organizational progress. Additionally, it is useful to consider how to ensure operational engagement of the outgoing leader. Both internally and externally, the view of the outgoing leader can shift due to an announced departure, and it is important to discuss the best use of the outgoing leader's time and focus, and to plan for adjustments in their roles and responsibilities.

For more lengthy transitions, it may also be useful to consider an interim leader to support the organization's operations through the transition and to provide a clear line of leadership for the senior leadership and other management staff.

Interim Leader Transitions

In 2011, Health Imperatives in Massachusetts experienced an unplanned leadership transition. The CEO had been in the role for 28 years and as a result of that longevity and the circumstances of the transition, the board decided that putting an interim leader in place would be wise. Often this is recommended to organizations with founders or long-term leaders as it allows an organization to adjust to change and then have a more successful eventual transition to a new leader. For Health Imperatives, they also wanted to have a period of stability in which to plan for the CEO search, and the interim leadership allowed for this to occur.

With some of the operational pressures temporarily relieved, the board then engaged a search firm to assist in the search process that led to a new CEO, Julia Kehoe. The decision to use a search firm was grounded in a number of important considerations including: challenges associated with the previous CEO's departure and a need for external expertise and structure; the desire to find a leader with expertise in nonprofit management; and the desire to formalize the process for the organization. In this decision, the board acknowledged that the organization needed to advance from a hands-on "home grown" organization to a new level of governance and operations. An important aspect of this formalization and redefining of roles between senior leadership and the board was having a search process led externally.

The board made a strategic decision to minimize communication with the staff about the search. Its goal was to reduce the high anxiety about the process and positively influence the culture regarding communication. At the time, there was a tendency for over communication and processing among staff which led to a highly charged environment. The board believed that by limiting information, they could quiet the organization and reduce some of the challenges around selecting a new leader. This approach highlights again that the "right decision" will vary organization by organization.

Board Bylaws and Policies

Developing a plan for leadership change provides an important opportunity for the board to review board roles in the process, the resources (monetary and board time) that are available for the process, and the need for any changes to the board bylaws. For example, the board needs to decide how to manage board members' interest in the new position and any corresponding need to update policies related to timeframes for board resignation to ensure fairness in the search process.

Another example of a bylaw or policy consideration is the make-up of the search committee. A search committee plan that is too prescriptive may cause problems, while one that is too open may produce other challenges to the process.

Lessons to Share from Phase 2

Determine the Degree of Transparency

Information sharing is an important aspect of the process. Transparent communication from the outgoing leader and the board regarding leadership transition facilitates successful change management. A clarity of the process and how the board will select the next leader reduces anxiety, which reduces distraction for the organization broadly. The method of transparency and the kind of information sharing may vary across organizations, as will the degree of staff engagement in the plan formation.

Assess the Timeframe of the Transition

Short transitions are six months or less while longer transitions are generally a year to 18 months. There is evidence that nonprofits often assume they can replace executive leaders in six months and that this may not be realistic depending on the specific needs of the incoming leader.⁶ This further indicates the importance of careful board consideration of the timeframe and the specific goals of the search process.

Both long and short transitions have advantages and disadvantages. For example, short transitions may require more intensive board time initially to get the search process outlined in order to get the search quickly initiated. While long term transitions may delay operational changes or initiatives which can slow organizational progress. Ideally, the board can be deliberate and thoughtful in choosing the timeframe based on the goals for transition and the organization's immediate needs.

Phase 3: Endings and Beginnings

Phase 3 focuses on the process of transition itself with an outgoing leader's departure and the incoming leader's beginning. Aspects of this phase include onboarding activities for the incoming leader as well as considerations around knowledge transition and crossover between leaders. It also represents a good time to consider organizational transition and change management. Although often boards may see their primary role in Phase 1 and 2, they can play an essential role in the onboarding process and in transition management. An additional aspect of Phase 3 may be an assessment or evaluation of the search process and a review of the implementation, lessons learned, and any adjustments needed for the leadership transition plan in the future (see **Workbook Tools #31 and #32**).

Transition Process

Consideration of the transition process itself is often important and will vary depending on the degree of change anticipated. For IWSC, South Carolina Bureau of Maternal and Child Health, and Health Imperatives, organizational repositioning was a significant element of the transition and each site emphasized the need to acknowledge this change in culture and mission and to expect time for staff to adjust.

IWSC is one year into the transition in executive leadership with their new CEO, Robin McGinnis. Robin has a Master's in Social Work and a long history in nonprofit management including founding an organization dedicated to improving treatment for sexual offenders in an effort to reduce sexual violence towards children.

Robin, the board, and senior leadership commented that the organization is making a number of exciting and challenging changes in the first year of transition. IWSC is applying to become a FQHC, which will expand services to new populations as well as expand the breath of services provided. In addition, the organization has worked on numerous new partnerships within the community to begin developing new programming, such as expanded reach into Latino communities and going into schools to perform primary health care and running a teen sexuality clinic.

As these broader organizational changes in mission and vision shift, so too have the operations of the agency. These have included realigning senior leadership roles such as developing a vice president of operations position and creating a senior leadership team and structure (see **Workbook Tool #29**). Similarly, it has meant adjustments in communication processes such as creating more structured lines of communication between senior leadership and board members.

Furthermore, a primary goal in the leadership transition was to identify a new phase in organizational development. Robin's leadership style is different from the previous executive director's. The degree of transition has created meaningful changes which will take time for staff and the organizational structure to adjust to, and time for a new organizational culture to develop. Examples of organizational changes for IWSC included leadership structure changes in roles and responsibility, communication patterns and style, expectations around shared decision making, engagement of community partners, and expansion of the population being served as well as service array. Change extended to the board as well with the addition of community members as new board members.

Change in a State Health Department

Beth De Santis was promoted to Director of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control in 2014. Prior to her promotion within the agency, Beth was the State Director for Family Planning for three years. As appointed department leaders are instituting significant changes in the pace and accountability of work, Beth is emphasizing collaborative leadership, empowering staff to own projects, and developing the staff potential around her.

A key strategy for both her and the leadership has been clear and transparent communication about why there is need for change, how the change internally connects to the broader changes in health care, how and why specific decision are made, and the plan for the future. As Beth put it, "you can never communicate enough." The techniques for communication have included numerous forms including email, memos, and conversations. The leadership is also using a series of videos in which the leaders speak directly to staff and share the vision and changes coming with staff members. Beth is finding that these communication strategies are key to creating a shared vision for the future.

The specifics of onboarding will vary across organizations depending on the current needs of the leaders, organizational capacity, and the specific nature of the reason for the leader transition. There are of course situations in which the outgoing leader is not present and, therefore, onboarding considerations are different.

FHCCP decided to engage proscriptive onboarding in the succession plan (see **Workbook Tool #26**). This included specific activities for the incoming CEO, which will be overseen and facilitated by the board. For example, the incoming CEO will be asked to spend three months developing relationships with staff and developing an understanding of the organizational culture. This was not meant to deter a new leader from changing the culture, but rather to ensure the incoming CEO understood the culture prior to making changes. FHCCP believed that having onboarding last a full year was also necessary, since a year allows the new CEO to go through “a full cycle of work,” such as budgeting, an audit, funding proposals, conducting a sub-contracting process, conducting an allocations process, etc. Many of these aspects require board member engagement, helping to build relationships and trust between the new CEO and board. The decision to prescribe onboarding then required a commitment from the board in resources as the board would be responsible for facilitating the experience.

An additional element of this decision was the crossover timeframe between the incoming and outgoing CEO. FHCCP decided to write into the plan a period of crossover for the two leaders and built into the budget the consideration of paying for two contracts simultaneously. The outgoing CEO, however, was clear that the exact timeframe chosen would be determined with the incoming CEO and be based on his or her needs and desires. This could conceivably mean no crossover.

Knowledge Transfer

Although most executive leaders need minimal knowledge transfer, the experiences of the organizations in this case study demonstrate that it is an important variable to consider. For organizations in which the executive leader engages in more operational support of the organization (e.g., payroll, bank deposits, etc.), there may need to be greater time devoted to knowledge transfer. Each organization needs to assess the degree to which they have duplication in operational knowledge and how an incoming leader will have support in learning key operational components of the organization. FHCCP provides an example of a tool it uses to capture key operational information each time any employee leaves the organization (see **Workbook Tool #27**). This is an example of how to build the operational duplication of knowledge and ensure successful transitions across positions. Although at FHCCP, the tool is focused on all staff (not specifically the executive leader), it is a resource that could be particularly useful for executive leadership transition for smaller organizations in which the executive leader may have a greater role in more hands on operational support.

The knowledge transfer between leaders may be more focused on funder relationships, stakeholder nuance, and public relations. Janet Colm of Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina described the importance of passing on knowledge and specific relationship histories with funders as part of the transition process.

Leaders with Experience Outside of Health Care

There is a growing trend within family planning and sexual health organizations for the new leaders to be outside of family planning and even outside of health care. This may be in part due to the developmental needs of many organizations and a desire to focus on

financial viability and strong management rather than specific program expertise.

This is another area in which incoming leaders and the board may find transparency useful. Julia Kehoe, the leader at Health Imperatives, is an example of an incoming leader engaged in frequent and purposely transparent communication about her own goals and vision as well as leadership style and background. Her transition process has included significant operational changes as well as assisting the organization in re-conceptualization. Health Imperatives has many health centers and programs over a large area serving different populations and providing different services. Julia is working to shift the model from “separate organizations” to a more holistic organization with centralized structures. In Kehoe’s process, she articulates her expertise in nonprofit management while also acknowledging she is from outside of health care. She has used in-person meetings in each health center in addition to other forms of communication to share her vision, and has relied on staff to be the experts in health care. Her openness about this shift and her communication of confidence that she is the kind of leader that Health Imperative needs has promoted acceptance of her vision for the organization. Her collaborative leadership style and empowerment of staff have been central themes in her communication and actions. This openness and direct approach to the concerns of staff has been an important aspect of transition management.

Leadership Transitions Are Not Purely Operational

Each organization emphasized the emotional nature of leadership transition, particularly for organizations that have had long-term leaders (20 years or more). Whether the organization is ready for new leadership or holding on to existing leaders, the change itself marks a milestone for the organization. One method for managing this aspect of transition is to celebrate the transition

by acknowledging history with leaders, progress made, and shared stories as a way of preparing to move into a new phase.

Long-Term Leader Departures

In a similar vein, the leaders interviewed in this case study indicated the challenges for them and other long-term leaders in leaving organizations they have cultivated. In discussion of these challenges, many leaders also provided strategies for long-term leaders to manage the process and facilitate smooth transitions (see **Workbook Tool #25**).

- *Reframe the Ending:* Outgoing leaders who are struggling with retirement and see it as an ending can reframe the experience. For example, instead of deciding when to leave, leaders may decide what they want to accomplish before leaving. This focuses the outgoing leader on tangible goals that are tied to leaving and provide an opportunity for a “capstone” and positive departure.
- *Celebrate and Acknowledge the Significance:* Allow time to acknowledge the transition for the leader, staff, and the organization instead of avoiding this element of the transition. The idea of graduation and celebration may help to move people towards a new beginning.
- *Support:* For some long-term leaders, it can be useful to have someone else to talk with as they transition out of the organization. This could be a previous leader who has already transitioned, it could be another leader leaving at the same time, or it could be through a formal program such as Employee Assistance Programs. The goal is that the outgoing leader receives the support needed in order to successfully hand over the organization and do so in a way that best supports the continued growth and transition of the staff.

- *Future Roles:* As the field sees a wave of individuals retire at once, it may be important to think about methods for using individuals’ expertise while their roles change such as thinking about specific ways in which this group can be an asset to the field and provide support to emerging leaders. Perhaps some of these leaders could support and promote leadership transition planning and assist boards and leaders with outlining a process for their organization. It is best that these leaders work with an organization other than their own (see **Workbook Tool #30**).

Lessons to Share from Phase 3

Prepare for Structural Change

When the goal of leadership transition is changing organizational status within the greater health care environment, boards may need to anticipate more significant structural changes within the organization. This is both logical and may seem intuitive, however IWSC’s transition indicated that sometimes even when desired, the degree of structural change can be surprising to both the board and senior leadership. Changes may be at the board level as well as within senior leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, the board’s role may adjust somewhat as it did at IWSC with the change from having an executive leader to a CEO. In addition, operational and senior leadership structures may change to support a new mission or role of the organization in the community. At IWSC, for example, the incoming CEO brought a new focus on the external community and new relationships for the organization which changed some of the work for the senior leadership.

The implications of the change in strategic planning at IWSC provides important lessons for other organizations facing similar changes in leadership and organizational direction.

- Change is hard even when everyone agrees change is necessary. As a result, the more the outgoing leader and the board can plan for this kind of change—even simply making staff aware of change coming, the more prepared the organization will be for the shift.
- Even in smooth transitions, there is a period of adjustment as part of the change process. As the degree of change is heightened, so may the length of time needed for transition. An important strategy for change management is to use communication and transparency about the transition process to acknowledge the adjustment. Interviews from this case study indicated that when organizations built expectation for some degree of discomfort, organizational preparedness and commitment to change were bolstered (see **Workbook Tool #28**).
- Changes in strategic vision will likely result in significant changes in organizational context. At IWSC context changes included: assessment of community needs, new partnerships, change in senior leadership roles and communication strategies, and board adjustment to a new strategic vision and plan.

Prepare for Change Management

It is important that the board articulate to staff the role of the newly selected leader in repositioning an organization to keep pace with a changing health care climate. New leaders need to acknowledge that change can be challenging while holding staff and the organization (including the board members) accountable to the desired and agreed upon changes.

Assess and Plan Knowledge Transfer

Both the amount and the type of knowledge transfer are important factors in the transition. Outgoing leaders and boards can assess the need and design a plan that will provide a foundation for the incoming leader.

Conclusion

Leadership transition is an exciting opportunity for organizations. It may mark the end of a developmental phase for an organization and growth into the future. Even sudden or tragic changes in leadership, if previously prepared for, can be an important opportunity for an organization to demonstrate its maturity for and capacity to change.

The best strategy for taking advantage of the opportunity is to view transition planning as vital as strategic planning. Leadership transition is inevitable for organizations, and the process of planning for it can be a rich and useful exercise. In addition, developing a formal plan for leadership transitions that is strategic with deliberate decisions and thoughtful analysis can make the

process less distressing and build a strong foundation for the organization to be prepared for change. The more direct and transparent the process of leadership transition, the less uncomfortable it becomes to talk about and the more it can generate excitement. Even if a planned leadership transition is years away, the process of planning improves current operational functioning and will provide the board, current leader, and staff a deeper understanding of how change will occur.

Janet Colm of Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina captured the spirit of transition well when she said: “I had this very strong feeling—really an image of a river—a Planned Parenthood or family planning river...

Margaret Sanger got into the river and then she got out, someone else got in, and then she got out, and then I got in and now I’m getting out and the legacy continues. There is this whole wave of people coming behind us—that’s what a movement is—it’s not just one person.”

Endnotes

- 1 FHCCP used the term succession planning for their specific plan and thus an effort was made to use their language in the case study. However, the same process is being described whether it is called succession planning or leadership transition planning.
- 2 Arlene Alvarez Quick “Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit,” *Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Denver, Oklahoma City, and Omaha*, <http://www.kc.frb.org/publicat/community/Nonprofit-Executive-Succession-Planning-Toolkit.pdf>.
- 3 The Denison Organizational Culture Model. Denison Consulting. <http://www.denisonconsulting.com/model/organizational-culture>
- 4 “A Guide to Engaging an Executive Search Firm,” *The Bridgespan Group*, <http://www.bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Hiring-Nonprofit-Leaders/Hiring-Strategy/Guide-to-Engaging-Executive-Search-Firm.aspx>

About NFPRHA

Founded in 1971 and located in Washington, DC, the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit membership organization representing the broad spectrum of family planning administrators and providers who serve the nation's low-income, under-insured, and uninsured women and men.

As the only national membership organization in the United States dedicated to increasing family planning access, NFPRHA is committed to advocacy, education, and training for its members. NFPRHA works to help ensure access to voluntary, comprehensive, and culturally sensitive sexual and reproductive health care services and supplies, and to support reproductive freedom for all.

To that end, NFPRHA seeks to maximize the opportunities for protecting and expanding access to family planning services for vulnerable populations by advocating for programs and resources that enhance both the medical services provided through and infrastructure of the publicly funded safety net.

Furthermore, NFPRHA prepares its membership for changes in the health care economy by providing policy and operational analyses to help its members consider and execute strategies for adapting to evolving economic and policy climates, and by convening administrators and clinicians to share experiences and best practices that help enhance quality and service delivery.

National
Family Planning
& Reproductive Health Association

www.nationalfamilyplanning.org

 **Mixed Sources**
Product group from well-managed
forests, controlled sources and
recycled wood or fiber
www.fsc.org Cert no. S11-COC-XXXX
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

