

Ottawa Public Library

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Emergency Succession Plan

A. Context

Leadership plays an essential role in the success of any organization, particularly one as influential and important to the community as the Ottawa Public Library (OPL). As an unexpected disruption in CEO leadership is always a possibility, planning for both that eventuality as well as planned transitions in leadership is a governance best practice. A CEO Emergency Succession Plan can help bring order at a time of potential confusion, so that OPL can continue to fulfill its mission.

B. Policy and Procedure

The unexpected, temporary absence of a CEO can be challenging time for any organization. It is the policy of OPL to be prepared to ensure stability and accountability of the organization until the return of the CEO. The OPL Board Policy OPLB-018 CEO Succession Planning outlines general principles for succession planning.

To support the policy, the CEO Emergency Succession Plan (the Plan) is both a contingency plan in the event of the temporary absence, disability, or death, of its CEO to facilitate the transition to both interim and longer-term leadership, as well as the recruitment of a future CEO in the event of planned retirement. The Plan outlines steps to be taken in the event of a temporary, unplanned absence of the CEO, be it short- or long-term.

C. Guiding Principles

In its CEO Emergency Succession Plan, the OPL Board will strive to:

- Be responsive, responsible, and decisive in an emergency;
- Ensure continuity in operations and strategic direction;
- Demonstrate and convey confidence in its interim executive leadership;
- Communicate in a measured, timely, and effective manner with all key stakeholder groups, internally and externally;
- Engage its Board and senior staff in support of respective changes;
- Ensure its response is aligned with OPL values, vision, and mission;
- Demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns; and,
- Provide appropriate support to the Acting CEO.

When it is necessary to fill the position of CEO, the Board Chair will work with the Division Manager, Governance, Communications, and Strategic Services to affirm the procedures prescribed in the Plan or to make modifications as appropriate. The full Board will be informed of key developments and, if applicable, asked to ratify major changes to the Plan at the earliest opportunity.

D. Short-Term Temporary, Unplanned Absence

A temporary absence is one of less than 17 weeks in which it is expected that the CEO will return to his/her position once the events precipitating the absence are resolved. An unplanned absence is one that arises unexpectedly, in contrast to a planned leave, such as a vacation. The Board authorizes the Board Chair to implement the terms of this emergency plan in the event of the short-term, temporary, and unplanned absence of the CEO.

The person identified to fill the position of Acting CEO is the Deputy CEO first and foremost. If the Deputy CEO is unable to fulfill this role, a Division Manager would fill the position of Acting CEO.

If the Acting CEO is new to his/her substantive position, the Chair may decide to appoint a backup appointee to the Acting CEO position (i.e. Division Manager). While recognizing that an Acting CEO must be appointed, the Chair may also consider the option of appointing a Secretary and/or Treasurer independent of the CEO (as per the Public Libraries Act).

E. Long-Term Temporary, Unplanned Absence

A long-term absence is one that is expected to last more than 17 weeks. The procedures and conditions to be followed will be the same as for a short-term absence with one addition: the Board Chair will give immediate consideration, in consultation with the Acting CEO, to **temporarily** filling the position left vacant by the Acting CEO or to providing additional support to the Acting CEO.

This is in recognition of the fact that for a term of more than 17 weeks, it may not be reasonable to expect the Acting CEO to carry the duties of both positions. The position description of a temporary senior manager or executive would focus on covering the priority areas in which the Acting CEO needs assistance.

F. Completion of Emergency Succession Period

The decision on when the CEO returns to lead OPL should be determined by the CEO and the Board Chair. They will decide upon a mutually agreed upon schedule as required and start date.

G. Permanent Change in CEO Leadership

A permanent change is one in which it is firmly determined that the CEO will not be returning to the position. On an interim basis, the procedures and conditions should be the same as for a long-term temporary absence.

The OPL Board will undertake a CEO Search and Selection Process, as per OPL Board Policy OPLB-018 CEO Succession Planning. Where circumstances permit, the CEO Transition Process will be followed.

H. Communications Plan

Immediately upon transferring the responsibilities to the Acting CEO, the Division Manager, Governance, Communications, and Strategic Services will support the development and implementation of a communications strategy appropriate to the needs and interests of OPL and its key stakeholders, and work with the Board Chair to notify employees and members of the Board.

As soon as possible thereafter, the Board Chair and Acting CEO shall communicate the temporary leadership structure to key external stakeholders. This may include, but is not limited to, municipal government officials, agency CEOs, key sector leaders, and other key community partners.

I. Authority and Compensation of the Acting CEO

The person appointed as Acting CEO shall have the full authority for decision making and independent action as the CEO, as per OPL Board Policy OPLB-002 Delegation of Authority. The Acting CEO will be offered compensation in accordance with the Management and Professional Exempt Terms and Conditions.

J. Board Oversight

The Board Chair is responsible for monitoring the work of the Acting CEO and will be sensitive to any special support needs of the Acting CEO in this temporary leadership role. The Board Chair may call upon the members of the Ad-Hoc Committee on CEO Performance to keep the Board regularly informed of matters pertaining to the implementation of the emergency succession plan. Should circumstances warrant, an emergency meeting of the Board will be called by the Board Chair.

K. Acceptance of the CEO Succession Plan

- **Succession Plan Approval.** This Plan will be reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee on Board Governance and forwarded to the Board (through the CEO) for approval. This Plan is a supporting document to the OPL Board Policy on CEO Succession Planning, and will be reviewed with said policy as per the policy review timelines.
- **Copies.** Copies of this Plan along with the corresponding documentation will be maintained by the Board Chair, the CEO, and the Division Manager, Governance, Communications, and Strategic Services (on behalf of the Board Secretary).