

Groundswell Conservancy Policy

Name: Executive Director Succession

Approval: Approved by July 20, 2017 by Executive Committee

Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices 7D1. Transition Planning. Develop a written process or plan to provide for continuity in the leadership and management of the land trust's functions.

Transition planning ensures the continuous coverage of executive duties critical to the ongoing operations of Groundswell Conservancy. This policy addresses an unplanned departure or extended absence of the Executive Director, as well as a planned transition to a new Executive Director. This policy will ensure continuity in external relationships, staff functioning, and mission success.

Priority Functions of the Executive Director Position

Among the duties listed in the Executive Director's job description, the following are the key functions to be covered in an emergency by board and other staff positions:

- Planning & Implementation: Ensure the development and execution of annual plans, budgets, and fundraising to advance the strategic goals of the organization.
- Organization: In coordination with the Board President, plan board and executive committee meetings; provide relevant information to the board and its committees; ensure financial reporting to the board; provide other support to board governance.
- Administration: Manage finances; supervise daily office operations.
- Personnel: Hire staff; manage the development and implementation of annual staff work goals and plans; annually evaluate staff.
- Fundraising: In coordination with other staff and the Development Committee, participate in the identification, cultivation, solicitation and recognition of financial contributors; write project/operations grant proposals and reports as necessary.
- Community Engagement: Represent Groundswell Conservancy to media, government, partners and other groups; oversee communications with supporters and partners, including annual reports and newsletters.
- Conservation Planning: In coordination with other staff and the Stewardship Committee, continue the identification, development, and implementation of priority conservation projects; oversee land management strategies for fee land, including coordination with partners.
- Landowner Negotiations: Build relationships with landowners and community leaders that result in land conservation.
- Easement Monitoring: Ensure the monitoring and enforcement of easements held by the organization.

Succession in Event of a Temporary, Unplanned Absence – SHORT TERM

- A temporary absence is one in which it is expected that the Executive Director 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 (e.g., a vacation).
- A short-term absence is 3 months or less.

Notification and Authorization

If able to do so, the Executive Director will notify the Board President of the unplanned absence. If the Board President cannot be reached, another member of the Executive Committee should be contacted.

If another individual board member or staff member is first to learn of an unplanned absence, that individual will immediately notify the Board President. If the Board President cannot be reached, another member of the Executive Committee should be contacted.

The Board of Directors authorizes the Executive Committee to implement this emergency succession policy.

As soon as feasible, the Board President or other Executive Committee member shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee to affirm the procedures prescribed in this plan and its supporting documents. The Executive Committee may make modifications the Committee deems necessary given the circumstances.

Successive Responsibility for Priority Functions of Executive Director

- Planning & Implementation: Board President or another member of the Executive Committee
- Organization: Board President
- Administration: Senior Staff, assisted by Accountant
- Personnel: Board President or designated Executive Committee Member
- Fundraising: Director of Major and Planned Gifts
- Community Engagement: Senior Staff
- Conservation Planning: Senior Conservation Specialist
- Landowner Negotiations: Senior Conservation Specialist
- Easement Monitoring: Senior Conservation Specialist

Some restrictions apply to successive responsibilities: (1) The Executive Committee must approve any expenditures above \$2,500. (2) No staff person may be hired or terminated without approval by the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee may authorize a temporary increase in the compensation for staff members who become responsible for priority functions of the Executive Director.

Communication With Stakeholders

The Board President is responsible for immediate internal and external communication of the absence. For purposes of this policy, the individual responsible for stakeholder communication is termed the key spokesperson. It is the responsibility of the key spokesperson to ensure that all board and staff members are notified of the unplanned absence, the successive responsibilities, the anticipated return date of the Executive Director, and other issues immediately relevant to maintaining organizational effectiveness. The spokesperson may call upon staff to assist in drafting a communications strategy that includes partners, funders, donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders. Communications should identify appropriate contact persons at Groundswell Conservancy for priority functions.

Emergency Succession Procedures

The Executive Director is responsible for maintaining a record of key information needed by successors. The following information should be included:

- Regular financial tasks (e.g., payroll, IRA contributions, payment of invoices, receipt of contributions, deposits)
- Personnel information including emergency contacts
- Insurance policies and contacts
- Passwords
- Computer backup protocol
- Office landlord and location of office keys
- Bank and investment accounts, including deposits and transfers
- Access for certain confidential records

The record of key information falls into two categories: (1) Emergency Succession Procedures, which is on the office network and can be viewed by an internal audience; and (2) Restricted Emergency Succession Procedures, with access restricted for internal control purposes. The latter information will be held by the Board President and Vice President.

Staff Readiness

The Executive Director will develop a strategy to ensure that staff capability exists to assume priority executive functions during a temporary absence. For each function the strategy may include documentation of specific procedures, cross training, or both. Some functions routinely have two staff members knowledgeable about how to perform them. In those cases, shared knowledge of procedures may be sufficient. Other functions are routinely performed only by the Executive Director. For those functions, documented procedures may need to be supplemented with specific training.

Succession in Event of a Temporary, Unplanned Absence – LONG TERM

- A long term absence is one that is expected to last more than 3 months.
- Succession procedures shall be governed by the above policy with the following addition.

The Executive Committee shall authorize a temporary increase in the compensation for those staff members who become responsible for priority functions of the Executive Director. Alternatively, the Executive Committee shall hire a qualified individual as Interim Executive Director.

Succession in Event of a PERMANENT Unplanned or Planned Absence

- A permanent absence is one in which it is firmly determined that the Executive Director will not be returning to the position.
- Succession procedures shall be governed by the above policies with one addition.

The Board of Directors shall appoint a Transition and Search Committee to plan and carry out a transition to a new permanent executive director.

Groundswell Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Policies may be updated to reflect changing accreditation standards and practices, as well as changing local organizational needs.

Z:\Office\Handbook\Policies\Executive Director Succession.doc