

# Active Essex Succession Plan



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## 1. Context to the Active Essex Succession Plan

- 1.1 Executive succession planning is a critical step for non-profit organisations. This plan aims to provide a structured process to ensure leadership continuity in key positions and to retain and develop knowledge capital and relationships for the future.
- 1.2 This plan will:
- Identify posts that are critical to the success of Active Essex and how best to satisfy future requirements
  - Develop strategies to determine the optimum mix of internal and external recruitment.
- 1.3 This succession plan will be split into three different sections to cover the following scenarios:
- **Emergency Succession Planning** – A process that is in place in the event of Board members or senior management staff suddenly departing, either permanently or for an extended period of time (i.e. longer than three months)
  - **Departure-Defined Succession Planning** – A process that is in place for a future planned retirement or permanent departure of Board members or senior management
  - **Strategic Leader Development** – A process that promotes ongoing leadership development for talent within Active Essex.
- 1.4 Following consultation with the Active Essex Board the following positions have been deemed critical to the on-going operational and strategic success of Active Essex.
- Add positions deemed critical here, and rationale for choice.

## 2. Emergency Succession Planning

- 2.1 The purpose of this Emergency Succession Plan is to ensure continuous coverage of strategic duties, critical to the on-going operations and Active Essex's sustainability, in the event of an emergency departure of the Partnership Director or Strategic Lead positions.
- 2.2 This plan address issues related to both permanent (the member of staff will not return) and the temporary (employee will return after unplanned absence such as illness etc.) replacement.

To produce the detail necessary for the Emergency Succession plan the Board and Senior Management Team would be advised to work through the steps.

- a. Update the job descriptions of the critical roles identified to ensure responsibilities are hiring requirements promote Active Essex's commitment to sustainability. Whilst updating the JDs, it is important to consider matching Active Essex's future strategic needs with leadership competencies desired.

If planning cycles allow the updating/review of the JDs should fall within existing business planning sessions, and should consider the following questions:

- What are the top three to five strategic objectives or challenges outlined in the Active Essex Strategy (2017-2021), that fall under the core responsibilities of the critical roles?
  - Based on these objectives and/or challenges, is there an impact on the job descriptions of the critical roles? (e.g. core leadership and management, strategic thinking, board oversight, staff management etc.)
- b. Define the interim Partnership Director key responsibilities. The interim Partnership Director is an individual appointed by the Board to fulfil Director duties until the position is filled or the Director returns (if the vacancy is temporary). Examples are detailed below, the Board/SMT can edit the list as necessary:
- Serve, with integrity and strength, as the organisation's primary leader, representative and spokes-person to the community/partners
  - Support Board members, including preparing executive reports and attending board meetings
  - Lead the management team
  - Participate in the recruitment and selection for directly supervised staff
  - Manage initiatives related to organisational capacity, sustainability and strategic plan
  - Maintain accountability for current year operating budget and financial performance
  - Establish, maintain and cultivate relations with partners, funders and other stakeholders/volunteers.
- c. Outline authority and restrictions of appointed interim Director. The person appointed as interim Director shall have the full authority for decision making and independent action, except for the following which must be approved by the Board:
- Board/SMT to add details here.
- d. Compensation for the interim Partnership Director. The interim shall receive a temporary salary increase (if appointed internally) to the entry level salary of the Director position or up to X% above their current salary, whichever is greater. (I have made a suggested approach here – but this would obviously need to be approved by the Board/ECC).
- e. Define an internal and external communication plan. Conversations between staff and Board members can significantly impact, negatively or positively, the interim Director and transition success. It also helps alleviate concerns about Active Essex's direction and sustainability, particularly with key funders.
- f. Immediately upon departure, the Board should communicate the following internal information (I have provided some suggestions but the Board/SMT will need to decide what is appropriate):
- Effective departure date
  - Implementation of the approved succession plan and process to address transition and replacement issues
  - Temporary leadership structure and any changes in key contacts
  - The Board will also need to determine how communications with external partners and funders will be managed. It is suggested that a contact list of key stakeholders is maintained for this purpose.

- g. Training for the interim Director. The Board/SMT will need to give thought to what critical training may be required for any individual taking on the interim Director position.
- h. Board oversight and support of the interim Director. The Board will need to establish an information system that enables the Board Chair to gain access to critical information pertaining to Active Essex in an event of an emergency.

### **3. Departure-Defined Succession Planning**

- 3.1 The purpose of this Departure-Defined Succession plan is to ensure continuous coverage of senior management duties, critical to the on-going operations and sustainability of Active Essex, when a long-term senior member of staff plan a future retirement or departure date.
- 3.2 The objective of this process is to share the expertise of the departing senior member of staff, whilst simultaneously preparing Active Essex to fully support the successor.
- 3.3 Ideally the departing employee's input, along with involvement from the Board and successor, will make this an effective plan to ensure continuity in external relationships and with staff, while promoting an environment of operational effectiveness under new leadership.

To produce the detail necessary for the Departure-Defined Succession plan the Board and Senior Management Team would be advised to work through the steps.

- a) The Board will need to address the reasons for the departing senior member of staff, by asking the employee to review a number of self-reflection questions (examples are provided below, but the Board will need to determine which questions it feels are pertinent).
  - Why do I want to make this move?
  - What are the benefits for me in making this move? For Active Essex? For the wider stakeholders?
  - What are the downsides for me in making this move? For Active Essex? For the wider stakeholders?
  - What can I do to address the downsides so they don't become barriers to Active Essex's future sustainability and success?
  - How do I see my connection with Active Essex and the successor? What do I need? Is it realistic? How can I get it?
  - How can I help my replacement be successful? How can I help the Board and other key stakeholders?
- b) The Board will need to facilitate personal for the departing senior member of staff, by providing self-reflection questions and/or access to a life coach.

Once the Board have been notified of the planned departure, it is an ideal opportunity to review and update the departing employee's job description, to ensure it aligns with the future strategic direction of Active Essex.

Reflect the same process already detailed within section two – Emergency Succession Planning.

The Board would be advised to establish a succession planning task group with clear roles and accountability to the Board.

The task group will be accountable for developing, seeking commitment and implementing the departure- defined succession management plan. The task group will facilitate, manage and obtain Board approval of this critical leadership transition. The key difference for this task group from a standard committee is the focus and time commitment to developing the successor and preparing Active Essex for a successful transition.

The Succession Planning Task Group will oversee the following steps:

- Determine the recruitment strategy required
- Update the job description of the position being recruited
- Define an internal and external communication plan (as detailed within the Emergency Succession Planning section)
- Strategic Leader Development – develop a plan in line with the competencies defined for the critical senior positions to develop and nurture existing staff that indicate a desire to gain internal promotion if the opportunity arises. This may be in the form of mentoring, coaching, formal training or shadowing senior members of staff in certain circumstances.