

Transcript for Webinar “Making and Taking Space: Preparing for Leadership Progressions”

Host: Building Movement Project

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Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

... To Making and Taking Space, Preparing Organizations for Leadership Progressions. We're going to take a few minutes to let folks come into the room. If you would do us a great big favor and drop your name and your organization into the chat so we can say hello and welcome you and get to know who's joining us today. So, we'll just take a couple minutes as folks enter. Again, thank you for joining our Building Movement Project webinar today.

Welcome. I see [inaudible 00:00:56], Melinda Williams, Kinzie Mabond, lots of great folks coming in the room, the [inaudible 00:01:04] Center for Civic Policy. Welcome. Welcome folks. If you are in the Building Movement Project webinar, Making and Taking Space, Preparing Organizations for Leadership Progressions, you are in the right webinar.

Going to take us a couple more minutes to let folks come into the room and then we'll get going with our webinar today. And my name is Alicia Lueras Maldonado. I'm very excited to be moderating today's webinar. We've got a great lineup of speakers and panelists who've taken the time to be with us today, talk about leadership progression. Fantastic folks.

Well we are going to let folks continue to drop into the Zoom room. In the meantime, we are going to go ahead and get going with today's webinar Making and Taking Space, Preparing Organizations for Leadership Progression. So a couple housekeeping things, attendees are not visible. Please use the Q&A feature to ask questions and use the chat to send any tech issues to BMP Admin. We have our colleague Jasmine [inaudible 00:02:44], who is managing tech and admin. And so we'd like to thank them for being here with us today. If you've got any questions regarding any tech or connectivity issues, please go ahead and send a message to BMP Admin. And thank you, Jasmine, for being here for us.

This webinar is being recorded and we'll share the link along with additional materials, and please if you want to send out a tweet along hashtag #Makingspace @BuildingMovementProject. So welcome folks. We've got a nice group of folks in the room. I wanted to share some information about Building Movement Project and what we do. We're a national organization. We develop research tools, training and opportunities for partnership to both non-profit organizations and the sector to support the voice and power of the people that they serve.

Since founding over 20 years ago, BMP has focused on three main areas, movement building, leadership and services and social change. For the movement building and transformational solidarity line of work, we help organization and movements work collaboratively to have a bigger impact than they might on their own. We recently released a move the money toolkit geared towards philanthropy. For our service and social change, we work with direct service organizations to embrace social values and practice. And on our leadership work, it includes research and study on generational shifts. And we have focused in the last few years in particular on racial gaps, namely our Race to Lead initiative, which is a survey that is still in the field right now. We'll share a little bit more information about that as we get going.

For today, in terms of the goals for our webinar, we'd like to introduce Making and Taking Space. We'll be sharing some discoveries and research from our glass ceilings report. And we've got with us our co-executive director from Building Movement Project, Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, who will be sharing the bulk of that research with us today. And then we'll hear from our leaders about transitions and as they share their best practices regarding executive leadership transitions and progressions. So at this point I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, to take us through the recent research on transition. So thank you and welcome, Sean.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Thanks so much. Before I start digging into some of the research findings, we did want to do a quick poll question just to get a sense of who's with us today. Jas, can you activate that first poll about the roles that people have? All right, so what you see here is a poll. If you're an ED CEO, select that. We're getting some responses. Looks great. So far about 60% of you have filled out the poll. All right, we've got folks in every category. Why don't we start showing the results, Jas.

And hopefully folks can see. So around a third of folks are in the ED CEO role. Another third are in the staff senior team C-suite role. And then the rest staff, other role. We have a few board members, consultants and capacity builders and a few funders as well. So thanks everybody for being with us.

I'm going to start talking about some of the recent research, as was mentioned. We have these two reports that we put out. Making or Taking Space we released about a year ago. And then Trading Glass Ceilings for Glass Cliffs we released at the beginning of this calendar year. And both are looking at executive transitions. I'm going to start out with a data point from the Trading Glass Ceilings for Glass Cliffs report, which is we asked people in the survey, the Race to Lead survey back in 2019, people who were already in the executive director CEO role, whether they were not ready to transition or already thinking about transition or planning to transition.

And it was interesting to see that around half of respondents, both EDs of color and white EDs were already thinking about or planning to transition. And part of the reason that I wanted to bring this up is because we had this early indication in 2019, but we've been hearing anecdotally that the trend is increasing. And so we're going to do another quick poll just to see what you all are seeing in your own area, because we want to know, what are you seeing? Are a lot of people transitioning? Is it sort of everybody or is it something that's barely being talked about? Jas, can you start that second poll question?

Jas, I think it's not this one. Can you go ... All right. So the question is, how many non-profit ED CEOs in your area are talking about leaving? Nobody, only a few, is it a growing trend? Just want to see what people are experiencing in your own areas. About half of you have participated, just give it a few more seconds. All right, wonderful. So we're over three quarters of folks have participated. Jas, can you switch to showing the results? All right, so it looks like the biggest category is definitely that it's a growing trend, right? So it is sort of mostly in the only a few definitely growing trend and that a few people are panicked. So everybody is planning to transition or leave their executive director role. All right, wonderful.

So the just want to acknowledge that this isn't the first time that the sector has been in a wave of executive transitions. And so as Alicia mentioned, BMP's been around for over 20 years and we've been doing research in this area for many of those years. And so back in the mid to late 2000s was the last time that there was this sense that there was a real wave of executive transitions that was happening. In part, it was about demographics in terms of baby boomers who were supposedly going to be retiring en masse and passing on the reigns to the next generation of Gen X executive leaders, which didn't materialize for a lot of reasons, in particular the economic downturn in 2008.

But there were these other factors that were also swirling, and so some of those were concerns about the ED role not being sustainable. That was a topic of conversation back then. There was also this awareness that as leadership changed would reflect generations changing as well and that the demographics were different of the younger generations were going to be moving into executive leadership. BMP also did some research on looking at different ways that organizations were structuring both leadership and decision making. That was a report in around 2010. And at around that same time, we also were trying to reframe this moment of executive transition as a moment of opportunity, and particularly the idea that there was a important responsibility for executive leaders in terms of setting their organization up for success under future leadership.

And so this make or taking space report that we released a year ago was based on a set of interviews that we did with incoming leaders of color and outgoing white leaders and board members all from the same organization. So we were talking to three different people with three different vantage points, but who were all connected to the same organization. It was really interesting to see what some of the trends were across those interviews, and one of which was that organizations were being intentional about wanting the next leader to be a person of color. And sometimes this coincided with or was in response to internal challenges that the organization had faced around race and identity.

We also found that oftentimes incoming leaders of color had a real understanding and awareness of the challenges that they were going to be inheriting. My co-ED Francis often talks about the dirty closet that new leaders end up inheriting. And so people had some awareness of what was going to be in that dirty closet. But sometimes the extent wasn't always clear as you see with this next finding around the fact that many times incoming leaders of color knew that their job was going to entail both running an organization and also doing internal race equity work.

But what they often did not anticipate was that the organization would face funding challenges, and too often that's because funders take what's called a wait and see approach. They wait to see if the next leader is going to be successful and then they decide to renew a grant, which unfortunately handicaps or makes it impossible for that lead next leader to be successful in terms of being able to keep the organization moving forward. We also heard that there was this added challenge that incoming leaders were facing in terms of protecting the reputation of the outgoing white leader who was their predecessor.

And so I'm going to switch gears to talk about the data from our Race to Lead survey. And just again, invitation if you haven't already taken Race to Lead for 2022, please take a photo of this QR code, go to the Bitly, please share it widely because we want as big of a data set as possible from 2022 so we can do these kinds of reports that drill down on the shared experiences of executive leaders as well. And so this Trading Glass Ceilings for Glass Cliffs report was based on data we collected back in 2019. And so here I'm showing all of the findings and we're not going to talk through all of them, but I did want to at least see the range of findings that we had from this report.

I'm going to talk specifically about the leaders of color needing support, not training. And so I think that this quote really helps to illustrate that because what we found was that there were no gaps in terms of what kind of training people had experienced once they made it to the executive director role on the basis of race or anything. So people are equally trained, they have the same kind of academic credentials. The difference is that oftentimes people of color reported not having had the kind of supports earlier in their careers that were really important to either be on a fast track to advancement or having more success as an executive leader.

And one of those things is the kind of institutional sponsorship or advocacy for advancement that, as this person is saying they were not experiencing, but they were seeing peers who were white men or white women ascend to and get promotions on the basis of others advocating on their behalf.

On this next finding about the added challenges that people face leading identity based organizations, I want to lift this up because the partners that you'll be hearing from are leading identity based organizations and there are particular challenges that are about the organization that people are leading.

Sometimes it's compounded then by the race of the leader, but there are challenges that do come with leading identity based organizations. And it's interesting to note that over half of EDs of color in our sample reported that their organization was an identity based organization and just over 20% of white EDs reported that their organization was an identity based organization. So an organization that's race based, focused on the immigrant community, LGBTQ folks, et cetera. And so this is a quote from one of the survey respondents about some of the added challenges of being a Black leader of a Black operated

organization as they put it, particularly around funding opportunities and the sense repeatedly that identity based organizations are often overlooked regardless of the quality of work they perform.

Here is another data point that I'm showing where if you look at the left side of this slide, we're looking at EDs of color and white EDs of identity based organizations. And then on the right we're looking at EDs of color and white EDs of all other more mainstream nonprofits. And so this piece, this challenge around lack of relationship with funding sources, clearly the biggest challenge for EDs of color leading identity based organizations followed by leaders of color leading mainstream organizations were basically on par with white EDs of identity based organizations. And then only around a third of white EDs of mainstream organizations felt like lack of relationships with funding sources was a big challenge.

We saw the same pattern when it came to the stress of being called upon to represent a community, but where it's different is the demanding workload. And so here we see no real racial gap between EDs of color and white EDs leading identity based organizations, but clearly they have a different kind of workload or reporting more stress around workload that's higher than leaders of more mainstream organizations.

Moving on to this next finding around the challenges again of taking over leadership from white predecessor, just to provide some big picture context, the main point here is that almost half of EDs of color are reporting that their predecessor was white, whereas only 8% of white EDs were following a person of color. So the experience of navigating executive transitions that are also racialized transitions is largely falling on EDs of color. So it's just worth keeping in mind and understanding that because it helps to understand the widespread experience and frustration that many leaders of color end up reporting about feeling insubordination or not supported by their board or staff. And that often does come with following an outgoing leader who does not look like or lead in the same way that the incoming leader does.

Going to pause here just because we have a question that we're hoping that the 2022 Race to Lead data will help us inform and understand around if we really are in a moment of executive transition, a wave of executive transitions, are there rising leaders who are ready and willing and excited to take on the challenge of becoming an executive director?

We had seen in 2016 and 2019 higher degree of aspiration on the part of people of color in terms of becoming nonprofit leaders. And so one of the questions was, would this continue? And so right now looking at some of the preliminary data that we've received so far, it does look like the aspirations to lead is lower for both people of color and white respondents compared to the data we'd collected in previous years. So again, hoping that we'll gather more data this year in 2022 to inform some of this conversation in the sector about the next wave of executive transitions. So on this point about the future aspiration, the final poll question hopefully can come up, where we're going to ask you to sort of speculate what do you think might be getting in the way of people wanting to aspire to be executive leaders.

And so do you think it's about work life balance, dissatisfaction with the current leadership models, that the ED role just involves too much responsibility and stress? Do people have concerns about equity in the sector? Is it low pay? So far, around a third of you have participated in the poll. Let's just give it a few more seconds to get more folks to fill out the poll. All right, it looks like we have an early lead in the too much responsibility stress category. Let's see if we can share the responses with everybody and see. Yeah, so almost half of you are indicating that you think that the lower aspirations to executive leadership is related to the amount of responsibility and stress that people take on as executive directors. So I'm going to pause here and turn it back over to Alicia to introduce our panel and then we will keep the conversation going.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thank you, Sean. And just wanted to take a minute again to welcome everyone who is in the room with us. I appreciate you sharing your name and organization in the chat so we can welcome you and say hello. So I'm really excited to introduce these really amazing leaders that are taking the time to chat with us today about executive leadership transitions and the challenges and opportunities that exist.

So with us we have Adrien Lawyer, the co-founder and former ED of advocacy and development at the Transgender Resource Center. Adrien co-founded the resource center in 2008 with Zane Stephens to be a clearinghouse of direct services, education and advocacy for the transgender community. He's delivered transgender cultural fluency trainings in over 2,500 settings and has led successful advocacy efforts for model transgender student policies, gender neutral restrooms, trans inclusion and social services facilities, statewide bullying prevention, and most recently birth certificate gender marker change. So welcome, Adrien.

Also with us we have T. Michael Trimm. He is the new executive director of services and administration for the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico. Michael joined the center in November of 2020, so a newer one to this position as the director of operations and was promoted in February of 2022 to executive director. Originally from Ohio and with eight siblings, Michael now calls the southwest region home and sought the opportunity to join the center to be part of uplifting, encouraging and empowering transgender and gender nonconforming people. So welcome, Michael, to our panel today.

Also with us is Jennifer Landau, the co-founder and executive director of the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center. Jennifer graduated cum laude from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 2006 where she was awarded the Clinical Legal Association Outstanding Student Award along with clinical honors. In 2007, she was awarded a two year Equal Justice Works fellowship and was presented the 2009 Justice Pamela B. Minzer Outstanding Advocacy for Women. Jenny has also taught immigration courses as an adjunct faculty at UNM School of Law. So welcome, Jennifer.

And also with us is Monica Cordova. She is the board president for the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center. She is also the executive co-director at the Funder's Collaborative on youth organizing. She's an experienced executive director with the demonstrated history of working in the philanthropy industry. She's skilled in nonprofit organizations, fundraising, community organizing, program development, and community outreach. Monica is a strong community and social services professional with a Bachelor's degree focused in social work from New Mexico Highlands University. So welcome all of you to our panel today. Really excited to launch into this conversation.

To get us started, I wanted to ask Adrien and Michael about the big moments and how you planned for transition change. And so how did you view the leadership transition at the Transgender Resource Center and what was your succession strategy? How did you move through that? And so if you both want to share with us your thoughts on that, and welcome.

Adrien Lawyer:

Thank y'all for having us. Michael, do you want to start or do you want me to?

T. Michael Trimm:

I think that this started with you, so maybe you can start and then I'll just jump in.

Adrien Lawyer:

Okay, sounds good. So yeah, I'm a founder. So my friend Zane and I started this center. Actually, somebody recently told me in 2007 we started showing up talking about we were the TGRC, and so I guess we started it in 2007. And so we were a completely typical grassroots organization. We started with nothing, with just no resources, just the people and trying to help people one on one. So we were building it from really and truly the ground up all this time. I was a head volunteer for a long time, for a really long time I didn't get paid at all to be doing the work that we were doing and it was a real slow going to build up the funding. And we started in 2007, but we got our 501(c)(3) in 2011. We opened our

very first physical location in January of 2012. So now we have almost 13 years of having a drop in center open here in Albuquerque.

I think during that time that we were building, we often got feedback from the community and Zane and I both also very genuinely felt that when the time came for us to move on, we shouldn't have two more white leaders leading the organization. That just doesn't make sense. When you look at the transgender communities in New Mexico, it doesn't make sense that you would have two white men, actually we're both transgender men as well, leading the organization. But leading the organization in those early years really meant sacrificing, trying to build something. And that was not ... it wasn't even a paid job to hand over to somebody in that way.

When we got to the place where it started to feel like we were moving towards our departures, we really wanted to think hard about how to recruit and engage folks who were people of color to come in and take over the work that we were doing. So for us, that was a really important part of it. We actually didn't know that we had racial issues so much inside the organization. I always find that so interesting in the report that so many of these transitions happened because there were internal issues that were bubbling up around race, and we didn't really have that so much, but we did have it and we didn't know it. We've had some stuff bubble up in the transition process actually.

And the last thing I want to say about it is I'm such a stereotypical founder that even this, I've just had to learn the hard way. I don't know I what I'm doing. So when you talk about planning it, that makes me, I was sort of laughing on mute because, as with everything else about the center, I feel like I didn't have a strategic vision or plan or anything that was going to help to make this better. I had a lot of ideas and thoughts. I had things I knew I was watching out for, especially within myself in the beginning, my own internal racism as a white person and how I responded and reacted to Michael and stuff like that. But I didn't have a great plan. I could help somebody make one now I feel. I feel that now Michael and I both could help people through the process a little bit better, but it's been really difficult and had a lot of bumps in our case for sure.

T. Michael Trimm:

Yeah, I think the-

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thank you for sharing.

T. Michael Trimm:

Sure. I think that for me on this end, being the person that was the gotcha moment, if you will, that I always refer to, Adrien and I, we have check-ins a couple times a week and in early 2022 he was like, "Hey, I have something to tell you." And I'm like, "What is it?" And he talked about his desire to retire and his vision for me in this role. And I was like, "Ah, okay." In the short amount of time prior to that, I had really grown to love the organization and the people that we serve and become very protective of it, surprising myself even. And that made it so much easier for me to say that yes, this is something that I want to do. And even unbeknownst to myself, I realized that I did have a strategic plan and a vision for where I wanted this organization to go.

So things just kind of fell into place initially and we created a plan. And one of the things that I love about our org is that we are very agile and flexible because our initial plan did not work. So we flexed, we did something differently. We have moved from a codirector, a co-ED model to now a senior leadership team with the sole executive director and then two directors "Under", if you will, myself. So we've moved to having this very strong triangle leadership approach, which has turned out to be certainly a blessing for sure.

Moving forward, I think the biggest thing that should be kept in mind in terms of these strategic plans is that you have to be flexible and that our organizations are living, breathing things and that something is going to come our way and throw us a curve ball and we have to be willing to catch it or drop it or move

out of the way so you don't get hit by it and knocked out. And all of those things are super important. And I'm very happy that this transition was amicable. Adrien was not run out of town with pitch forks, like, "Get him out of here." We were able to work together in this transition. And that's my hope for everyone, because that has certainly been a blessing as well.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thanks for sharing that. And I think one of the things that I want to lift up before I turn it over to Jennifer and Monica to share some of the experiences with the transitions that the Immigrant Law Center has gone through, is that the flexibility and then what tools are at your disposal to lean into, what strategies can you lift up? And I know that you all have had to do those shiftings as you're moving through these transitions, so thanks for sharing that.

I wanted to turn it over to Jennifer and Monica to talk about what did you plan for when you all were looking at a executive leadership change and how did you move through that transition and that process, right? And also having to be flexible and make changes and refigure things. What did that look like for you all?

Jennifer Landau:

Should I go, Monica, or would you like to? Okay. Yeah, I would totally agree with the flexibility and agility and different context for each organization. Similarly, I was a co-founder of a startup. My background is that my family, my father and his family were born in refugee camp. So I come to this work of immigrant rights from that family experience. My family came out of World War II and immigrated to the United States and started from scratch. And I've always really connected with that experience and how in each generation there's new people that are experiencing the very same things that my family experienced. And so when we started in a MILC there weren't services in New Mexico. My intention was not to start a non-profit. I had a fellowship out of law school and then the fellowship project grew into an organization. I don't have any training on in non-profit management.

But what we noticed when we started the organization was that all the folks that ... there's one law school in New Mexico, there was a huge gap in terms of services to immigrants and there was also a huge gap ... This was during the bush years, pre DACA, just access to the legal profession was very limited for immigrant community members. Federal financial aid is only available if you're a legal permanent resident or a citizen. The folks that would come to even intern with us or want to work in the non-profit sector generally were white and not connected to the immigrant community. And so it wasn't just the non-profit context, it was also the legal context in New Mexico. Early on, it was just me and my co-founder who was another law graduate from law school who also was concerned about access to justice and legal services in New Mexico.

And I think it was year two of the formal immigrant law center trajectory that we had, we happened to find out about the Public Allies program and we went to interview a public ally and he turned out to be from New Mexico, had gone away to school, wanted to do public interest law. His family was from Mexico, had the immigrant experience here and in Mexico and was a visionary from the very beginning. Within the first six months of his public ally position at our organization, I was like, "Hey, what are your professional interests and where do you see yourself going?" And so [inaudible 00:34:42] ended up going to UNM Law School and really in a lot of ways was a co-founder maybe two years later, but really in that early stage of organizational growth and over the years then went to law school and then became an attorney and then became the associate director.

But I think it wasn't so much that I was thinking I am ready to retire or I need a succession plan. It was more like a co-founder in a way situation where I just thought he was leading the vision from very early on and it just seemed like it was a natural progression of leadership. I think one of the lessons learned though is that when you're a small or a growing organization that has growing administrative and management needs that often in succession planning you identify the person who is really passionate about making an impact and connected to the program work and that the administrative burdens of

being in a non-profit leadership role, unless you have funding where you can have the person who's the operations person and the human resources person and does all the other work to actually be the visionary and lead in that way is really challenging in a growing nonprofit funding context.

I think that's just something that we've reflected on, is that there really needs to be ... I think, Adrien, what you were saying, a much broader leadership structure. It's also kind of a setup, I think to have one person feel like they have to make an impact in every aspect of the organization and are the answer to solving all the organizations' dreams and problems. There really needs to be a much broader leadership space. But the problem also is we were growing during the Trump years, so it was rapid growth and reactive growth. And so at the time when we started thinking about the transition, we were maybe a 10 person organization and by the end of the transition we were a 25 to 30 person organization with a lot more administrative needs.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Jennifer, I wanted to stop you there.

Jennifer Landau:

Oh great.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

And ask Monica to share a little bit about ... because I know this transition, right? You had a plan and then you had to restructure when [inaudible 00:37:39] was not able to stay with the organization. And then thinking about the amount of growth that you mentioned, and so in terms Monica being a board member and thinking through restructuring and what does that look like for a board and the investment of board members when you're looking at leadership transitions and looking at things like growth and funding and all of that, if you could share some thoughts and lessons learned from your perspective.

Monica Cordova:

Sure, I'm happy to. And also I'm executive director at the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing. We are also going through our own transition, so no longer in a co-directorship. But in my role as the board chair, one, I think that something was really valuable and something that Jenny's actually really been thoughtful about is who is on the board and the types of skill sets and experience they bring. And so from having folks that understand the finance side of things to help support that capacity in the organization to somebody like me who has a long history in the nonprofit sector, has been a board member, has had to work with boards. And so in those, Jenny and I were talking yesterday and Jenny was like, "I don't know that it was a process." And I was like, "Well, there was a process. Don't you remember?"

I think a lot of it felt quite natural and just the ways in which the organization was growing the transitions and shifting of roles was what made sense in that instance. When we early on had the conversations, I think one of the first things we thought about really was the leadership capacities that needed to get built up with somebody coming into a role. And so as Jenny named, there was a thought process put into how to bring something somebody, not just kind of throw them into leadership, but what would adhering of that look like? So there was a real decision to actually do the associate director role for a solid year before then thinking differently about then what was the roles that would make sense after that, which I thought was really smart.

And so we did, and the board was quite active in the process after that. We were in discussions, Jenny and I had several conversations and then proposals came around. There were choice points, like why aren't we putting ... I know I remember conversations, why wouldn't we put it out? If it's about a shift in leadership, was this a position that we should put out to advertise and hire for? And so there was discussions around why it actually made sense as what Jenny just named, to move somebody who had been a part of the organization for quite some time into a leadership role.

And then as that role transitioned through the pandemic, because we know what happened, Jenny named the tremendous growth the organization went through and it went from managing a 10 person team to a 20, 30 person team, which is a whole other thing. And if you don't have a structure that's caught up with that, the leadership gaps begin to become clear. And it's not about any kind of one individual, but it is about the structure that's in place that actually supports whatever type of transition. And so as we transitioned back to Jenny as the executive director, those were things that we had to think about. And then Jenny was able to then spend some time, I think in now the thinking about what is the broader staff structure that the organization needs, what is a broader staff structure that our healthy organization needs? And we're able to, as a board, I think really do our best to support that and be flexible, like Adrien talked about being flexible.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Yeah, I think what you all have just shared is the density of challenge that comes right in the midst of transition and then large growth and the need for having that broader framework. So thanks for bringing that up, Monica. Yeah, I was curious as to Adrien and Jennifer, you all are co-founders of an organization. What would you say are specific challenges or issues or even opportunities that come with moving from a co-founder to someone who's not a founder within an organization?

Adrien Lawyer:

For me, it was that I have to deal now even more directly with my own workaholism and the fact that I am compulsive about doing that, that's me and not the job, but a founder is also famously somebody who's stretched in 1,000 directions because there is nobody else to do everything that needs to get done. So the opportunity in my opinion was exactly what we've done, which is now have three people ... basically there are three positions now to take over pieces of the work that I was doing. Which means if one person is doing three full-time jobs and those jobs are not getting done very well, they're getting done adequately. They're getting done to the best that I can devote my attention to them. But they're certainly not where you want the leadership of the organization to be or where you want people to be in terms of the programs either.

So for me, the big opportunity was, A, bringing new voices to the front of the trans movement in New Mexico and mentoring some new leadership on my way out the door, but also making the organization more sustainable by breaking this job in down into the individual jobs that it is in the hopes that the folks coming after me can do it in a way that is more healthy, that is healthier than the way that I was certainly doing it.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

[inaudible 00:43:42] Did you want to share anything along those lines? Micheal, go ahead.

T. Michael Trimm:

Yeah, Jennifer, go ahead.

Jennifer Landau:

Oh no. Go ahead, Michael.

T. Michael Trimm:

I would just say that on this end, as the new leader, the emerging leader coming into this space, I have the blessing of the foundation laid by our founders, all the institutional knowledge, but I don't have the burden to be beholden to them. I am not stuck with this is how TGRC always did this. So that's how we always have to do things in the future, and I feel very supported by the other leaders within the organization, our board, to make those changes in a positive direction without it being that I'm somehow disrespectful to the foundation that has been laid for me. And again, to Adrien's point, we actually split his job up into four jobs, not just three. So we all get to be a little bit healthier. We get to, I don't know, take days off.

We get to enjoy the work that we're doing instead of it constantly being something that's dragging us down even though we love it. But then we also secretly hate it. Come on, we do a little bit because it makes us sick because we can't stop. And so us being in a position where we can really specialize to a certain extent in things and really pour our whole hearts into what it is that we're doing instead of being pulled in so many different directions that we just can't possibly focus. I think that's also something fantastic that has come out of this kind of shake up and restructuring.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thanks for sharing that. And we just had a comment in the chat around that balance of work life, keeping ourselves healthy, how do we do the work? And then as you mentioned, Michael, wanting to continue in the trajectory of the values and vision of an organization, but also having the ability to create change and push things forward. It seems like that would be a good balance and place to move towards. And I'm wondering, Jennifer, what you've experienced in regards to that.

Jennifer Landau:

Yeah, I mean I think any executive transition has challenges even if it's not a founder. But I think definitely for founders, you start everything from scratch and you know all the systems and so that what you were talking about, Adrien, like the specialization and building towards that specialization with growth I think is key to building a sustainable organization. But I do think that there's often, at least we're funded with federal and state funds, it's not just foundation funds. And so it's really difficult to find funding for that specialization if it's not program oriented to really build out that infrastructure that's needed for all the components of what ... I think the term that I really like is core mission support as opposed to admin. And I think that's critical in building healthy organizations and at least the landscape that we are in, the funding landscape, very challenging to pull off.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

That was going to be one of my next questions, Jennifer, in terms of what is the role of funders in leadership transitions, what should they avoid, what do they need to support, what do you all need in terms of that? And so if you could share some thoughts on that. And I don't know, Monica, maybe you've got some thoughts and ideas, but really anyone. What is that role?

Jennifer Landau:

Well, I would just go ahead and say that I think oftentimes when things don't go well it creates ... there's a lot of resources needed in an organization when things go south, but on the building sustainability and healthy organizations, coaching is such an incredible tool and it's often hard to find funding for, not just for an executive director but for a much broader leadership team. And then also just the figuring out how to actually build out a leadership team that has the time and space to build out, to really develop skills in all the different pieces that make an organization work. Every organization's different.

If in our case it's because we're direct services, we have some federal and state funding, there's like a heavy compliance side. Now that we're a 35 person organization, we've had to build out different admin pieces that require specialized knowledge. And at least our struggle is just as I mentioned before, the most funding, the most we can usually have in terms of operating support is 10% from federal and state grants. And that certainly does not cover a full leadership team, and so the general operating supporter just support in growth and transitions is extremely helpful.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thank you. I'm just looking at a really great comment and question that came in on the chat from Monica. In terms of the poll that was shared earlier about being ready to transition, some might not even want to transition from their top positions. So if you all could share what tools or approaches you used to reconcile the situation and the natural progression of transitioning and moving with grace, compounded by an environment has the only POC in a mostly white female dominated organization. So any thoughts or reactions to particular tools or strategies that have worked or that you have seen?

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

Well I'll do a shameless plug. So in the leadership in leaving report that BMP did at this point over a decade ago, there were some reflection tools, reflection questions that were put into that report that help people really think about their own personal readiness and interest, but also balance it with thinking holistically about the organization and really trying to line those things up because I think as everyone's sort of acknowledged, transitions are going to be complicated no matter what, because change is hard.

And so part of what PMP was trying to put forward for the sector is that the sort of leaving as a leadership responsibility does mean that certain things have to be done intentional. And what you heard from our partners today is real intentionality around building a bench, bringing people into leadership roles, rethinking the executive function so that it's shared more and that more people have, as Adrien said, the ability to have each of those pieces be a full-time job instead of having one person do all of those things in a less than ideal situation. So I think those are sorts of things that are useful to be thinking about if you're in a place where you are thinking about both your future as well as the future of the organization that you've been leading for however long. Because any transition is going to be complicated because change is hard.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thanks for sharing that, Sean. And Jasmine just dropped into the chat, the link to the Leadership in Leading, Reflecting on Your Organizational and Personal Readiness. So really just of leaning into that question that came in earlier. We've got another question, and Monica, I'd like to direct this towards you. What is one key thing you think board members can do to support incoming EDs of color who are proceeding a white ED?

Monica Cordova:

Sorry, take a second to get off mute. I think that this is helpful for any transition. I mean I've gone through multiple, I've been a part of multiple. And I think as a board, what I try to keep a thoughtful eye on is leadership looks different. Like whomever, leadership from a white ED to a person of color ED is going to look different from across all kinds of what folks bring into this work experience, whatever that is.

And so I think that oftentimes it is not just about the practical skills that somebody's coming into the organization and they're needing to learn or new skills if they're already in the organization they're going to learn, but also trying to find room to actually let their leadership style thrive when people might be very comfortable with a different type of leadership style. And I think as we think about the board's support for that, being comfortable with somebody coming in with a different type of leadership style that might want a different type of relationship to you as a board. And Jenny and I have talked about this, and this wasn't necessarily as a challenge I don't think with the transition at the law center, but we did talk, I know when [inaudible 00:53:43] came into leadership, I was like, Jenny and I had a particular working relationship that worked for her and I'm happy to be here in the capacity that you want me to be here. And Jenny ever talked about, what is the type of board you want and you need? And that could look different based on whoever's in leadership.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thank you for that, Monica. Michael, I see you raised your hand if you want to share some thoughts with us before we start wrapping up.

T. Michael Trimm:

Yeah, I would just say that naming what you need and naming that racism is real. It's real. And actually saying out loud, even for the person that is the most woke, that is the most sensitive, the most understanding, we live in a racist culture and we are products of that to a certain extent, to varying degrees. And that when you least expect it, it will creep up in some sort of way, whether it's within us as individuals or coming at us from the outside or some sort of combination of the two. So naming that this is something that is important and saying out loud that your leader of color, and even for me, I am a

Black person, I say Black, I don't consider myself a person of color. I say Black because Black is beautiful and as my shirt says that you can't read, Black is a blessing. But saying out loud that your Black leaders, your brown leaders, your indigenous leaders, that they need your support and then really meaning that and putting action behind it is so crucial.

And the folks that aren't really with it, they'll weed themselves out, they will show their colors or they will leave and disappear on their own. And you can get the folks that really are on board with where the organization is and where the organization is going.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thank you for saying that out loud, Michael. I think that some of what Sean was sharing earlier about the Race to Lead report and the survey that's still out now, really lifts up naming what is going on, what folks are seeing within organizations and how they can get the support that they need. We've got just a couple more minutes before we wrap up if anyone wanted to share some last words. Again, my thanks to all of you for taking the time today. To everyone who joined us on the webinar today, we thank you for coming in. Again, it's recorded and we'll be sharing it in a blog post. But any last words from anyone before we wrap up today?

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld:

I would just say, hey everybody, it's giving Tuesday, please support the transgender Resource Center of New Mexico and the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center. They are great organizations doing critical work on the ground in New Mexico, and I'm so grateful as one of the co-EDs of BMP to have had such a long and lasting relationship with both of these organizations and all of the leaders who you got to hear from today. Thanks everybody for being here.

Alicia Lueras Maldonado:

Thank you. And before we close out, I want ... Jasmine, if you could share this last slide. We still have the 2022 Race to Lead survey out in the field. What you're looking at on your screen right now is the Bitly, or you can scan the code. We'd love to get as many leaders to complete this survey so that we can have some healthy data to analyze and then that report will come out next year. So thank you all once again for joining us today. Thanks to Building Movement Project for all of the support, for the years of relationship. I'm grateful to each and every one of you for your work. Thanks for being with us today, folks.