**Succession Planning**

Please see below for a list of questions asked at the ‘succession planning’ session of the Governors for Schools Conference 2022, on Wednesday, 28th September from 10:15am – 10:45am.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I’ve only been Chair of Governors for just over a year - when should we start succession planning?  It seems too soon to do now. | It’s never too early to start planning for succession and making sure the issue is not overlooked by the board, even if you are intending to stay in office for a while. The point is that at some stage, say in no more than five years, it will be time to move on due to circumstances, or because it’s time to refresh the leadership of the board.  That time will go quickly, so I recommend the board uses it to lay the foundations for your eventual successor, even if there is no need to identify who it will be yet. |
| Do you think it is important for a chair to put a concrete timescale on their departure? | That depends on the circumstances.  NGA’s recommendation that no one serves as chair in one school or trust for more than six consecutive years is not an arbitrary time limit. Rather, it is good practice that boards should work towards.  I appreciate that in some circumstances it is right for a chair to stay on longer, as the risks associated with their departure are too high.  However, this often creates a barrier to building leadership capacity on the board, as no-one can imagine the chair ever departing.  So, it’s important that the chair has a timescale for departure and is transparent about it, even if it is not set in stone. |
| Is it good enough to just have a plan in my head? | Not really. It’s better to bring these plans into the open so that everyone is clear about potential next steps and has the opportunity to provide their opinions. This step is particularly important for those you view as the most likely successors. |
| Can discussions around succession take place outside of formal board meetings (which are extremely tight for time)? | Yes, of course. In fact, I would encourage the board to stay in touch with each other between meetings unconstrained by a formal agenda, building professional rapport and discussing how they work together, both now and in the future. It helps to solidify the team. |
| What are your views on co-chairing? I am going to start co-chairing with our existing chair for 2 terms before she retires. | NGA definitely supports this concept. Sharing the role of chair can be a useful option, especially where individuals have the necessary skills but lack time. Not only can this make the role workable for people who would otherwise not be able to find the time, it can also strengthen the leadership of the board by adding another person’s valued opinions. In order for co-chairing to work, there needs to be a clear understanding of what is required from both co-chairs. As with any job-share, both parties need to decide how the work will be divided and ensure that that the division is fair.  NGA has produced some short [guidance](https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Governance-structure-roles-and-responsibilities/Roles-and-responsibilities/Chairing/Sharing-the-chair.aspx) with pointers on how to make a co-chairing arrangement work well. |