



The State of the Interim Profession in the Nonprofit Sector

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A summary of insights and ideas shared by participants during the 2023 Interim Leadership Summit

*When organizations are in transition,
the clay is softer to help mold a
beautiful work of art.*

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Executive Summary

In July 2023, 100 interim leaders and colleagues gathered for the inaugural Interim Leadership Summit.

The purpose of the Summit was to provide professional development for interim leaders, create a shared community, and advance the latest research related to the field. Conference participants represented a diversity of interim professionals across age, tenure in the profession, racial/cultural background, and lived experience.



National Interim Leadership Summit

July 26 - 28, 2023

One product of the Summit is this report: “The State of the Interim Profession in the Nonprofit Sector 2023.” It gives voice to interim executives across North America and advances the practical work of interim leaders in the field. While the focus of this report is on the interim profession, Summit participants also shared insights and stories related to the social sector as a whole, nonprofits as organizations advancing a social mission, and the individual interim experience.

As the report describes further, interim leadership is increasingly seen as a profession and core capacity building lever in the nonprofit sector. More and more nonprofits are tapping into the power of interim executives as change leaders uniquely capable of ensuring organizational readiness for new leadership. This shift, however, is not uniformly experienced across all regions of the United States and Canada. As the interim profession develops, it is well poised to expand its leadership role in the social sector as a whole.

Interim leadership happens within a larger context, and sector-level challenges influence the profession. Interim executives are navigating unhappy work environments, generational shifts, uneven diversity, equity, and inclusion practice, and virtual work just as any social sector leaders are. The state of board practice is of particular importance in interim leadership because boards hire and support the interim and govern organizations through change.

Through the Summit, participants identified seven high-level opportunities to advance the profession: define and frame the role, commit to racial justice as core to the role, expand professional development and credentialing, expand partnerships, invest in nonprofit and board development, develop tools to help interims educate and connect, and address barriers to long-term participation in the interim profession.

As the interim leadership profession is defined and advanced, individual interims have opportunities to develop their practice both on the business side of being an interim leader and on the content of what there is to know and be able to do. Top concerns for Interim leaders are the job pipeline, their professional development, and personal wellness.

The interim experience is not uniform. Among many other variables, it varies by identity and sector. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ interim leadership, for example, shared the pain that comes from racism and bigotry and how that impacts their ability to serve. Interim leaders working in the arts and healthcare identified unique aspects of those fields of service.

At the core of interim leadership is leadership and how nonprofits and charities will advance the missions and causes they care about through inevitable change. The success of interim leaders is vital in our collective effort to make progress in health and human services, the arts & culture, and human & environmental rights.

Recommendations

Through the Summit, participants identified **seven high-level opportunities to advance the profession**:

1. Define and frame the role of the interim
2. Commit to racial justice as core to the role of the interim
3. Expand professional development and credentialing for the interim profession
4. Expand partnerships between professional interims and funders, professional associations, search firms, and others
5. Invest in nonprofit and board development
6. Develop tools to help interims educate and connect
7. Identify solutions to the barriers to entry and long-term participation in the interim profession

Recognition of the profession

Interim leadership is increasingly seen as a profession and a core capacity building lever in the nonprofit sector.

Interims are being recognized as change leaders, steering the nonprofits in their care through change that goes beyond a leadership transition. Interims increasingly are managing change related to diversity and inclusion, generational shifts, changes in nonprofit practice, and more. While not equally distributed across communities in the United States and Canada, interim leadership has experienced a steady increase in awareness and demand as more people have experienced the power of an interim. It continues to evolve, emerge, and develop as a professional discipline.

There is a renewed understanding that the need for transitional support is critical to the long-term success of nonprofits.

Despite advances, there is still a lack of recognition or understanding of the profession.

It is common for board members to think about an interim as a savior, house sitter, crisis manager, or “temp.” Board members are reluctant to hire an interim because they see it as training two people to do the same job. They don’t trust that a part-time solution can achieve full-time results. They fear that an outsider could never understand their organization or sector.

Interim leadership isn’t viewed as an opportunity to create purposeful transformation within an organization that can set up the next permanent leader for success.

The interim profession is in its early stages of development. This Summit offered a first opportunity for interim leaders to connect, share resources, and be inspired by the collegial spirit that comes from finding others in similar situations. Established professions are often served by a membership association, credentialing system, professional development services, etc.

Several participants expressed concern about the damage untrained, non-professional interims can cause to the interim profession as a whole. While some participants expressed interest in the creation of these services for interims, others saw opportunity in collaboration with existing associations or informal connection that doesn’t involve paid staff. The interim profession can be creative in how it advances its collective interests.

I perceive the opportunity for interims will continue to increase, particularly in the nonprofit space where volunteer boards and staff are pressed to govern and conduct meaningful work in the midst of dramatic cultural shifts/realities within this country.

The episodic nature of interim work poses unique sustainability issues for the interim profession.

Individuals working within an established profession typically know what they can expect in terms of remuneration at every level (entering, mid-level, and advanced). They have access to health benefits and retirement savings. In some ways, interim leaders resemble app-based workers in how their work changes location, circumstance, and pay—and isn’t consistent over time. As the interim profession develops, participants in the Summit offered suggestions on ways to set standards and expand the safety net that would allow more people to enter the profession.

Sector influences on the profession

Interims are navigating the same shifts within the nonprofit sector as others. As change leaders, they are also in a position to make things better for the nonprofit they are stewarding through a leadership shift. Four significant shifts are:

- **Unhappy work environments** - Interims are walking into one of the most unhappy work environments in recent history. Staff shortages, fundraising challenges, and demand increases are some of the drivers of stress and burnout in nonprofit spaces.
- **Generational shifts** - As Boomers retire and Gen X expands its leadership presence, younger generations are advancing into staff and leadership positions. This brings new thinking related to what “authority” means, what the work is, how we use technology, work/life balance, and expectations related to equity and belonging.
- **Equity practice** – Interims are stepping into organizations at some place in their equity journey. Equity commitment and practice is inconsistent from organization to organization, and even within organizations, which is challenging to all interims. It is particularly challenging for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and LGTBQ+ identifying individuals, which we explore more deeply on page 16.
- **Virtual work** – Post-pandemic, nonprofits are innovating new ways of working and gathering. Virtual work impacts interims on two levels. First, interim leaders are finding their way managing hybrid teams. Second, interim leaders are experiencing the benefits of virtual work as they take assignments outside the region in which they live.

This generation of interims can play a powerful role in helping the next generation of nonprofit leaders be successful, especially if as interims we push the envelope around pay equity and the organizational structures that need to shift from traditional hierarchical ones to ones which makes more sense for the organizations.

Change and transition in general are misunderstood. Many nonprofit boards and staff members are eager to get back to “normal” with a new Executive Director. Whether people loved the outgoing Executive Director or hated them, everyone has feelings about change. Transition is seen as a gap between leaders rather than an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of the organization. “All leadership is interim,” as expressed by one Summit participant, reminded us that leadership change is normal and part of any organization’s experience.

Diversity in leadership, including both executive and board leadership, is a challenge within nonprofits. The interim leadership profession mirrors the sector in the underrepresentation of people of color within leadership positions. This lack of representation hinders the ability to fully grasp the needs of the communities they aim to support, can lead to

disconnects in decision-making processes, and restricts opportunities for emerging leaders from diverse backgrounds.

Finally, the quality of board practice deeply influences the interim profession at every level:

- Preparedness for transition of any kind
- Identification of interim leadership as a solution during a transition
- Hiring/onboarding an interim
- Supporting an interim
- Transitioning to the new Executive Director

A board's practice is certainly tested during a leadership transition. Participants cited these characteristics of many boards:

- They underestimate the risks and costs of bad leadership decisions.
- They are typically unprepared for succession and therefore fail to take advantage of the opportunity that comes in leadership change.
- They often don't understand their role or the role of a nonprofit CEO, so they don't know what they are replacing.
- They often haven't worked with consultants or outside expertise in the past to know the value they bring.
- They haven't invested in any organizational assessment, so don't know the strategy or status of their organizational systems, etc.
- They don't know the business model to inform decisions about how the investment in an interim might benefit the organization.
- They are often disconnected from their communities, so don't necessarily know what kind of leadership is needed.
- They often turn to a fellow board member to serve as an interim leader during a transition, and this can be problematic and miss the opportunity of bringing in an outsider.

In the event the organization doesn't "hear" my advice about the challenges of hiring a current board member as their interim, I suggest two things. (1) The board member should resign (not take a leave of absence, which many states do not allow, and (2) the board member should only be invited to re-join the board after at least one year and only with the enthusiastic endorsement of the new Executive Director.

When boards do have a deep understanding of their role, the organization, and their community, the interim is set up for success as a transformational, transition leader. The interim can guide them to an even better practice in ways that an Executive Director can't.

Opportunities to advance the profession

Summit participants identified six high-level opportunities for advancing the interim leadership profession.

1. Define and frame the role
2. Commit to racial justice as core to the role
3. Advance learning and credentialing for interim professionals
4. Expand partnerships
5. Invest in nonprofit and board development
6. Develop tools to help interims educate and connect

1. Define and frame the role

“Interim leaders are in the leadership business,” as one Summit participant expressed.

An interim leader is a nonprofit expert—a steward of an organization’s mission through a leadership transition. An interim moves an organization through change, bringing a fresh perspective, innovative strategies, and a new focus to the organization. Interim leadership is a methodology over a structure or person. Interim leaders are guided by a framework that strengthens the core capacity of an organization so it is stronger at the end of its transition.

An interim leader offers a unique advantage to organizations undergoing transitions or specific challenges. An interim is a “truth teller,” a disruptor that can broach hard topics such as restructuring, mergers, strategic partnerships, financial business modeling, and more. An interim leader can invest deeply in culture and belonging. These are two elements of a nonprofit that commonly cause transition, suffering through transition, and generally hold back nonprofits from being inclusive, safe spaces for diverse staff. An interim isn’t simply an “acting” leader “who brings the paper in and makes sure the cat is fed,” as repeatedly joked throughout the Summit.

As interims work across organizations, **they are sector leaders with their fingers on the pulse of the nonprofit sector in unique ways.** They experience firsthand the trends of the day and hold a tremendous amount of data and stories that can advance organizations and the sector. Because they enter organizations at a time of transition, interim leaders have a unique opportunity to see how equity efforts are playing out inside organizations and strengthen JEDI practices in general.

More nonprofit professionals are getting into the interim space but not all of them have the requisite skills to successfully help transition organizations from one leader to the next. Especially those who were long-time Executive Directors and now want to “try out interim work.” They still have the mindset of a permanent Executive Director and may do more damage than good.

The interim role extends beyond the Executive Director. It also encompasses other C-Suite roles: chief development officers, chief financial officers, etc. By expanding the definition of interim leadership, executive directors are more likely to see interims as partners.

The language used to describe interim leaders matters.

Clear and consistent language is useful in expanding a common understanding of the profession among nonprofits, boards, and social sector partners. Framing the role of interims within the larger social sector highlights the unique contributions interims make within our communities.

Instead of talking with boards about interim leadership, talk about the continuity of leadership. This is not an intervention. This is an evolution. Place interim within the larger context of cause, mission, and leadership.

2. Commit to racial justice as core to the role

As many Summit participants expressed it, racial justice isn't an add-on to the interim role. It is a core part of the work. It needs to be operationalized within the organizational assessment and transition process. "Inclusive leadership" is one way to frame the work. Interims can facilitate systems thinking, looking at root causes in a way that an Executive Director and/or board cannot or won't.

There are many ways in which an interim can advance racial justice. A few notes during the Summit include:

- Don't make the DEI work negotiable.
- Establish a common vocabulary.
- Use the [Stages of Change model](#) work to determine nonprofit readiness. Note that staff, leaders, and board may be in different places. (It is important to listen to all of the voices)
- Note that there is often a gap between where they think they are and where they are.
- Policies and procedures are a first step to put into place.
- Be clear what you are able to do in the timeframe. Eighteen months can have a lot more movement than 6 months.
- Bring in a group to support you. It is hard to do this alone. Helpful to have a DEIJ consultant working alongside you.
- Identify specific ways to change the status quo: compensation for frontline staff, HR policies and procedures, decision-making process, etc.

3. Expand professional development and credentialing

Interim leaders are eager for continuing professional development on such topics as:

- Interim leadership
- Co-leadership models
- Financial models
- Merger and other restructuring options
- Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI)

Professional development related to equity was emphasized in many forms. Interims need a deep self-awareness and education in the effective use of power as it pertains to organizational management, DEI, and justice. As the diversity of the interim profession itself is prioritized, training for nonprofit leaders of color interested in becoming interims is particularly important. Interim leaders need a safe space to gather and connect.

Credentialing offers a way for interim leaders to demonstrate their training and competence in interim leadership methodology and practices. Many Summit participants have attended existing programs, such as Third Sector Company's Interim Executive Academy, among other interim training programs. Alumni of these programs can demonstrate their qualifications by listing their professional development within their marketing materials (website, resumes, etc.). They can reference the Common Principles of Interim Management. A pro-active use of existing tools might offer some level of quality assurance.

4. Expand partnerships

Interim leaders work within an ecosystem of other entities that play a role in leadership and nonprofit capacity building. Each of these represent potential partners to individual interims and the interim leadership profession in general:

- **Search firms** are struggling to hire the right people for jobs. Interim leaders are a short-term solution.
- **National organizations** (Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, United Ways, etc.) to market interim as solutions.
- **Media organizations** offer an opportunity to spread the word about interims as change leaders. Stories of interim leaders in the spotlight (such as Summit speaker Dr. Denny Martin)

Common Interim Leadership Principles

Interim Management is Purposeful:

Focusing the entire goal of interim leadership on advancing an organization's cause.

Interim Management is Transformational:

Fostering processes and structures that support people to build new capacities to make their own best decisions to further evolve the cause.

Interim Management is Methodical:

Demonstrating well-defined leadership processes that are evidence-based and measurement-oriented.

Interim Management is Profound:

Building authentic diversity, inclusion, equity and access by identifying and addressing preconceptions that exist in an organization's culture.

- **Funders, including community foundations**, are important partners as they see interims as the bridge between their past and future support.
- **Professional associations** such as ASAE/CSAE, Alliance for Nonprofit Management, Independent Sector, BoardSource, National Council of Nonprofits, Community Foundations of Canada, etc.
- **Nonprofit/provincial state associations** advance nonprofit capacity building within their regions. They may have board training and tools that interim leaders can tap into.

5. Invest in nonprofit and board development

Interim leaders regularly educate nonprofit board and staff, philanthropy, and community stakeholders about a range of nonprofit topics. Interims have the opportunity to advance the profession and nonprofits. They need board education tools that could be brought back into organizations. Board members change all the time, which means interims need off-the-shelf tools that can be deployed as needed. Interim leaders can also work with ASAE/CSAE and other partners to ensure board training is available.

Boards need training to be ready for transition. Summit participants listed these ideas as topics to cover with boards:

- How to get to clarity on what they are looking for in a permanent leader
- How a board chair can engage your interim as a thought partner
- How to build trust between an interim and board
- How to keep focusing on the mission and vision through a transition

Beyond board education, interims can strengthen nonprofit practice through organizational assessments. Boards typically don't conduct organizational or operational evaluation to inform its decision-making. Objective, skilled third-party assessments are an invaluable asset that interim leadership can offer.

6. Develop tools to help interims educate and connect

Throughout the Summit, participants shared a wish list of tools that they hope the profession can develop, collect, and make available. Ideally these would be common tools that interim leaders can use and adapt.

- **Success stories** would help boards get past being “penny-wise and pound-foolish.” It would be helpful to have examples of where interims have made a difference for decision-makers.

- **Research and/or white papers** on interim-related topics. For example, it would be helpful to have an article on the perils of hiring a board member as an interim. Interims need an educational tool to give boards as a way to avoid this common issue.
- **Cost/benefit analysis** on why hiring an interim is worth it. A tool to demonstrate how the investment in interim leadership pays off would help interims to educate boards and make the case for hiring an interim versus installing a board member).
- **White allyship guide** with examples of how a White interim can support BIPOC leaders across various entry points:
 - Outgoing ED of color
 - Boards generally
 - Boards where a BIPOC leader is coming in
 - Incoming leader of color
 - Staff members of color
- **Professional connection forums** such as a job board or listserv where openings can be posted. It would be helpful to have a non-proprietary website about interim leadership as a referral source.

I have noticed concerns and great suggestions for how organizations may budget for (and afford) an interim. Those recommendations could be readily available as a knowledge resource for boards to consider.

The interim leadership experience

The Summit created the space for interim leaders to share their concerns and offer tips for success.

Interim leader concerns

The leading concerns for interim leaders relate to **finding jobs**. This includes:

- Managing the pipeline from marketing to landing the job
- Assessing the match between me and the potential job
- Dealing with when I get too many requests at the same time
- Matching my interests in skills with the most impactful opportunities
- Identifying sustainable public relations support
- Costing projects
- Convincing boards it is the right option

Interims are also thinking about the **elements of doing the job well**:

- Performing well as a new interim
- Determining how much support I can expect from the Board upon my arrival.
- Keeping up with technology
- Becoming more expert in change management
- Learning about DEI
- Having a trustful peer to connect with

Finally, interims are thinking about their own **personal wellness**:

- Figuring out how we stay well physically and mentally.
- Finding financial stability within the profession
- Investing in self-care between jobs
- Finding small governance contracts that can be finished part-time while in an Interim role
- Deciding how long do I wish to continue working
- Managing my time

How do you plan your life and meet your family obligations [in] an interim role that will come and go? Being able, as a profession, to clearly answer this for those in and interested in the profession is mandatory as we continue to develop.

Tips for interims

Experienced interims shared the lessons they've learned from years of working in the profession.

Tell the story

Interims are the best people to know the success stories up close. Gathering and telling the stories of success will help individual interims and advance the profession. When you start telling a board a story of an engagement where someone left quickly or there is a disruption and what you were able to do, that gets their attention. It allows for them to discover the opportunity. There is also the need for clients to tell the story of having an interim and the benefits they experienced.

Frame the job

Interims bolster their change leader credentials when they use language that *centers* the nonprofit and its readiness for change, rather than focus on the interim's role as temporary leader. They can get more buy-in if organizations understand the interim as the start of the transition (not the new Executive Director).

- Shift from talking like a consultant to talking like a partner with the nonprofits' interest at heart. We can avoid putting ourselves into situations where our work is not wanted.
- Express your competency to do the immediate work (pay bills, keeps light on) AND shepherd the transition.
- Frame the work as a bigger question than who you are going to hire next. It is about being a steward of the organization, not just someone who sits in the seat. It is about organizational readiness, not just about hiring.
- Some interims are focused on context (culture), and some need to focus on content.
- Interims should not be afraid to lean into areas where they don't feel as strong or as comfortable (finance is often one of these areas)
- Incoming Interim is not responsible for the problems you inherited. You are responsible for the solutions. This is where change plays a role in this work.
- Recognize that the work may change as things get uncovered. The board may not have a full understanding of the culture and inner workers of the organization, there they may have miss misrepresented the work accurately.

In my experience, it was critically important from day one to leave zero doubt that as the interim, the goal was to prepare the organization for great success under a new permanent leader. There was zero chance of my being that permanent leader. Doing so provided much more empowerment and opportunity for impact in the interim role than would otherwise have been the case.

Work with people

Interims work with the full cross-section of people involved in a nonprofit mission delivery: board, staff, community members, funders, etc.

- The sooner you get to the **decision-makers**, the faster you will make progress.
- Use **teams**. Engage a leadership team that moves from authoritative leadership to strengthening the leadership team. Engage a transition team to guide the process.
- **Be visible**. Face time with people is a key part of providing people with a sense of stability.

Document what you are learning

The transition document was cited as an important transition tool.

Expand professional networks

Finally, there are strategic ways that an interim can expand their professional networks:

- Add your interim roles to your LinkedIn profile.
- Add your training to your profile.
- Inform your networks about the work (blogs, newsletters, etc.)
- Participate in networks, such as nonprofit state associations.
- Embrace a growth mindset that allows for mistakes and learning. The personal risk-taking that this requires means being vulnerable and transparent with each other. The stronger connections we have with people with different identities than ours will create the personal resilience necessary for the challenging work ahead.

I always share the transition document Table of Contents with the board or executive committee so they know what information is being transmitted to the new ED and can make sure nothing is missing from their perspective. I don't share the whole document because sometimes there are elements that pertain to the way staff are performing and/or board members that I think the new ED should have, but it's not for board or staff consumption.

Interim experience by identity

An interim leader’s identity helps shape their experience in an interim leadership role. The experiences of Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQ+ leaders were shared in breakout groups. While this information isn’t inclusive of all identity-related experiences, it demonstrates the unique challenges of specific interim leaders.

BIPOC

Racism impacts the interim leadership experience.

BIPOC interim leaders noted that they have to be smarter, faster, better than White colleagues. Any problem that occurs reinforces what they have experienced their whole lives. Particular challenge arises with boards led by older, White people and boards that are unaware of how they are reinforcing a racist culture through their actions. Boards may not be comfortable with supporting an interim of color or know where to start.

What can we do to create more protections?

What can we do to push the sector to understand how to be ready to hire a person of color?

Racism diminishes an interim leader’s ability to do the job well. Interim leaders of color take longer to earn trust. There is often concern about their ability to interact with donors or their financial acumen. Key is building relationships with board members. “We can have all of the talent and all of the skills, but we still have the challenge of building the relationship after we have the job. We need to be able to confide in someone on the board.”

One-way interim leaders respond to racism is through affect.

The affect—how a message is delivered—helps to close a perceived gap between how a BIPOC leader thinks of themselves and how their message is received. BIPOC leaders noted that there are layers of what they need to think about before they can talk. “We cannot show up as our whole selves ever. The question is how much of our whole selves we can bring into our work.”

The fact that you have lived life through a different lens is challenging for authority figures.

A BIPOC readiness screen would help a BIPOC leader avoid putting themselves in harm’s way. BIPOC leaders can expand their discernment process by building in a survey into hiring conversations. Questions to explore include:

- Is this organization in the right place culturally (transparency, respecting staff)?
- Is this organization resilient to handle change?
- How are staff involved in the process? If the board won’t let you interview the staff, that is evidence about the culture.
- How can we use the scope of work to guide conversations with people outside the organization to get more data about readiness?

Other solutions were offered through the Summit:

- Make sure the community is represented and engaged in the process.
- Create your “kitchen cabinet” to build a team of leaders around you... a pathway of understanding.
- Use the contract to outline the assessment and key relationships.
- Build support into contracts and budgets. Lock in the support you will need at the start.
- Be clear on your own boundaries. We are there for a quick moment in the organization’s journey. We need to be clear about what we can realistically accomplish and what is the responsibility of the on-going team.
- Balance politics vs. pace.
- Use employee satisfaction surveys to get data. Use the power of the data to get additional institutional knowledge.

BIPOC interim leaders need safe spaces to gather.

They are “always on the cutting edge, creating something new.” As pioneers, they face unique challenges and endure pain experienced through leadership.

I perceive there are assumptions about the opportunities/threats of placing an interim as a permanent ED that are intended to protect the integrity of the interim profession but does not consider the experience of some BIPOC professionals. I imagine that the interim executive profession is a pathway for some where their industry of experience may not have made room for them otherwise.

LGBTQ+

Interim leaders who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, among other identities (LGBTQ+), shared some of the same experiences as BIPOC interim leaders. We share quotes or paraphrases below.

Pain

- “We take all of that pain and use it, not only to make ourselves better but to make our organizations and the world a better place.”
- “If you’ve come through the coming out process, there is scar tissue of some kind or another. It matters what you do with that scar tissue.”
- “Being able to say to people that ‘I am that thing’ that you loathe, fear, or don’t understand is not only challenging, but it is also very much a part of saying, ‘Your fear, loathing, etc. do not stop me.’”

Intersectionality

- Intersectionality and the self-insight that comes from being part of a marginalized group in society is part of our power.
- Being transparent about who we are has a lot of weight in some of the organizations we work with.
- Show up as an authentic human being, challenging others to show up as their authentic selves. How amazing is that?

Stereotypes

- I think many people stereotype you and set you up before you can even make that decision for yourself.
- The oddity is what makes us all fascinating.
- By letting people in, they can see what they think may be false. They get to make that decision to begin thinking in different ways.
- “So many people who are closeted get the, “Well, is he or isn’t he?” You get pegged before you even come out of the closet.”

I know what it feels like to be in a room and know you aren’t telling the whole truth and the whole room can tell you aren’t telling the whole truth. I also know what it feels like to be in a room telling the whole truth and know that the rest of the room knows you are telling it. There is a personal power that comes from that, and it is unmatched. The authority that comes from that is hard to describe. A level of respect shows up when you tell the whole truth, and it is empowering.

Interim experience by sector

The interim leadership profession can differ by sector as well. Arts & culture and healthcare are two examples.

Arts and culture

Some unique characteristics and lessons from arts & culture leadership:

- Arts organizations have a long history of co-directorships that could be learned from (artistic director/managing director). They know how to break down the artistic from the business side of the work. This is a strength, and it may be a challenge if an interim comes into the equation. There can be conflict in the power imbalance between AD and MD and how to interim plays into leadership.
- Arts organizations are suffering financially coming out of COVID, which puts added pressure on interims. Adding additional financial pressure, there is a big move to pay fair wages to artists.
- Succession seems to come as a surprise to arts boards. They seem to think leaders are going to be around forever. There is a need for education on succession planning generally.
- Arts education organizations have a high turnover rate. It would be helpful to move conversations about career aspirations into discussion with younger people. Don't wait for retirement to talk about job change.
- Unionized workers pose a unique challenge to interims without that experience. Both arts and healthcare organizations often have strong unions that are complex. There is a need for further exploration for interims on how to work with unions.

Healthcare

Some unique characteristics and lessons from healthcare leadership:

- The healthcare sector is under a lot of pressure. COVID broke the healthcare system. Healthcare workers are tired on another level, and they are leaving the sector in droves due to burnout.
- In faith-based healthcare, the executive role is a ministry.
- Healthcare is a very fast-paced industry. Healthcare administration is especially fast paced. A 40-hour week in healthcare administration is not the norm; that is a 3-day work week for this industry. There is a very real fatigue and intensity addiction that is on another level.
- There's a big difference between large-scale healthcare/hospital positions and traditional nonprofit settings.
- Healthcare systems are biased towards those with healthcare backgrounds and experience.
- Many recruiting organizations recruit for healthcare-specific interim executive positions.

Resources

Here is a collection of resources shared by Summit attendees to help elucidate the comments made in this report.

General resources

United Way Next Interim Leadership: <https://www.unitedwaynext.org/interimexecldrshp.html>

United Way Next Interim Leadership Newsletter:

https://www.unitedwaynext.org/uploads/1/3/1/6/131655721/uww_next_-_newsletter_may_-_final_for_distribution_5.8.23.pdf

The Power of Possibility Strategic Alliances (tools):

<https://www.thepowerofpossibility.org/starting-points/>

Crafting Strategy by Henry Mintzberg (HBR, 1987): <https://hbr.org/1987/07/crafting-strategy>

The Business of Belonging by David Spinks (book): <https://bookshop.org/p/books/the-business-of-belonging-how-to-make-community-your-competitive-advantage-david-spinks/18076271?ean=9781119766124>

A National Strategy for Belonging (Canada): <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/national-strategy-for-belonging>

Interim Executive Directors: The Power in the Middle (report from Annie E. Casey Foundation):

<https://www.aecf.org/resources/interim-executive-directors>

Racial justice resources

Groundwater Institute: <https://www.groundwaterinstitute.com/>

Waters Center for Systems Thinking: <https://waters-center-for-systems-thinking.myshopify.com/>

Dismantling the Nonprofit Industrial Complex: <https://both-and.org/dismantling-the-npic>

Six signature traits of inclusive leadership:

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html>

Resistance and Radical Love: The Call-Forward of a Pro-Black Sector:

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/resistance-and-radical-love-the-call-forward-of-a-pro-black-sector/>

Theory and Practice of Multicultural Organization Development:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UhLNmFecM6rPJutKbSKRS7Fhm_6x6SgT/view

Reimagining governance:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UhLNmFecM6rPJutKbSKRS7Fhm_6x6SgT/view