



The Christian Camp Leadership Transition Checklist

A practical guide for boards, outgoing leaders, search teams, and incoming executives navigating a significant leadership change.

A healthy transition is more than a search.

It is a season of preparing the organization, preserving institutional knowledge, clarifying expectations, onboarding the next leader, and creating the conditions for a strong first 100 days.

Use this checklist to identify what is complete, what still needs attention, and where outside perspective may help.

Evaluation. Implementation. Transformation.

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1. Before the Announcement: Succession Readiness

The strongest transitions begin before a departure becomes urgent. This stage helps the board understand the organization's current health and what the next season requires.

Board & Organizational Preparation

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| ☐ | Confirm the expected transition timeline and identify who owns the transition process. |
| ☐ | Clarify board, Executive Director, and search-team roles before the search begins. |
| ☐ | Review the camp's mission, ministry philosophy, values, and strategic direction. |
| ☐ | Evaluate current organizational health: enrollment, guest groups, revenue, staffing, development, facilities, risk, and ministry impact. |
| ☐ | Identify the organization's most significant opportunities and vulnerabilities. |
| ☐ | Review the current leadership structure and determine whether it should remain the same. |
| ☐ | Define what the camp needs from its next leader - not simply what the current leader has done. |
| ☐ | Identify critical competencies, character qualities, leadership style, and ministry alignment needed in the next Executive Director. |
| ☐ | Determine what issues should be addressed before the next leader arrives and what should appropriately be left for the incoming leader. |
| ☐ | Create a communication plan for staff, donors, churches, guests, alumni, and other stakeholders. |

Questions for the Board

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| ☐ | If we were designing this organization for the next five years, would we structure it exactly as it is today? |
| ☐ | What does our next leader need to inherit in a healthy condition? |
| ☐ | Where might the board be unintentionally expecting the next leader to solve problems that belong to the board? |
| ☐ | What must not be lost during this transition? |

2. During the Search: Executive Search Readiness

The search process should flow from clarity about the organization and its future, not merely from the need to fill a vacancy.

Search Process

- ☐ Approve a clear position profile that reflects the camp's actual needs and priorities.
- ☐ Agree on non-negotiable qualifications and distinguish them from preferences.
- ☐ Establish the search process, decision authority, interview stages, and expected timeline.
- ☐ Prepare an honest picture of organizational strengths, challenges, finances, staffing, facilities, and strategic priorities for serious candidates.
- ☐ Identify who will communicate with candidates and maintain confidentiality.
- ☐ Develop interview questions that test leadership judgment, culture fit, ministry alignment, financial understanding, staff leadership, fundraising, operations, and strategic thinking.
- ☐ Discuss compensation, housing, benefits, relocation, and other expectations early enough to avoid preventable surprises.
- ☐ Determine how the outgoing leader will - and will not - participate in the selection process.
- ☐ Prepare staff and key stakeholders for the transition without creating unnecessary uncertainty.
- ☐ Define what a successful first year should look like before the incoming leader starts.

3. Before the Leader Leaves: Knowledge Transfer

Long-tenured leaders often carry years of unwritten history, relationships, judgment, and operating knowledge. Capture it deliberately.

Institutional Knowledge

- ☐ Create a list of key donor, church, alumni, vendor, community, and ministry relationships.
 - ☐ Document annual organizational rhythms, recurring deadlines, seasonal decisions, and major events.
 - ☐ Review budgeting practices, cash-flow rhythms, financial reporting, restricted funds, debt, and major financial commitments.
 - ☐ Document staff roles, reporting relationships, key strengths, known gaps, and sensitive personnel context that can appropriately be transferred.
 - ☐ Record facility history, deferred maintenance, capital priorities, recurring problems, and important vendor relationships.
 - ☐ List current strategic initiatives, pending decisions, major projects, and unresolved issues.
 - ☐ Document important technology systems, software ownership, contracts, access procedures, and data responsibilities.
 - ☐ Capture fundraising history, major donor context, active asks, grants, campaigns, and stewardship expectations.
 - ☐ Identify board history and context behind major policies or past decisions.
 - ☐ Create a written list of lessons learned: what has worked, what has not, and what the outgoing leader wishes they had known earlier.
 - ☐ Identify relationships that require a personal introduction rather than an email handoff.
 - ☐ Create an accessible transition file or knowledge-transfer repository for the incoming leader.
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4. Leader Selected: Incoming Leader Onboarding

Onboarding should begin before day one. The goal is not to overwhelm the incoming leader with information, but to provide context, relationships, and clear expectations.

Prepare the Leader to Begin Well

- ☐ Agree on start date, transition overlap, communication plan, and announcement sequence.
- ☐ Clarify board expectations, authority, reporting relationships, and decision-making boundaries.
- ☐ Review the camp's strategic plan, current goals, budget, financial position, and major commitments.
- ☐ Provide staff structure, job descriptions, organizational chart, and key personnel context.
- ☐ Schedule introductions with board members, senior staff, key donors, churches, ministry partners, and important community relationships.
- ☐ Walk every major facility and review capital priorities, maintenance concerns, safety issues, and current projects.
- ☐ Review enrollment, retreat/guest group, marketing, fundraising, and development trends.
- ☐ Review insurance, risk management, child protection, emergency procedures, and regulatory responsibilities.
- ☐ Provide access to essential systems, files, contracts, calendars, dashboards, and reporting tools.
- ☐ Clarify which decisions are urgent and which can wait until the leader has had time to listen and evaluate.
- ☐ Establish a healthy board-chair/Executive Director communication rhythm.
- ☐ Identify a trusted outside advisor, mentor, or peer the incoming leader can call when they need perspective.

5. The First 100 Days

A new leader does not need to prove they were the right hire by changing everything. The first 100 days should create understanding, trust, clarity, and priorities.

Days 1-30: LISTEN

Learn the people, history, culture, and current reality.

- ☐ Meet individually with board members and key staff.
- ☐ Ask staff what is working, what is difficult, and what they hope will not be lost.
- ☐ Listen to campers/families, guests, donors, churches, alumni, and ministry partners where practical.
- ☐ Observe operations before redesigning them.
- ☐ Learn the story behind important traditions, systems, and decisions.
- ☐ Keep a running list of observations and questions without rushing to conclusions.

Days 31-60: EVALUATE

Begin connecting what you are hearing with what the data and operations reveal.

- ☐ Identify organizational strengths that should be protected.
- ☐ Identify vulnerabilities, bottlenecks, and recurring problems.
- ☐ Review key performance indicators and trends.
- ☐ Evaluate staff structure, leadership capacity, and communication.
- ☐ Separate urgent issues from important-but-not-urgent opportunities.
- ☐ Discuss emerging observations with the board chair before announcing major changes.

Days 61-100: PRIORITIZE

Turn learning into a focused leadership agenda.

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- ☐ Choose a small number of priorities for the next 6-12 months.
 - ☐ Define what success will look like for each priority.
 - ☐ Communicate priorities clearly to the board and staff.
 - ☐ Establish regular leadership and KPI review rhythms.
 - ☐ Identify decisions that require board involvement or additional analysis.
 - ☐ Build a realistic implementation sequence rather than trying to change everything at once.

6. After the First 100 Days: Build the Next Season

Move From Transition to Leadership

- ☐ Review the first 100 days with the board chair and board.
- ☐ Confirm strategic priorities for the remainder of year one.
- ☐ Address role clarity, organizational structure, and staffing needs discovered during onboarding.
- ☐ Build or refresh a practical strategic plan with measurable priorities.
- ☐ Establish dashboards for enrollment, revenue, guest groups, staffing, fundraising, marketing, facilities, and ministry outcomes.
- ☐ Create a leadership-development plan for key staff.
- ☐ Evaluate board governance practices and board/Executive Director partnership.
- ☐ Review capital, facility, and deferred-maintenance priorities.
- ☐ Clarify fundraising and donor-development strategy.
- ☐ Schedule a six-month and one-year transition review.

Transition Health Check

Area	Green	Needs Attention	Urgent
Board alignment			
Outgoing leader knowledge transfer			
Staff readiness			
Financial clarity			
Incoming leader onboarding			
Stakeholder communication			
First 100-day plan			
Strategic priorities			

Where is your camp in the transition?

Preparing | Searching | Selected/Incoming | First 100 Days | Post-Transition

Keystone Camp Solutions helps Christian camp boards and leaders navigate succession readiness, knowledge transfer, onboarding, the first 100 days, and the organizational decisions surrounding leadership change.

Start with a complimentary 30-minute Leadership Transition conversation.
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