

NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

With few established pathways out of their current roles, long-term leaders who have contributed for decades to social change are figuring out their future steps, including how to stay financially secure and socially relevant. Many of them are considering not only how to leave long term jobs, but also the organizations that they founded. In most cases, however, this will involve staying in the sector in some capacity rather than entering traditional retirement.¹ Ultimately, however they end up defining this new period in the lifespan not only affects the larger boomer cohort, it also has implications for the map of life and work for younger generations as they age.

Making the decision about when to leave can be complicated by a leader's personal situation and the needs of the organization. Of course, the decision of older leaders to remain in their jobs or to leave is not theirs alone. They are responsible to the Board of Directors and organization as a whole. Staying in the position should be based on their continued energy and commitment, ability to perform, and leadership qualities.

Boomers who plan to continue to work in the sector's leadership roles will face daily challenges that they have coped with for years. But they also have additional responsibilities. There is pressure to ensure that their organizations are relevant and will continue to thrive after they leave. However, there are several ways to address these pressures, including expanding and deepening the organization's secondary leadership, thinking about what the organization will need to survive, and considering other roles within the organization.

Additionally, it has become clear over the last decade, that GenXers and Millennials have big visions for change and are looking to build scale and impact in the social change sector. They are working and organizing during

a time of both great opportunity and great need. The desire to build strategic partnerships, expand base building and leadership development, and increase organizational strength and sustainability all pose a complex challenge.

It is also clear that these leaders are more than willing to take up the work, and are already moving the ball forward in impressive and far reaching ways. These younger leaders have many things to teach the broader movement, and need support to push new boundaries in building power and making changes.

LEADERSHIP TOOLS

As long-term leaders in the nonprofit sector think about life after they leave their current jobs, two things become clear: They are not planning to move into traditional retirement, and they want to continue to contribute to the common good. At the same time, younger generations are already leading, and making big strides. The exercises and reports in this section will provide helpful information for both sides to prepare for this transition, as well as future transitions now.

¹ See *The New Lifecycle of Work: Long-Term Nonprofit Leaders Prepare for their Future* (Building Movement Project, 2012)