

Monitoring Report VI: Emergency Executive Director Succession

This Monitoring Report was approved by the AIR Board of Directors on November 21, 2025. The entire report is for internal use only. Do not duplicate or distribute without the express written approval of the Association for Institutional Research. Copyright 2024.

I certify that the information contained in this report is true.



Christine M Keller, Executive Director & CEO

October 30, 2025

Date

Policy Language

In order to protect the Board from sudden loss of Executive Director services, the Executive Director will have no fewer than two other executives sufficiently familiar with Board and Executive Director issues and processes to enable either to take over with reasonable proficiency as an acting successor.

Interpretation 1

The Executive Director will develop and annually review a plan for emergency Executive Director succession to include a clear chain of command, authority, conditions for enacting the plan, and responsibility for contacting the Board Chair if the plan is enacted.

Evidence 1

The Emergency Executive Director Succession Plan was reviewed and updated in October 2025 by the Executive Director. The plan designates the Deputy Director & CFO, Jason Lewis, as the primary successor to assume the Executive Director & CEO role if the Executive Director is unavailable or unable to perform her duties. If both the Executive Director and Deputy Director are unavailable, the Associate Deputy Director, Leah Ewing Ross, will assume the Executive Director responsibilities. Additional details are provided in the appendix.

Compliance Statement 1

I report compliance.

Interpretation 2

Staff identified in the Emergency Executive Director Succession Plan will maintain familiarity with Board governance, policies, and reporting processes through regular participation in Board meetings, engagement in policy governance training, and review and contribute to materials prepared for the Board. These ongoing practices ensure sufficient knowledge of governance and Board operations to support continuity in the event of an Executive Director absence.

Evidence 2

Both designated successors to the Executive Director regularly attend Board meetings, possess in-depth knowledge of policy governance, and actively contribute to monitoring and incidental reports prepared for the Board.

Compliance Statement 2

I report compliance.

Interpretation 3

The Executive Director successors will maintain a working understanding of the Association's major projects, member services, funding sources, administrative processes, and strategic priorities of the Executive Office.

Evidence 3

The Executive Director successors meet regularly to discuss Association strategy, key initiatives, and organizational issues, and they contribute to major operational and strategic decisions. The Deputy Director also has direct experience as Interim Executive Director for 18 months, providing firsthand knowledge of the Association's full portfolio.

Compliance Statement 3

I report compliance.

Interpretation 4

All AIR staff will have access to a written document outlining the chain of command, authority, conditions for activating the Emergency Executive Director Succession Plan, and responsibility for notifying the Board Chair if the plan is enacted.

Evidence 4

All staff received a memo outlining the succession plan on October 7, 2025 (see appendix for a copy of the memo). Each staff member electronically acknowledged receipt and understanding of the information. New staff will receive the plan for review and signature as part of their onboarding process.

Compliance Statement 4

I report compliance.



October 6, 2025

To: AIR staff
From: Christine Keller, Executive Director & CEO
RE: Executive Director Emergency Succession Plan

To ensure AIR's operational continuity, the Board of Directors established a policy that designates at least two individuals who are prepared to assume the Executive Director & CEO role if I am unable to perform my responsibilities.

I am also charged with providing a copy of the written succession plan to each of you as AIR staff members on an annual basis and asking for your acknowledgement that you have read and understood the plan. The succession plan explains the chain of command, authority, conditions for enacting a succession plan, and the responsibility for contacting the Chair of the Board if the plan is enacted. While intended to cover conditions that require an extended absence, the core ideas also provide guidance if I am temporarily unavailable and a critical decision must be made immediately.

Please note that this succession plan does not alter or limit the decision-making authority delegated to you as part of your regular responsibilities.

Executive Director & CEO Succession Plan

Chain of Command

The chain of command for AIR is as follows and will continue until further notice:

1. The Executive Director & CEO has final authority as delegated by the Board of Directors.
2. If the Executive Director & CEO is unavailable or unable to carry out her duties, the Deputy Director & CFO (Jason Lewis) will assume the Executive Director duties and responsibilities.
3. If both the Executive Director & CEO and Deputy Director & CFO are unavailable or unable to carry out the Executive Director responsibilities and duties, the Associate Deputy Director (Leah Ewing Ross) will assume the Executive Director duties and responsibilities.

Authority

If another staff member in the chain of command assumes the Executive Director role, that individual is obligated to adhere to the Executive Limitations and Ends policies established by the Board of Directors. The acting Executive Director is empowered with the management authority delegated by the Board to assure that the organization continues to function. The only exception to this authority is that personnel actions to terminate or demote employees requires approval of the Chair of the Board as well as the acting Executive Director.

Conditions for Enacting a Succession Plan

Each individual in the chain of command has the authority to enact the succession plan by confirming two conditions:

1. A critical leadership decision must be made immediately and has not been delegated to staff; and
2. All higher-level staff in the chain of command are unavailable or unable to assume leadership.

Each individual in the chain of command accepts responsibility to use this authority appropriately.

Communication to the Chair of the Board of Directors

If the succession plan is enacted, the staff member serving as acting Executive Director will notify the Board Chair as soon as possible given the circumstances. The current 2025–26 Board Chair is Brent Drake; his term concludes at the May 2026 Annual Business Meeting during the AIR Forum. The 2026–27 Board Chair will be elected during the March 2026 Board meeting.