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Envisioning Leadership Succession: Questions for Founders and Long-Term Executives

Founders and long-term executive directors have created significant social benefits through their dedicated work over many years. Preparing the way for a successor is part of the long-term leader's work.

1. In what ways are you fostering dependence? Perhaps you're the only one within the organization who knows the funders, understands the budget, or has the ability to _____ [fill in the blank].
2. How are you engaging others in developing a shared vision for the future?
3. Is leadership development a priority within the organization? For example, is funding regularly included in the annual budget for staff and board development?
4. Do you make it a priority to take time for reflection and to focus on your own personal/professional development?
5. Can your work ethic be characterized as: "I often work very long hours and I have LOTS of unused vacation time"? If so, what is your level of resentment and/or entitlement?
6. Is your salary and benefits package reasonably competitive in the nonprofit arena? Would a qualified successor be likely to take the job at your salary?
7. What are you doing to make sure the board of directors is actively engaged in understanding the important issues for this organization and making strategic choices?
8. If you were to leave the organization in the next few months, would the board and staff be able to carry on without major disruption? Or would the organization be in "crisis mode"?
9. Based on your tenure as executive director, how will you be remembered? What will your legacy be to this organization? To the community? To the field?