Delegation of Authority and Leadership Succession Policy

Adopted 11/2026
Approved by the WiLS Board on 11/3/2026

Purpose & Scope

At WiLS, we work with libraries and cultural organizations to help them do what they need to do within their budgets, helping our members turn their ideas into action. To keep our services running smoothly and to support our staff, we need a clear plan for when our executive director is away.

The WiLS Board is familiar with the job description of the executive director (attached) and has a clear understanding of the executive director's role in organizational leadership, program development, program administration, operations, Board of Directors' relationships, financial operations, resource development, and community presence.

This policy outlines decision-making authority and ensures that WiLS maintains operational consistency, protects organizational stability, and preserves our cooperative, trust-based culture during both planned and unplanned leadership vacancies. This plan facilitates the transition to both interim and longer-term leadership if the organization is faced with an untimely vacancy due to an extended leave (planned or unplanned), unexpected disability, death, or departure.

Planned Short-Term Absences

Routine, brief leaves such as short vacations, illness, or personal days, standard out-of-office coverage are the purview of the executive director and will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

For extended planned leaves - such as lengthier vacations, professional development, or medical leaves - the executive director remains the formal leader of the organization. However, to keep daily operations moving without delay:

- **Designation**: The executive director will designate a member of the Strategy Group to serve as the primary operational point of contact during their absence.
- **Notification**: The executive director will notify the Board Chair and all staff of the upcoming absence, the exact dates, and the name of the designated point of contact.
- **Authority**: The designated Strategy Group member will handle routine operational requests that do not currently have a backup designee and act as a coordinator for emergent issues, consulting with the wider Strategy Group as needed. The Director of

Finance, for example, serves as the identified payroll approval backup and would continue in this role during any vacancy.

Unplanned or Extended Absences of More Than 30 Days

If the executive director faces an unexpected, long-term, or indeterminate absence (such as a sudden medical emergency, disability, or sudden departure), notification will be made to the Strategy Group and the WiLS Board Chair. Within five (5) business days, the Board Chair should convene a meeting of the executive committee to affirm the procedures laid out in this policy or to make modifications as the executive committee deems appropriate.

Daily operational decision-making:

- **Designation:** To honor our non-hierarchical structure and preserve staff autonomy, the WiLS Strategy Group will collectively assume the role of interim leadership team. Rather than placing the entire operational burden on a single individual, the Strategy Group will determine how to share management duties and make key operational decisions by consensus.
- **Communication**: Within forty-eight (48) hours of policy activation, the Strategy Group will recommend one of its members to act as the lead liaison between the Board, the Strategy Group, and staff. This recommendation will be sent to the Board Chair and approved by the executive committee at their emergency meeting.
    - The lead liaison does not act as the "sole boss" or supervisor.
    - Instead, they serve as the central coordinator for team workflows and act as the direct, primary line of communication between the Board of Directors and the Strategy Group.

Limits of Authority

To protect our staff and ensure strong governance, we maintain a clear distinction between day-to-day coordination and major organizational decisions.

What the Strategy Group Can Approve Collectively	**What Requires Executive Committee of the Board Sign-Off**
Managing and executing ongoing member consulting, purchasing, and digital projects.	Launching new services.
Approving or signing new MOUs or contracts under $50,000.	Approving or signing new contracts, financial commitments, or expenditures of **$50,000** or greater.

Approving regular budgeted operational expenses and payroll.	Hiring or terminating permanent staff members, or making adjustments to the overall salary structure.
Supporting standard staff workflows and addressing minor operational concerns.	Making major changes to WiLS' long-term strategic goals, bylaws, or core policies.

Succession Plan in Event of a Permanent Change in Executive Director

A permanent change is one in which it is firmly determined that the executive director will not be returning to the position. The procedures and conditions should be the same as for an extended temporary absence with one addition:

Upon learning of the departure of the executive director, the WiLS Board executive committee will promptly appoint a transition and search committee to plan and carry out a transition to a new permanent executive director.

The review of, and any modifications to, the position description for the executive director role will remain the responsibility of the WiLS Board of Directors. The transition and search committee will consist of three Board members and at least two WiLS staff members. The transition and search committee will consider the need for outside consulting assistance depending on the circumstances of the transition and the capacity to plan and manage the transition and search.

The transition and search committee will screen prospects, interview candidates, and bring a final candidate or candidates before the full Board for a vote. Any official offer will come from the WiLS Board Chair. The transition and search committee will also determine the need for an interim executive director and plan for the recruitment and selection of an interim executive director and/or permanent executive director.

Policy Activation

When an unplanned or extended absence occurs, this policy is activated through a simple four-step process:

1. **Immediate Notification**: The Strategy Group and the Board Chair are notified of the executive director's sudden absence.
2. **Formal Activation**: The Board Chair and the executive committee formally notify the full Board of Directors and officially activate the Strategy Group’s collective interim leadership role.

3. **Board Touch-Base**: Within five (5) business days, the executive committee will meet with the Strategy Group to confirm the interim structure, address any concerns or questions, and recognize the selected lead liaison.
4. **Long-Term Planning**: If the absence is expected to last longer than sixty (60) days, the Board will take it up at their next regularly scheduled meeting to evaluate the arrangement and decide whether to continue the collective model, appoint a single interim executive director, or launch a transition search committee.