

## When Leadership Transitions Are Heavy, Standards and Support Matter



Leadership transitions in the nonprofit sector have always required skill and care. Today, they require something more.

Our latest [\*Interim Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector\*](#) report surfaced a clear and consistent insight from interim leaders across the U.S. and Canada:

**Sector instability and the resulting organizational instability are making interim assignments more complex and emotionally demanding.**

Interim leaders are no longer stepping into a neutral transition between executives. They are entering organizations shaped by burnout, leadership churn, funding uncertainty, cultural strain and unresolved emotional turmoil.

In these environments, **stabilization and healing are just as critical as operations and strategy.**

### What the Field Is Telling Us

Interim leaders described in the [\*Interim Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector\*](#) report:

- *High burnout and turnover*, with many staff exhausted from ongoing instability
- *Hybrid work challenges* that make communication, cohesion, and culture-building difficult—especially for a temporary leader stepping in midstream
- *Funding volatility and retrenchment in equity commitments*, creating emotional and cultural complexity
- *Unresolved organizational issues*—outdated systems, unclear roles, governance gaps, and culture challenges that have accumulated over time

Many participants noted that workplace trauma is now a consistent part of transition work. Staff, boards, and communities often carry accumulated strain from instability, conflict, or

broken trust, meaning interims must navigate environments where emotional dynamics are as present as operational ones.

## How Third Sector Company Responds

Third Sector Company was founded to foster leadership continuity solutions throughout the entire nonprofit sector. Our work directly addresses the complexity and emotional weight of today's interim leadership through four interconnected commitments:

- **Clear Standards:** We advance national standards that define interim leadership as purposeful, methodical, transformational and profound. This sets clear expectations for boards, organizations and leaders alike.
- **Rigorous Training:** Through Interim Executives Academy, we prepare interim leaders to navigate operational challenges, as well as culture, governance and equity-informed transition work through [6 defined phases and 13 protocols](#).
- **Intentional Placement:** We place trained, supported interim leaders who understand the realities of today's nonprofit environment. They are backed by a community framework, not operating alone.
- **Ecosystem-Building:** We provide advisory/coaching for interim leaders, an interim job marketplace, and shared learning so interim leaders are supported, connected and sustained.

## What Our Customers Say About How Interims Care for Organizations During Executive Succession

*"Our interim executive director was exactly what our community preschool needed. She brought humor and humility along with a frank style of leadership and a fierce loyalty to the health of our organization. She held us together and helped create foundational stability. One of her greatest strengths was dealing with ambiguity and making a plan out of the chaos. We can't thank you enough. What Third Sector Company provided us was so much more than we expected, not only interim leadership, but an opportunity to evaluate our organization and align around our values. The entire experience has made me a real cheerleader for Third Sector Company."* **Vanessa Longacre-Wilcox**, Former Board Chair at Community School of West Seattle, Seattle, Washington Former Board Chair, FishWise, Santa Cruz, CA



**If your organization is navigating or anticipating a leadership transition**, we invite you to learn more about what effective succession planning and interim leadership looks like and how Third Sector Company can help.

→ [Explore the State of the Interim Leadership Profession](#)

→ [Learn How Third Sector Company Supports Nonprofit Transitions](#)

Third Sector Company supports **search committees and boards** of nonprofit organizations for interim executive recruitment and placement. The graduates of our Interim Executives Academy offer nonprofit organizations proven methods to ensure staff support, operational best practices, and continued mission impact during an executive search and transition.



**Third Sector Company** is a nationally recognized pioneer in leadership continuity solutions for community impact organizations including charitable causes, professional associations, congregations and foundations. The organization offers interim executive training, placement, coaching, support services, and job advertising and counsel.

[www.thirdsectorcompany.com](http://www.thirdsectorcompany.com)