

Sample Interview Questions and Scenarios for Executive Director Search

Vision, Assessment and Strategic Positioning

1. Now that you have reviewed some background information about <the organization>, how would you go about achieving <the organization>'s mission? What new ideas or strategies would you employ to increase <the organization>'s effectiveness? Please be as specific as possible.
2. Tell us what steps you would take to "scale up" the organization including expanding its community organizing efforts, achieving broader media visibility and advocacy impact?
3. What questions surfaced for you in reviewing <the organization>'s financial statements that might have a bearing on our ability to "scale up"?
4. What are the top three advocacy issues you think <the organization> should address in the next 3-5 years and why?

Management Scenario

One of your staff members has frequently been arriving at meetings and to the office late and/or providing last minute notice that she is unwell and will not be arriving. She often indicates that she has ongoing health problems that relate to stress and often appears to be sick. She has shown up late for or cancelled meetings with members as well as with other staff and allies. The members are frustrated about this and feel their time is not being respected. The staff member has been questioning her supervisor's experience and qualifications to supervise her as well as whether the power structure of the organization is in line with its social justice values.

In discussions among staff and with allies, the staff member is very articulate and able to discuss the work and our mission and goals in a very articulate and nuanced way. She professes strong commitment to the work and members, but her actions seem to contradict this. Moreover, her behavior is having a negative impact on team dynamics.

How would you handle this situation?

Media and Public Relations

1. The mission of <the organization> is <insert mission>. What do you think are the core messages <the organization> should be disseminating within communities, to policy makers and the media?
2. How would you increase <the organization>'s overall visibility?

Media Scenario

The Senator who has taken the lead on environmental issues has come out with a framework for what her/his proposed legislation would look like. While it appears to include some positive components, on the whole its disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

Our community -based allies are largely outraged and making calls to strongly oppose the proposal which they see as unacceptably emphasizing immigration enforcement - something that will devastate the communities we work with.

You are called by a reporter to comment on the legislation. What do you do/say?

Fundraising

1. Describe your top three fundraising successes. What did you do specifically to contribute to each success?
2. What strategies would you employ to significantly increase <the Organization's> budget in the next three to five years?
3. What aspects of fundraising do you find most difficult? Why?
4. When do you think a prospective donor is ready to be asked for a major gift? Describe the circumstances that you believe to be ideal for such an "ask."

Fundraising Scenario

You receive a call from a funder who provides general support for one of the projects. The funder had expected that <the organization> would be able to substantially change the position and level of engagement of labor unions - particularly building trades unions who do not have significant immigrant membership - on the issue of immigration.

The funder expresses frustration that this has not happened and also expresses personal criticism about the staff person primarily responsible for carrying out the work.

How do you respond?

Questions from the interviewee

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questions, we would also like to provide you with this opportunity to ask any questions.

Adapted from Strategies for Social Change, LLC