



Nonprofit Leadership Models

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for Asian Pacific Environmental Network
2021





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Executive Summary

Purpose: In 2021, Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), announced her transition from the organization. In this transition, APEN underwent a process to determine the next leadership model. Their process started with conducting this leadership model research to help the APEN board make a decision on their leadership model, sole Executive Director or Co-Directorship, for their next phase of their leadership.

Outcomes: This leadership model research helped APEN to decide to transition from a sole Executive Director model to a Co-Directorship model made up of two Co-Directors.

Process: In collaboration with APEN, the consultant conducted this research in the Spring of 2021. In general, the entire executive leadership hiring process involved two phases:

- PHASE I: Determine the next leadership model of APEN - either continue with the sole Executive Director model or transition to a new Co-Director model. This research focuses on PHASE I to help APEN determine its next leadership model.
 - Methodology used for PHASE I: Consultant conducted one-on-one interviews with eight organizations with a Co-Director model and three organizations with a sole Executive Director / President & CEO model. See full report for the [full list of Co-Directors and sole EDs interviewed](#).
- PHASE II: Hiring process for next leader(s).

Rationale: APEN and the consultant (Strela Cervas Consulting, Inc.) are releasing this report as one resource that movement organizations can use if they are re-examining their own leadership models. This research is not meant to provide a recommendation nor sway any organization in any direction.

Disclaimers:

- This leadership model research is an APEN board-directed report. The board brought on an independent consultant to help determine the next leadership model. As such, this report is limited to two leadership models that the board focused on: 1) sole Executive Director/CEO and 2) Two Co-Directors. The report intentionally does not focus on other layers of leadership (e.g. directors).
- All organizational models we interviewed are unique in their own ways. The overall themes attempt to summarize models that are themselves all different.
- APEN had its own unique issues with a sole ED model. The research is not a commentary on any organization, nor is the research attempting to solve for all problems for every organization.

The main benefits/reasons for a Co-Director model:

- **Shared leadership and valuing leadership:** Organizations that choose a Co-Director model feel that their core values of shared leadership and democratic decision-making are better reflected in a Co-Director model.
- **Complementary skill sets:** Organizations with a Co-Director model report an unfairness in the expectation that a single person should be knowledgeable in all the skill sets that are required of leadership.
- **Sustainability:** Organizations that transitioned from a sole ED model to a Co-Director model report that their role as a sole ED can be extremely unsustainable. They believe that a Co-Director model relieves some of the burden.
- **Challenge to white dominant culture and capitalism:** Several organizations want to disrupt the dominant system of one charismatic leader.
- **Productivity:** Co-Directors that transitioned from a sole ED model report a bottleneck in tasks. They believe that Co-Directors are able to accomplish more.
- **Identity:** Leadership should reflect those you serve and organize. Co-Directors with varying identities achieve that.

Overall benefits/reasons of a sole ED/CEO model

- **People-centered approach:** One major determinant of hiring the next leader of an organization is the people. All EDs interviewed cited the importance of succession plans and two of the three organizations hired from within the organization.
- **Clear accountability:** The organization is clear that the ED/CEO is largely responsible for oversight, fundraising, hiring and firing, and board coordination.
- **Clarity of supervision and coordination with the next “tier” of staff:** The Deputy Director and/or director-level staff are clear that they have one supervisor and can directly coordinate and communicate with the ED/CEO.
- **Main contact for the organization:** In most cases and especially for high profile situations, the general public is clear who is the main contact and spokesperson for the organization. Funders and policy-makers also appreciate one main contact for an organization.
- **Ability to also have shared leadership:** Organizations with a sole ED/CEO model say they do, in fact, have shared leadership and that decision-making can be distributed. For example, one organization uses a “transformative organizing model” where decisions are distributed across the organization.

The main challenges and pitfalls:

Co-Directors Model:

- **Lack of alignment:** Vision, values, and/or politics are misaligned, or not on the same page about major decisions.
- **Lack of communication:** Co-Directors often report needing to communicate on a daily basis on any number of issues. A Co-Directorship fails when there is a lack of communication.

- **Inequitable roles:** A challenge to a Co-Directorship is when roles and responsibilities do not feel fair or equitable where one Co-Director may feel responsible for too many areas of work compared to the other Co-Director.
- **Unequal comfortability in power dynamics:** Both Co-Directors need to feel equally empowered to be the ultimate decision-makers. However, problems arise if one Co-Director is less comfortable making decisions.
- **Staff deference to Co-Directors:** Some organizations report staff deferring to Co-Directors on all decisions, despite Co-Directors empowering staff to make more decisions within their purview.
- **Potential to side with- and form alliances with one Co-Director:** Staff may have their “favorite” Co-Director and always go to that Co-Director to favor their opinions. To avoid alliances, Co-Directors must always be united.

Sole Executive Directors/CEO Model:

- **Sustainability:** Some EDs interviewed report a potential lack of capacity to do it all. One ED said, “It’s a lot. It’s way too much work.”
- **Expectations too high:** Some EDs report an expectation that the ED needs to be an expert at everything from fundraising to HR to programs to operations. One ED said they “had a huge job description” where requirements ranged from executive HR and administrative skills to strong “heart-centered” internal management skills.
- **Easily get scrutinized:** One ED said that since the ED is the ultimate decision-maker and the face of the organization, they can be easily blamed for every action or decision that is not aligned with others’ perspectives (compared to other models with shared leadership).
- **Potential to be less collaborative:** One ED shared an experience of not consulting staff or community when making a major decision and the community called for their accountability.

Across the Board (for both Co-Directors and sole EDs):

- **Decision-making:** There is an underlying assumption that decision-making would be more confusing with a Co-Director model. However, even sole EDs reported that decision-making is challenging for their organizations.
- **Capacity:** Even with any type of organizational restructuring many report that the overall job is still unsustainable.
- **Bias against female executive leadership:** Organizations report challenges of what it means to have female and non-binary executive leadership, especially women of color. Unseen “women’s work” (behind-the-scenes or administrative work) is not valued.
- **Challenge of being a cohesive team** for larger organizations. Lack of centralized direction and oversight.

There is no one formula for how Co-Directors divide their roles

Some organizations believe in sharing all of the major responsibilities equally, while others have a “lead”. There is no one way for determining who will be the lead. In general, organizations report dividing the responsibilities according to: 1) **Skill set/expertise**, 2) **Interest**, 3) **Relationships**, 4) **Capacity available**, and 5) **Identity** (race, gender, sexuality, etc).

Best practices across all leadership models:

- 1) **Distributed leadership**: Across both sole ED and Co-Director models, there are some roles (e.g. fund development or spokesperson) that can be distributed to other staff.
- 2) **Collaborative and supportive leadership teams**: Both sole EDs and Co-Directors do not have to carry the full burden. All organizations tend to use a tiered model to support their leadership: 1st tier of EDs/Co-Directors and 2nd tier of Program/Project Directors.
- 3) **Staff empowered decision-making**: Across both sole ED and Co-Director models, organizations use a “transformative organizing model” or “lateral leadership” where directors, organizers, and even members are empowered to make decisions.

List of Co-Directors and Executive Directors Interviewed

APEN and Strela Cervas (consultant) deeply appreciate the following people who generously participated in the interviews and shared their wisdom to make this valuable research possible.







Co-Directors

- California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), Strela Cervas, former Co-Director (*Feedback/opinions as former Co-Director. Organization transitioned to sole ED at time of research*)
- Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), Vincent Pan, Co-Director
- Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), Marion Gee, Incoming Co-Director (*Organization transitioning to Co-Directors at time of research*)
- Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO), Fernando Martí, Co-Director
- Freedom, Inc., Kabzuag Vaj, Co-Executive Director
- Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA), Joann Lo, former Co-Director
- Human Impact Partners (HIP), Solange Gould, Co-Director
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (LC), Veronica Garibay and Phoebe Seaton, Co-Directors

Sole Executive Directors / President & CEOs

- Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), Maricela Morales, Executive Director (*exploring Co-Director model for the future*)
- Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Executive Director
- Greenlining Institute, Debra Gore-Mann, President & CEO

The table below shows the changes in the leadership model by organization. The “X” indicates the status (sole EDs/CEO or Co-EDs) at the time of the interview between March to April 2021. The arrow indicates the direction in which the leadership model changed/is changing: from sole ED/CEO to Co-EDs or from Co-EDs to sole ED/CEO.

Organization	Sole ED/CEO	Direction	Co-EDs	ED Transition Changes
CEJA			X	Transitioned to sole ED, but have interim Co-EDs in 2022 and re-examining leadership model.
CAA			X	Previously sole ED
CJA			X	Previously sole ED
CCHO			X	Transitioning back to sole ED in 2022
FCWA			X	Previously sole ED
Freedom, Inc.			X	Previously sole ED
HIP			X	
LC			X	
CAUSE	X			Exploring Co-EDs in 2022
CBE	X			
Greenlining Institute	X			

Organizational Culture & Core Values

**Disclaimer: While most organizations have similar core values and ways they describe their organizational culture, this summary is not comprehensive and captures what organizations reported during the interviews.*

Top 3 Core Values Named by Organizations:

1. Racial justice and anti-racism
2. Feminism and gender equity
3. Climate Justice

Top 3 Ways Interviewees Describe their Organizational Culture

1. Working in coalition
2. Sustainability and wellness
3. Share leadership / shared power

Core Values Reported Among Organizations Interviewed

- **Racial justice and striving to be anti-racist organization:** All organizations
- **Feminism/feminist economy/women-led/gender equity:** 7 organizations
 - Examples of feminism in hiring practices: 1) One organization is an all-women staff; 2) Some organizations are majority women- and/or non-binary staff; and 3) Intentionally put women in leadership positions
 - Examples of feminism by approach: 1) Approach is less paternalistic and top down; 2) If male/female Co-EDs, avoid female Co-Director being the “internal” Co-ED. Share the external and internal work; and 3) For male identified leaders, name the gender dynamic and be open to growth in this area.
- **Climate Justice:** 4 organizations
- **Queer friendly / queer justice / non-binary and transgender friendly:** 2 organizations
- **Inclusion and equity:** 1 organization
- **Black-Asian-led and Black-Asian unity:** 1 organization
- **Transformative justice:** 1 organization
- **Public health:** 1 organization
- **Food justice:** 1 organization
- **Worker organizing:** 1 organization
- **Member-driven transformative organizing:** 1 organization
- **Cooperative, Sustainable, Participatory, Fair, Healthy:** 1 organization

How Organizations Describe Organizational Culture / Operational Values

- **Working in coalition:** All organizations
- **Sustainability and Wellness:** All organizations
- **Shared leadership / shared power:** All Co-Directors
 - Note: One organization named the difference between “shared leadership” and “principled leadership” where a hierarchy exists.
- **Collaboration, teamwork:** 2 organizations
- **Balance of heart and head:** 2 organizations
- **Valuing of relationships:** 2 organizations
- **Reciprocal learning:** 1 organization
- **Good organizational structure aligned with values:** 1 organization
- **Respect:** 1 organization
- **Clear roles and responsibilities, mission and values:** 1 organization
- **Solution-oriented:** 1 organization
- **Accountability and culture of direct feedback:** 1 organization
- **Agree how to show up with each other** (e.g. naming power, affinity groups): 1 organization

Overall Benefits and Reasons for Co-Director Model

Summary of Benefits and Reasons Why Organizations Choose Co-Directorship:

1. Centering value of shared leadership
2. Leaders have complementary skill sets
3. Sustainability
4. Challenge to white dominant culture and capitalism
5. Productivity (ability to be more productive and less overburdened)
6. Identity (leaders should reflect identity of base)

Benefits and Reasons	Organization Reporting
<p>Values of shared leadership and honoring leadership: Organizational structure should be grounded in and reflect core values & organizational culture of democratic decision-making, shared leadership, support of leadership growth, support for health and well-being. Many organizations reported a central value of shared leadership and power, and that it is important to have the organizational model and structure reflect those values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing leadership of staff: Organizations who promoted Associate Directors to Co-Directors highlight that these Associate Directors were actually doing the work of executive directors and by promoting them to Co-Director, they are valuing their leadership. • Form follows function: An organization that is transitioning from a sole ED to a Co-Director model says there are two equally positioned people in the organization with the same tenure and can both do different parts of the job. • One organization had always seen themselves as being a collective of leaders. When that model did not come about, the next model that made sense to share leadership became a Co-Directorship 	<p>8 organizations: CAA, CEJA, CCHO, CJA, FCWA, Freedom, Inc., LC, CAUSE (exploring Co-Directors for future)</p>
<p>Complementary skill sets: Sole EDs report that it is nearly impossible to find a single person that is knowledgeable in all the skill sets that are required of EDs, and that it is unfair to expect EDs to be experts in all matters. With a Co-Director model, multiple complementary skill sets can be combined that allows for growth in areas that are not as strong.</p>	<p>6 organizations: CEJA, CCHO, CJA, FCWA, LC, CAUSE (exploring</p>

	Co-Directors for future)
<p>Sustainability: Former EDs that transitioned to a Co-director model reported the sole ED role can be extremely unsustainable. They wanted to transition to the Co-Director model to take some of the burden off of themselves. Some EDs also reported wanting a better work-life balance, and that the Co-Directorship is one way to help achieve that balance. Most Co-Directors share that even with a Co-Director model, each Co-Director still has more than a full-time job.</p>	<p>4 organizations: CAA, CJA, FCWA, HIP</p>
<p>Challenge to white dominant culture and capitalism: Non-profit structures come from a business model rooted in capitalism and white dominant culture. Having a Co-Directorship model with shared values and shared power is one way to disrupt the dominant system. Co-director models also disrupt our own stereotypes of a specific “ED type” - e.g. “there is only one charismatic leader”, or “only attorneys can be EDs” (especially for policy organizations).</p>	<p>2 organizations: CAA, LC</p>
<p>Productivity: EDs reported a bottleneck in ability to complete tasks due to the sheer amount of responsibilities required of them as a sole ED. Co-Directors could be more productive while not feeling overburdened and overly taxed.</p>	<p>1 organization: CAA</p>
<p>Identity: In one case, the leadership is based on identity because they believe that the leadership should represent their communities. Their Co-Directors represent Southeast Asian and Black communities, as well as have lived experience in LGBTQ+ issues and gender equity issues.</p>	<p>1 organization: Freedom, Inc.</p>

Summary of What Makes Co-Directors Successful Together:

1. Shared vision and values
2. Respect and working well with each other
3. Communication and Transparency
4. Having support from consultant(s)
5. Identifying and supporting each other's strengths and growth areas
6. Investment in skills building
7. Trust
8. Clear decision-making process
9. Understanding of when to step in or step back
10. Wellness and sustainability practices
11. Humility and letting go of ego
12. Create a united front and avoid gossip
13. Co-Directors should identify with- and share the lived experience of those you serve

Mixed results:

1. Coaching: Some organizations report success with coaching, others report a bad experience with coaching
2. Redundancy: Some organizations find redundancy in Co-Director roles helpful, while others avoid redundancy

Elements that make a Co-Director model successful <i>*Note: List is not comprehensive and captures what organizations named during the interviews.</i>	Organization Reporting
Shared Vision and Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of shared leadership, lifting up strengths, being supportive of areas of growth and interest. • Aligned on vision and north star of the organization, as well as, alignment on theory of change. 	All Co-Directors
Respect/ Work well together/ Equal partnership	6 organizations: CEJA, CCHO,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Co-Directors don't work well together and lack respect for each other's leadership, the Co-Directorship will not work. • Many Co-Directors report having a friendship and even "more than partner" relationship because they interact daily about major internal and external issues. • The job is emotionally charged and they need a partner to vent with, to bounce ideas off of, or to help hold the whole. • Takes a certain type of personality to want to work in Co-Directorship. Some people are happy to, others are not. 	FCWA, HIP, Freedom, Inc., LC
Communication & Transparency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Co-EDs report being in constant communication with each other on a weekly (if not daily) basis via video, phone, or text. • Do not lean away from conflict. "When things get hard, you have someone to bounce ideas off of. You have someone that helps to hold the load." • Be transparent when one needs time off/capacity will go down. 	6 organizations: CAA, CEJA, Freedom, Inc., FCWA, HIP, LC
Consultant support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One organization has a trusted consultant with historical memory of the organization that is brought on once per year to facilitate conversations with the Co-Directors on any challenging topic. The outside consultant brings another perspective and neutrality to the conversation. • One organization uses consultants for a variety of needs: Facilitation of conflict resolution, developing improved HR and organizational development, support with strategic planning processes. • One organization uses a consultant to keep their finger on the pulse around morale and what support is needed. 	6 organizations: CAA, CEJA, CCHO, CJA, FCWA, Freedom, Inc.
Identification of- and support for strengths/areas of growth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear articulation of each Co-Directors strengths and areas of growth at the outset • Trainings and mentorship in areas of growth 	5 organizations: CEJA, CCHO, Freedom, Inc., HIP, LC
Investment in skills building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General investment in leaders (organizations tend to invest in staff, but not leaders) • Dedicated professional development funds for areas of growth (e.g. fundraising, conflict resolution). 	5 organizations: CEJA, CCHO, Freedom, Inc., HIP, LC
Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing good intentions and being on the same page. Being able to have difficult conversations, and not leaning away from 	5 organizations: CEJA, CCHO, FCWA, HIP, LC

<p>conflict.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if not on the same page, trusting that the other is informed and is making the right decision based on core values and the good of the organization. • Had trust of the board and members. 	
<p>Clear decision-making process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a documented and transparent decision-making process. Organizations have clarity around who to ask for the type of decision. • Tools vary from organization to organization (e.g. use of DARCI, MOCHA, or supermajority voting) 	<p>4 organizations: CEJA, CJA, Freedom, Inc., LC</p>
<p>Understanding of when to step in or step back</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because Co-Directors are intimately familiar with their strengths and areas of growth, they naturally know when to step in or step back. • Successful Co-Directors also are supportive of each other's family/personal life, and actively volunteer to step in when needed. 	<p>4 organizations: CEJA, Freedom, Inc., FCWA, LC</p>
<p>Wellness and sustainability policies</p> <p>Many Co-Directors discussed the importance of wellness and sustainability to avoid burn out. Several organizations highlighted the importance of a sabbatical policy.</p>	<p>3 organizations: CEJA, CAA, FCWA</p>
<p>Let go of Ego / Humility: One organization said, "Both Co-Directors are comfortable standing in community and they have nothing to prove. It's important to not let ego drive your leadership."</p>	<p>3 organizations: LC, CAA, FCWA</p>
<p>Create a united front and avoid gossip: Avoid talking about one's Co-Director to staff, and resolve issues between each other. Whether or not there is agreement, bring a united position to the staff. Likewise, avoid gossiping about staff to staff.</p>	<p>1 organization: Freedom, Inc.</p>
<p>Co-Directors should identify with and share lived experience of those you serve/organize</p>	<p>1 organization: Freedom, Inc.</p>

Elements with mixed results	Organization Reporting
<p>Coaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most organizations report having a trained values-aligned coach is healthy for Co-Directors. • One organization reported both Co-Directors using the same coach for consistency and even to mediate conflict between Co-Directors. • “Coaching is like couples’ therapy.” • One organization reported a bad experience with their coach. The coach was inconsistent, and even “damaging to how they saw themselves as a leader.” 	<p>6 organizations: CAA, CEJA, FCWA, Freedom, Inc., HIP, LC</p>
<p>Redundancy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two organizations report that redundancy in Co-Director roles and responsibilities is helpful because it allows for one Co-Director to cover for the other when they need to be absent. Redundancy allows for one Co-Director’s capacity to go up and down so that the other can easily step in. • Another organization reports that they try to avoid redundancy by not requiring both Co-Directors to be present for everything. The idea is to avoid two minds working on a single issue or project. Rather, they like to think of splitting one role into two so that more is accomplished. 	<p>3 organizations: CAA, CCHO, LC</p>

Overall Benefits and Strengths of a Sole ED/CEO Model

Summary of the Benefits and Reasons Why Organizations Choose a Sole ED/CEO Model:

1. People-centered approach
2. Clear accountability
3. Clarity of supervision and coordination with the next “tier” of staff
4. Main contact for the organization
5. Ability to also have shared leadership

- **People-centered approach:** One major determinant of hiring the next leader of an organization is the people. All EDs interviewed cited the importance of succession plans and two of the three organizations hired from within the organization.
- **Clear accountability:** The organization is clear that the ED/CEO is largely responsible for oversight, fundraising, hiring and firing, and board coordination.
- **Clarity of supervision and coordination with the next “tier” of staff:** The Deputy Director and/or director-level staff are clear that they have one supervisor and can directly coordinate and communicate with the ED/CEO.
- **Main contact for the organization:** In most cases and especially for high profile situations, the general public is clear who is the main contact and spokesperson for the organization. Funders and policy-makers also appreciate one main contact for an organization.
- **Ability to also have shared leadership:** Organizations with a sole ED/CEO model say they do, in fact, have shared leadership and that decision-making can be distributed. For example, one organization uses a “transformative organizing model” where decisions are distributed across the organization.

What Makes a Sole ED/CEO Successful?

Summary of What Makes a Sole ED/CEO Successful:

1. Succession planning and leadership pipeline
2. Strong director-level staff
3. Family-supporting practices and structure
4. Coaching
5. Consultants
6. Experienced and active board of directors

Elements that make a Sole Executive Director / President & CEO model successful <i>*Note: List is not comprehensive and captures what organizations named during the interviews.</i>	Organization Reporting
Succession planning and leadership pipeline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One organization set an organizational culture of developing the Associate Director to become the ED. The onboarding process felt like 15 years of onboarding so that by the time she transitioned to the ED role, she felt ready. One organization's transformative organizing model is what allowed her to go from Youth Organizer to ED. 	3 organizations: CAUSE, CBE, Greenlining
Strong director-level staff that makes the ED role more sustainable: Organizations lifted up the longevity of staff is important. The most tenured directors came from the community. There is a longevity and institutional knowledge of staff.	2 organizations: CBE, Greenlining
Family-supporting practices and structure: Two of the EDs had children when they became new EDs. Other director level leaders are able to step in.	2 organizations: CAUSE, CBE
Coaching: Values-aligned coaching where ED can be vulnerable.	2 organizations: CAUSE, CBE
Consultants: Trusted external senior-level consultants that can take on work when capacity goes down.	1 organization: Greenlining
Experienced and active board of directors: One organization said they have two board Co-Chairs that are diverse and actively support the CEO in strategy and decision-making.	1 organization: Greenlining

Main Challenges & Pitfalls

Summary of Named Challenges & Pitfalls of Each Model		
Co-Director	Sole ED / CEO	Across the Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of alignment • Lack of communication • Inequitable roles • Unequal comfortability in power dynamics • Staff deference to Co-Directors • Siding with one Co-Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Expectations too high • Easily get scrutinized • Potential for less collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making • Capacity • Bias against female executive leadership • Challenge of being a cohesive team

Co-Director Model

- **Lack of alignment:** Vision, values, and/or politics are misaligned, or not on the same page about major decisions.
- **Lack of communication:** In a Co-Directorship, a high level of communication is key. Co-Directors often report needing to communicate on a daily basis from any number of issues from staff dynamics to politics to funding. A Co-Directorship fails when there is a lack of communication.
- **Inequitable roles:** Co-Directors need a sense of fairness in how their roles and responsibilities are divided. A challenge to a Co-Directorship is when roles and responsibilities do not feel fair or equitable where one Co-Director may feel responsible for too many areas of work compared to the other Co-Director.
- **Unequal comfortability in power dynamics:** Both Co-Directors need to feel equally empowered to be the ultimate decision-makers. However, some Co-Directors feel that this can be problematic if one Co-Director is not comfortable with making a decision.
- **Staff deference to Co-Directors:** Due to there being two (or more) Co-Directors, some organizations report staff deferring to Co-Directors on all decisions. Most Co-Directors report wanting to actually empower staff to make more decisions within their purview.
- **Potential to side with- and form alliances with one Co-Director:** Staff may have their “favorite” Co-Director and always go to that Co-Director to favor their opinions. To avoid alliances, Co-Directors must always be united.

Sole EDs / CEOs

- **Sustainability:** Most sole EDs interviewed report a lack of capacity to do it all. They do it all. One ED said, “It’s a lot. It’s way too much work.”
- **Expectations too high:** Some EDs report an expectation that the ED needs to be an expert at everything from fundraising to HR to programs to operations. One ED said they “had a huge job description” where requirements ranged from executive HR and administrative skills to strong “heart-centered” internal management skills.
- **Easily get scrutinized:** One ED said that since the ED is the ultimate decision-maker and the face of the organization, they can be easily blamed for every action or decision that is not aligned with others’ perspectives (compared to other models with shared leadership).
- **Potential to be less collaborative:** One ED shared an experience of not consulting staff or community when making a major decision and the community called for their accountability.

Across the Board (both sole EDs and Co-Directors)

- **Decision-making:** There is an underlying assumption that decision-making would be more confusing with a Co-Director model. However, even sole EDs reported that decision-making is challenging for their organizations. Some organizations report having too much process that the decision-making process takes too long. Organizations that attempt to be more inclusive also take a longer time to make decisions and have a lack of clarity of who is making a decision.
- **Capacity:** Even with any type of organizational restructuring many report that the overall job is still unsustainable. Transitioning to a Co-Director model is one solution to an unsustainable ED role, but it does not solve the root cause of the sustainability issue.
- **Bias against female executive leadership:** Directors that are female- and non-binary identified report the challenges of what it means to have female and non-binary leadership, especially women of color. Unseen “women’s work” (behind-the-scenes or administrative work) is not valued. And that there is a high turn-over of cisgendered male staff.
- **Challenge of being a cohesive team** for larger organizations. Lack of centralized direction and oversight.

Co-Director Roles & Responsibilities

There is **no one formula** for how Co-Directors approach their roles and responsibilities. Some organizations believe in sharing all of the major responsibilities equally, while others have a “lead”. There is no one way for determining who will be the lead. In general, organizations report divvying up the responsibilities according to:

- **Skill set/expertise:** Many Co-EDs divided roles according to skill set, whether it be a program area, fund development, or operations.
- **Interest:** Several Co-EDs divided roles according to their level of interest and/or if they wanted to learn and grow in that area.
- **Relationships:** Co-EDs reported having existing relationships in any given area of work and, therefore, became the automatic point person in that area.
- **Capacity available:** The lead on any area of work/program depended on who has the capacity to take it on.
- **Identity:** Some Co-EDs divvy up work according to identity (race, gender, sexuality, etc). E.g. Southeast Asian Co-ED leads “Stop Asian Hate” campaign, while Black Co-ED leads work on Black Girls Matter.

Organization	Fund Development	Programs	Oversight / Org Development / Operations / Budget	Internal Management / Supervision	HR / Conflict resolution	Work with Board	Public Face
California Environmental Justice Alliance (former Co-Director model in 2017) Some shared responsibilities with mostly a "lead". Determined who will be lead depending on skill set, interest, and capacity.	One lead	Each program assigned a lead Co-ED	One lead	Shared. Each Co-ED supervised equal # of staff	Shared + Work with Steering Committee or consultant	Shared	Shared generally. Program lead is spokesperson for that program.
Chinese for Affirmative Action Avoided having an internal vs external Co-ED. Shared major areas of work. Divided work depending on their initiatives, relationships, and capacity. Did <u>not</u> divide according to skill set.	New funders: Shared. Current funders: Divided according to relationship.	Divided according to initiative.	Shared	Shared. Each Co-ED supervised equal # of staff	HR Dept leads	Shared	Shared
Climate Justice Alliance In 2021, CJA was hiring for three Co-Directors. The following is the projected division of roles.	One lead (funder & operations). Members meet w/ funders.	One lead in: -Funder & Ops & Reinvest Campaign -Organizing -Comms & Policy	One lead (funder & operations)	Shared. Each Co-ED supervises the Director of the Programs they support.	HR Dept // Co-EDs	One lead	Shared
Council of Community Housing Organizations CCHO is a small organization that only had the two Co-Directors until six years ago. Currently, only have four staff.	Shared	One is lead on policy; the other is lead on strategy and politics	Shared	Shared (small staff)	One lead	Shared	Shared

Organization	Fund Development	Programs	Oversight / Org Development / Operations / Budget	Internal Management / Supervision	HR / Conflict resolution	Work with Board	Public Face
Food Chain Workers Alliance Based off former Co-Directors' leadership	One lead, but both maintained funder relationships	One lead for each program/campaign	One lead	Shared	Shared	One lead	Split according to availability
Freedom, Inc. Major responsibilities are shared, while they divide roles according to identity and expertise	Shared. One lead on grants. One lead on individual donors	Split depending on identity and expertise	Shared	Shared using same written processes. Use transformative justice (hire/fire in teams)	Shared	Shared, switch off facilitation	Depends on politics and strategy
Human Impact Partners One Co-Director is newer (2 years), while the other has more tenure (11 years). To onboard in all areas of work, the more senior Co-Director would lead, train, and then slowly wean off.	Split fundraising development, grant writing, and grant management. Decisions on how to split can be based on relationships, or content expertise.	Split according to expertise and interest	Shared	Shared. Each Co-ED supervise approximately equal # of staff	Shared with Operations Director and Leadership Team (shared power)	Shared	Shared
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability Approach is to share major areas of work, while dividing up areas according to expertise and capacity. They also try not to claim the organization as belonging to any single person, and share leadership with staff.	New funders: Shared. Current funders: Split according to relationship and expertise	Split according to expertise and desire to learn	Shared	Shared. Co-EDs supervise senior management and directors only	Shared	Shared, switch off facilitation	Shared with other staff; One lead depending on geography

Sole ED / CEO Roles & Responsibilities

Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)

**Note: At the time of this research, CAUSE is exploring a Co-Director model for their future leadership.*

Executive Director/President & CEO Roles & Responsibilities	Potential Division of Roles and Responsibilities for Co-Directors, other Directors
<p>Internal nurturing of staff: “When I transitioned in as ED, I heard that you could describe organizational leaders as builders or gardeners. It resonated with me because at the time, the ED was a builder and I was a gardener. I would not have been able to start CAUSE. I was not an organization builder. What the organization needed and what I wanted to do was to be very intentional about building the staff capacity.”</p> <p>Internal management: Senior Team made up of: ED, Operations Director, Organizing Director, and Policy & Communications Director</p> <p>Maintain statewide visibility / Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>Develop the regional ecosystem: Unofficially, the ED mentors other EDs of color and is available for technical assistance to other P/WOC-led nonprofit orgs.</p> <p>Fund Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants: ED and Operations Director • Donors: ED and Donor Relations Manager <p>Admin/Fiscal sponsorships: CAUSE is nurturing 3 other organizations</p> <p>Programmatic work</p> <p>Face of organization/Spokespeople: ED is point if needed, primarily in Ventura & South Santa Barbara County; Organizing Director by default (geographic base) has been face of organization in North Santa Barbara County. Front-line Organizers and Policy Advocates are empowered to hold relationships with decision-makers</p>	<p>One Co-ED: Oversee Organizing</p> <p>One Co-ED: Oversee Policy and Communications</p> <p>Internal management: Leadership Team made up of Co-EDs and Operations Director. Senior Team Organizing Director, Policy & Communications Director, 2 Associate Organizing Directors and 1-2 Associate Policy Directors</p> <p>Maintain statewide visibility / Strategic Partnerships</p> <p>Fund Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants: Operations Director & Co-EDs (split by geography or programmatic area) • Donors: Donor Relations Manager with more communications <p>Face of organization/Spokespeople: Organizers & Policy Advocates already doing that work</p>

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)

Executive Director/President & CEO Roles & Responsibilities	Responsibilities delegated to other staff
<p>Outreach and Advocacy: Public speaking opportunities, engages with decision-makers at local, regional and state levels, builds relationships with partners in alliances and coalitions, writes op-eds, press releases and blogs to raise profile of the organization's work</p> <p>Program: Implements the current strategic plan; Ensures the development of annual program plans and evaluations</p> <p>Human Resources: Ensures staff evaluations are completed; Hires, manages, and develops staff; Fosters leadership development among staff, board, and community members</p> <p>Development: Contributes to the development of annual fundraising plans; Develops and implements a fundraising strategy; Cultivates and stewards relationships</p> <p>Supervision: Supervise all directors, resiliency coordinator, co-supervise Civic Engagement Coordinator</p>	<p>Fund development: ED interfaces with all funders, but other staff cultivate funder relationships based on area of expertise, geography. Have 4-person Development Team.</p> <p>Strategic Partnerships: ED only interfaces with high level partners and those that CBE helped to found. Other partners are handled by staff.</p> <p>Policy: Policy Team is connected to decision-makers. ED attends all policy meetings, but model is not for ED to be spokesperson.</p> <p>501c4: Civic Engagement Coordinator is lead staff of c4 (while ED is support) and attends each Team's meeting, and manages ally relationships. ED raises c4 funds and attends high level meetings.</p>

Greenlining Institute

Executive Director/President & CEO Roles & Responsibilities	Greenlining Uses Values and Principles in Leadership Model
<p>The crux of the job is movement building while navigating BOTH centering BIPOC in a capitalist system AND dismantling that very system.</p> <p>“There’s a unique positionality with EJ/social justice organizations and an inherent conflict. You are trying to dismantle broken systems. And then the leadership wants to not demonstrate those bad structures. We are constantly trying to have progressive orgs that center POC, gender, sexuality in these structures. Then have staff fight an oppressive system.”</p> <p>Manage resources: 1) People and 2) Financial - raise funds, do the external funder relationship-building</p> <p>Additional named responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR and internal management • Strategic planning 	<p>Greenlining is grounded in the following values and principles that guide their work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-exploitive • Cooperative • Inclusive • Regenerative • Democratic <p>Greenlining uses the above values and principles in their leadership model and decision-making (see Organizational Model section). The inclusive, cooperative, and democratic values show up in their leadership model in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Co-Chairs actively support the President & CEO • Collaborative leadership with the following four teams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Development Team ◦ Policy Team ◦ Talent Team ◦ Operations/Finance Team • Workforce Equity & Inclusion Committee that is predominantly made of staff, and inclusive of the President and Board Chairs. This Committee is a safe space where staff can offer opinions on major decisions without retaliation.

Organizational Models & Decision-making

Themes & Observations Across Organizational Models and Decision-making

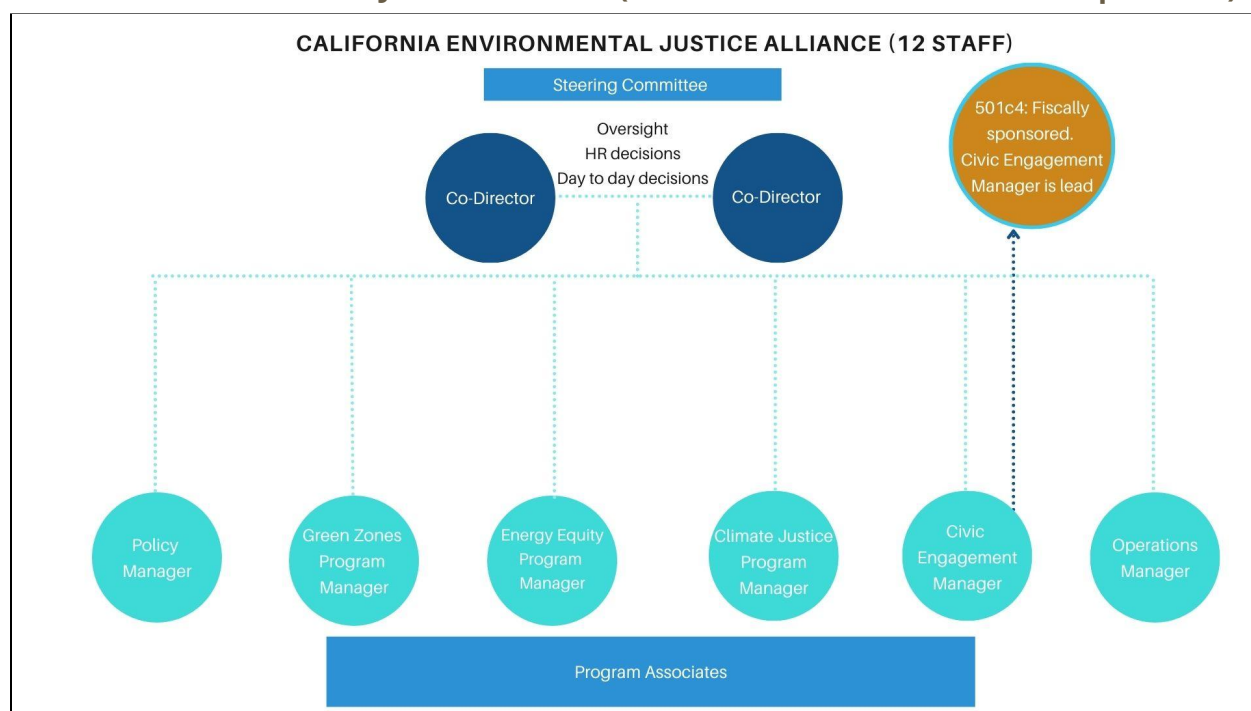
- Directors and VPs: Most organizations have directors or VPs as the next tier under them. Most common next tier staff:
 - Development Director
 - Program / Organizing Director
 - Operations Director and/or Finance Director
 - HR Director (in addition to Operations and Finance Director)
 - Policy Director
 - Communications Director
- Larger orgs have Executive/Senior Team:
 - Team is 3-5 people large
 - Made up of internal staff (does not necessarily include program directors). Probably due to Co-Directors supervising/overseeing programs
- Geographic-specific Directors: At CBE, one NorCal Program Director and one SoCal Program Director; at CAUSE, one Director is based in Ventura and one Director is based in Santa Barbara.
- Sustainability: Organizations that are collaborative or more "horizontal" can be more sustainable because others are empowered to make decisions. However, these organizations report being least successful at decision-making.
- Decision-making: All EDs and Co-Directors empower staff to make certain decisions. Ingredients for successful decision-making: 1) Leadership is not afraid to make decisions; 2) Balance collaboration with needing to make a clear decisions; 3) Clear and transparent decision-making protocols
- Orgs with a Fiscal Sponsor for organizations can either be led by:
 - One lead Co-Director (in Co-Director model)
 - Deputy Director (in ED model)
- 501c4: Most large organizations with a c4 have their Civic Engagement staff lead, while ED/Co-Directors play more of a supportive role; EXCEPT for Freedom, Inc.'s c4 that has completely separate staff and structure. Smaller organizations, such as CCHO, have both Co-Directors lead on their c4.

Co-Director Leadership Models

The information below responds to the question: How are decisions made at your organization?

**Note: The organizational models below reflect only the top tiers of leadership, and do not reflect the entire organizational model.*

California Environmental Justice Alliance: (12 staff at time of co-directorship in 2017)




**Note: CEJA transitioned to an Executive Director model between the end of 2017 to 2021. As of February 2022, they have three Interim Co-Directors and their next leadership model is currently being developed.*

CEJA Tiers of Leadership:

- Co-Directors
- Next Tier: Program Managers (Policy Manager, Green Zones Program Manager, Energy Equity Program Manager, Climate Justice Program Manager, Civic Engagement Program Manager, Operations Manager)
- Program Associates

Decision-making at CEJA:

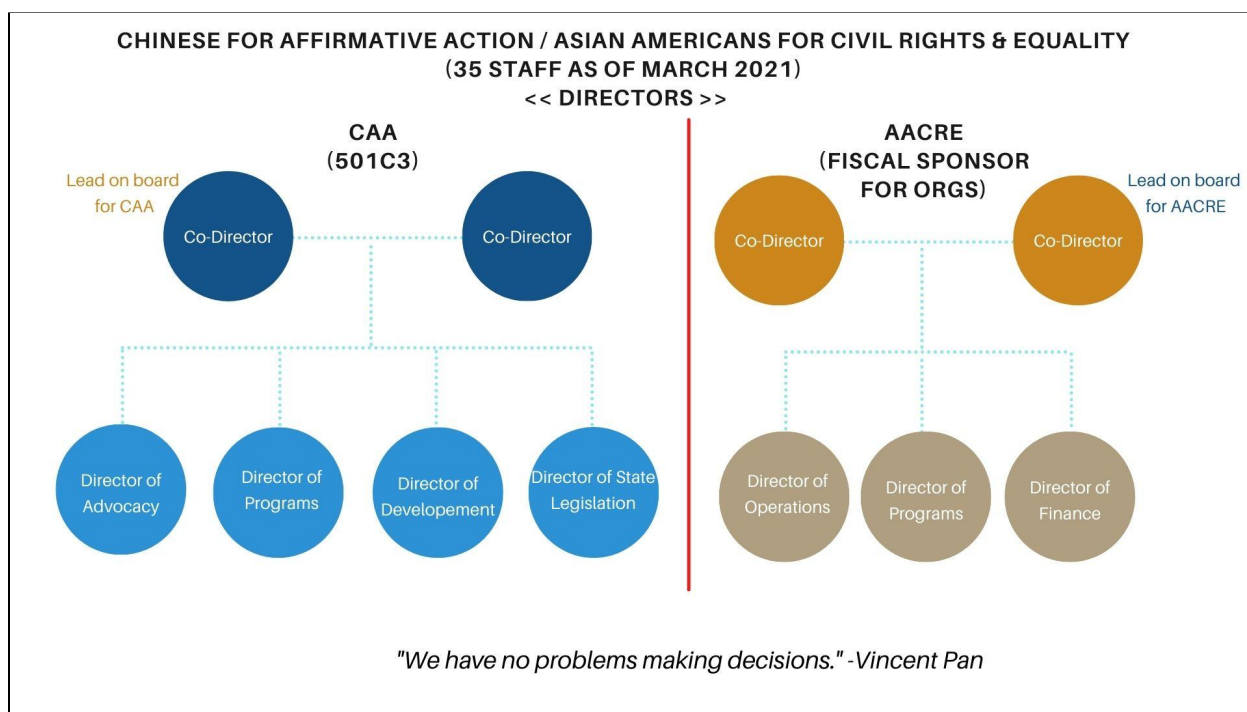
- Steering Committee made big decisions on strategy, budget, policy and political positions
- Co-Directors empowered to make day-to-day decisions and HR decisions in consultation with fiscal sponsor

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- Program Directors empowered to make day-to-day decisions of their program
 - For voting matters (e.g. positions on policies), used super-majority. No blocking allowed.

501c4: CEJA Action is CEJA's 501c4 arm. CEJA Action is fiscally sponsored by the Tides Foundation.

- One Co-Director was lead to oversee the c4
- Lead staff on the c4: Civic Engagement Manager and Policy Manager

Chinese for Affirmative Action / Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality (35 staff across the entire operation in March 2021)



There are two separate, but connected organizations:

- Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA)
 - CAA Tiers of Leadership:
 - Co-Directors
 - Next tier: Director of Advocacy, Director of Programs, Director of Development, Director of State Legislation
- Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality (AACRE)
 - AACRE is the legal entity that is the fiscal sponsor for several organizations. AACRE also includes some programmatic work.
 - AACRE Tiers of Leadership:
 - Co-Directors
 - Next tier: Director of Operations, Director of Finance, Director of Programs

CAA and AACRE share the same 501c3. The by-laws name both a CAA board and an AACRE board with different responsibilities.

CAA and AACRE do not have a 501c4. However, AACRE formed to be the fiscal sponsor of several organizations. One Co-Director is the lead with the board for AACRE, while the other Co-Director is the lead for CAA.

Council of Community Housing Organizations (4 staff in 2021)



**Note: As of February 2022, CCHO plans to transition back to a sole ED model.*

CCHO Tiers of Leadership:

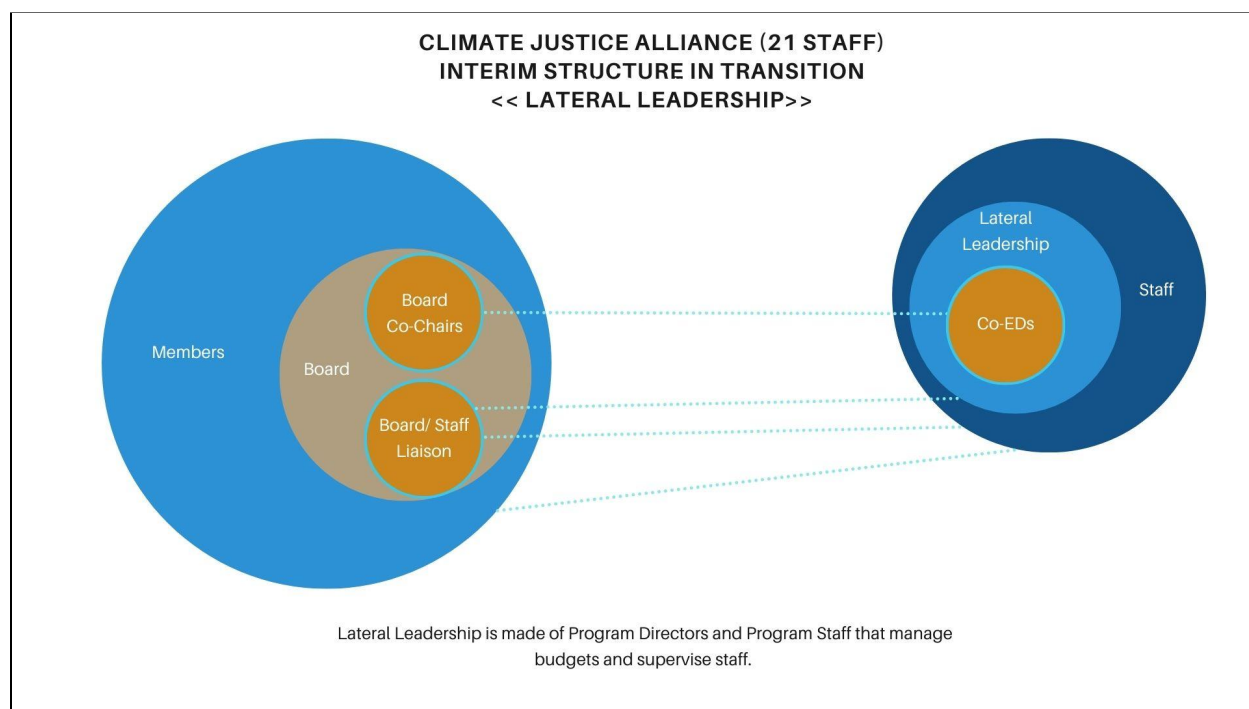
- Co-Directors
- Administrative staff and Communications staff

Decision-making:

- Most decision-making is done together with the Co-Directors.
- Coalition-wide decisions (e.g. legislation or endorsing ballot measures): Done with Steering Committee
- Big decision-making: Done at planning retreat
- To avoid bottle-necking decisions, need criteria for prioritization of work.

501c4: CCHO recently formed their c4 fiscally sponsored by the Tides Foundation. Although both interact with the c4, mostly one Co-Director leads on the c4.

Climate Justice Alliance (21 staff in 2021)



**Note: The structure above is an interim structure used during CJA's transition to a three Co-Director model in 2021.*

CJA Tiers of Leadership:

- Co-Directors
- Next tier: "Lateral Leadership" that is made up of Program Directors and Program Staff that manage budgets and supervise staff.

Decision-making at CJA: At the time of this research in 2021, CJA underwent a hiring process for their Co-Directors. Their new decision-making process is TBD. However, they already have a DARCI for each type of decision and for each program.

- Three decision-making areas:
 - Members: Decisions on strategic plans and direction, election of the Board
 - Board: Made up of members responsible for hiring of Co-EDs, financial, etc.
 - Co-EDs: Responsible for organization wide implementation of the strategic plan and organizational budget
- Distributed decision-making: Budget, work plan, screening criteria for bringing in new work is held at the Team and Organizational wide level. However, Co-EDs still have ultimate decision-making authority.

501c4: CJA does not have a 501c4.

Food Chain Workers' Alliance (8 staff at the time of Co-Directorship)



FCWA Tiers of Leadership:

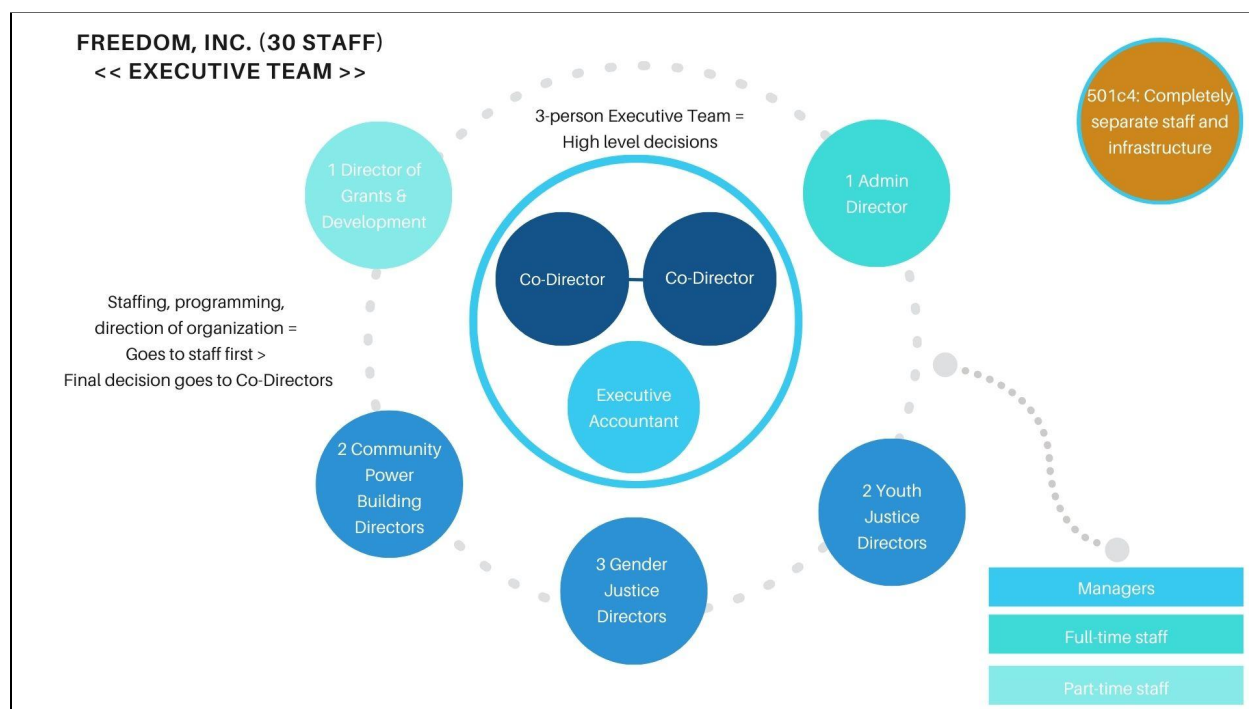
- Co-Directors
- Staff: National Campaign Coordinator, Regional Organizer, Communications Coordinator, Fundraising Development Coordinator, Part-time Operations Associate, new National Organizer

Decision-making at FCWA:

- General approach: Tried to make decisions as a team for day-to-day work. Co-Directors had regular meetings and discussed if a decision would need to be made by Co-Directors, or with staff.
- For urgent matters, Co-Directors would discuss and decide.
- Prevent bottle-necking decisions through constant communication and trust in each other.

501c4: FCWA does not have a 501c4.

Freedom, Inc. (30 staff in 2021)




Freedom, Inc. Tiers of Leadership :

- Executive Team: Co-Directors + Executive Accountant (3 people)
- Directors: 3 Gender Justice Directors, 1 Director of Grants & Development, 2 Youth Justice Directors, 1 Admin. Director, 2 Community Building Power Directors
- Next tier are managers, then full time staff, then part-time community leaders, and community volunteers.
- Departments: Gender Justice Dept, Queer Justice Dept, Youth and Community Power Building(CE) and, Admin Dept

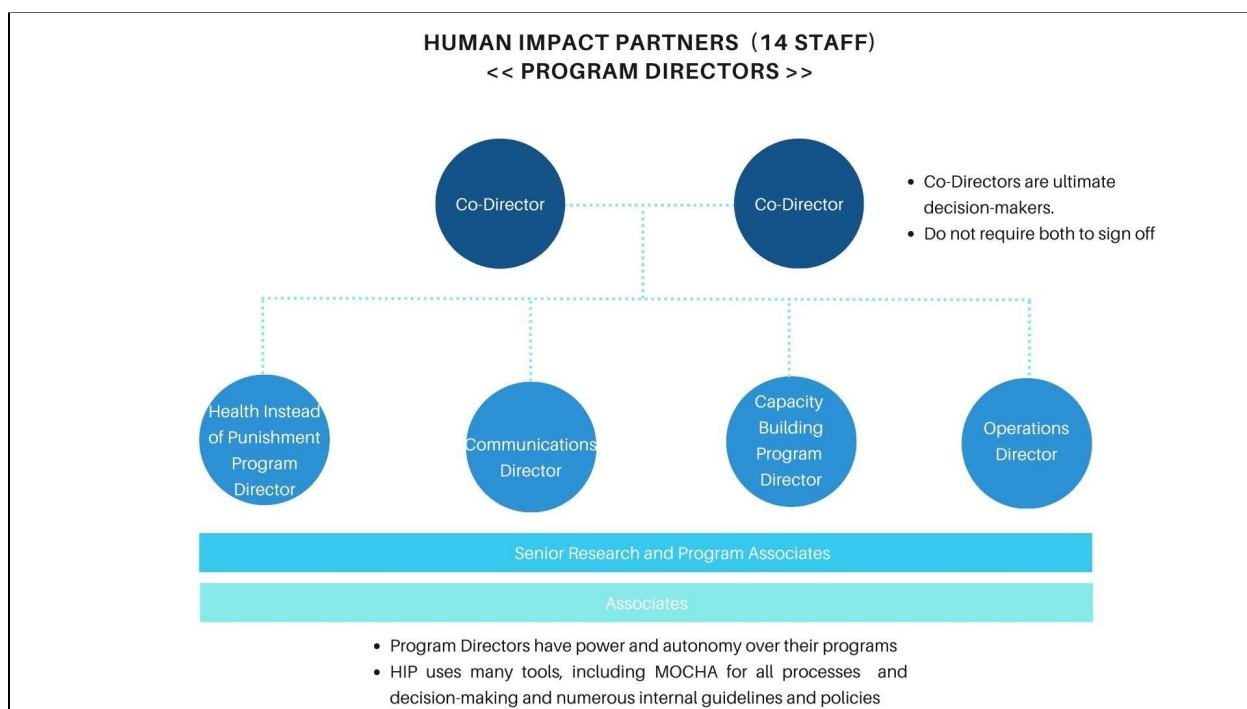
Decision-making at Freedom, Inc.:

- Immediate high level decisions: Executive Team-Co-Directors + Executive Accountant
- Decisions related to staffing, programming, direction of the organization: Bring to staff for discussion, then Directors, and then decision goes to Executive team to make final decision.
- Uses two processes (depending on the staff being terminated-some may not want a TJ process and would rather use the traditional HR termination process)
 1. "Collective" and transformative justice model. For example, if there is hiring and firing to be done, that is done in teams. All staff get to weigh in and the staff goes through a process and/or all directors get to weigh in on process depending on the situation
 2. Traditional HR process (only Directors, HR team and Executive team makes decisions)



501c4 arm: Because of the uprisings and because Freedom, Inc. is a Black/Southeast Asian organization, they split up the c3 and c4. They became very conservative with the two because there are many right-wing think tanks that conduct a lot of investigation on Freedom Inc's work. Having a separate c4 means there is no commingling of the staff. The c3 and the c4 are completely different legal entities, except for space and rental. The c4 is run completely separately. Both Co-Directors volunteer/or are contracted during their off time.

Human Impact Partners (17 staff in 2021)



HIP Tiers of Leadership:

- Co-Directors
- Program Directors: Health Instead of Punishment Program Director, Communications Director, Capacity Building Program Director, Operations Director
- Project Directors
- Senior Research and Program Associates
- Associates

Decision-making at HIP:

- Co-Directors are ultimate decision-makers. They also use their sector expertise for decision-making. For example, one has expertise in climate justice, another has expertise in economic justice.
- Program Directors have a lot of power and autonomy over their programs.
- “Leadership” includes Program and Project Directors, and HIP strives for everyone on staff to exercise some leadership.
- Tools that HIP uses for decision-making:
 - Use a MOCHA for all processes and decision-making. MOCHA allows for one clear role-delineation amongst many staff involved in a project. Co-Director to not be involved in any given project.
 - Numerous internal guidelines and policies, such as “Guidelines for Advocacy” help staff make programmatic, budgetary, advocacy, and other decisions on their own to reduce need for Co-Director input.

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- For policies, HIP has a policy spreadsheet that both Co-Directors are tagged into. HIP does not require both Co-Directors to sign off. However, for more complicated issues, both Co-Directors will discuss and come to alignment.

501c4: HIP does not have a 501c4.


Leadership Counsel (29 staff in 2021)



Leadership Counsel Tiers of Leadership:

- Co-Directors
- Senior Management that includes:
 - Co-Directors
 - Development Director
 - Director of Operations
 - Regional Policy Managers
 - Directing Attorneys
- Mid-Management that includes:
 - Office Manager
 - Communications Manager
 - Community Engagement Specialist
- Next Tier includes:
 - Policy Advocates
 - Policy Coordinators
 - Civic Engagement Specialist

Decision-making at Leadership Counsel: Leadership Counsel's general approach is to empower staff to make decisions in their own program and as teams depending on issue areas and geography. They have also learned the benefits of taking a longer time to make decisions.

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- LC established a Leadership Team to support the growth and sustainable development of the organization. The Leadership Team is composed of:
 - Co-Directors
 - Senior Management
 - Mid-Management
 - The Co-Directors and the Senior Management responsibilities include:
 - Hire and fire positions they supervise
 - Decide on strategic direction
 - Decide on litigation to engage in
 - Evaluation of staff they supervise
 - Director of Operations is the keeper and manager of accounting, audits, and budget.

501c4: Leadership Counsel Just launched their c4 in 2020. Tides is their fiscal sponsor. Fashioned it similar to the c3 staffing. Civic Engagement Specialist is lead thinker on c3/c4 coordination with support from Co-Directors.

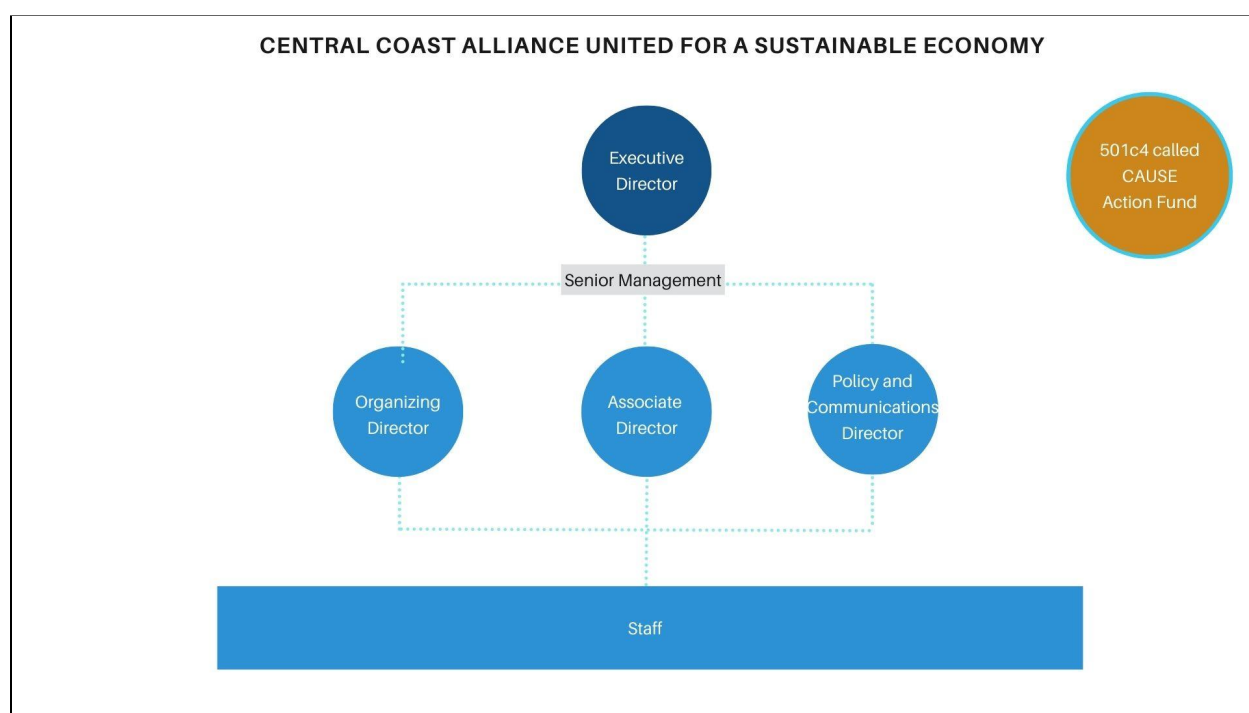
Sole Executive Directors / Presidents & CEOs

The information below responds to the question: How are decisions made at your organization?

**Note: The organizational models below reflect only the top tiers of leadership, and do not reflect the entire organizational model.*

Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy

In 2021, CAUSE explored transitioning from a sole ED to a Co-Director model for their future leadership structure.

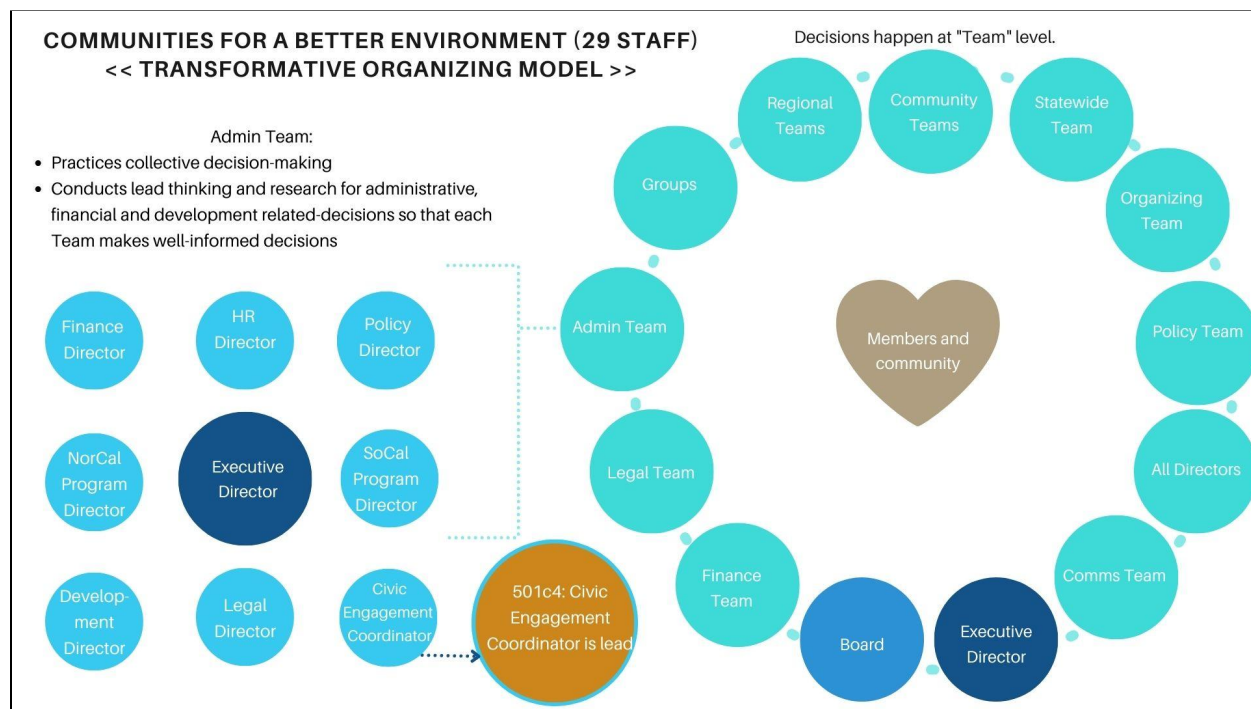


CAUSE Tiers of Leadership:

- ED
- Senior Management/Team: ED, Associate Director, Organizing Director, Policy & Communications Director
- Everyone else is under one of the senior teams

501c4: CAUSE has a c4 arm, called CAUSE Action Fund.

Communities for a Better Environment (29 staff in 2021)




CBE's model: CBE uses a "transformative organizing model" that provides a framework for their structure and decision-making.

- Executive Director
- HR Director
- Finance Director
- Policy Director
- Two Program Directors (NorCal and SoCal)
- Development Director
- Legal Director
- Civic Engagement Coordinator
- As of 2022, CBE hired a new Civic Engagement Director

**NOTE: Had an Associate Director formerly.*

Decision-making at CBE: In CBE's transformative organizing model, decision-making of members and community is at the center. Many decisions happen through the Teams led by the Program Director and supported by the Admin Team. This model allows the ED to not have to oversee everything. The Teams that make decisions include:

- Groups
- Community Teams
- Regional Teams
- Statewide Team
- Legal Team
- Organizing Team
- Policy Team
- Admin Team
- All of the directors
- Communications Team
- Finance Team
- ED
- Board



501c4: CBE has a separate 501c4 arm. CBE meets about the c4 weekly in their Funder Team meetings and Policy Team meetings.

- Each team identifies their c4 during planning.
- Civic Engagement Coordinator is lead staff of c4 (while the Program Director and ED are support) and attends each Team's meeting, and manages ally relationships.
- For high level campaigns, the ED is part of meetings.
- The ED cultivates all the c4 funding relationships, with support of Civic Engagement Coordinator, Development Director and Policy Director.

Greenlining Institute



Greenlining Structure:

- Greenlining has two Board Co-Chairs that actively collaborate with the President. Having two Board Co-Chairs relieves some of the burden from the President.
- President & CEO
- Vice Presidents:
 - VP of Policy
 - VP of Development and Communications
 - VP of Talent
 - VP of Operations and Finance

Decision-making at Greenlining: In 2021, Greenling developed a new decision-making process that included:

- Greenlining uses their core values to make decisions that are regenerative, democratic, inclusive, and cooperative.
- Decisions do not just sit with the President & CEO.
- The board has a diversity of voices that supports the President in making decisions. The board is intergenerational and they also are members of coalitions, making them grounded in the lived experience of Greenlining's communities.
- Greenlining has a Workforce Equity & Inclusion Committee that is predominantly made of staff, and inclusive of the President and Board Chairs. This Committee is a safe space where staff can offer opinions on major decisions without retaliation.



Topics that this Committee tackles includes organizational culture and how to pivot during COVID.

- Decisions that are made by VPs or higher include: promotions and compensation
 - The VP structure allows the President to engage in succession planning. Not only does Greenlining have a written succession plan, they are always building the next generation of leadership so these leaders can either ultimately lead at Greenlining or elsewhere.
- Policy decisions are “socialized”/collaborative meaning they discuss in small groups, then in large groups. Many edits are made before a decision is made.

501c4: Greenling has a 501c4, but does not engage with it.