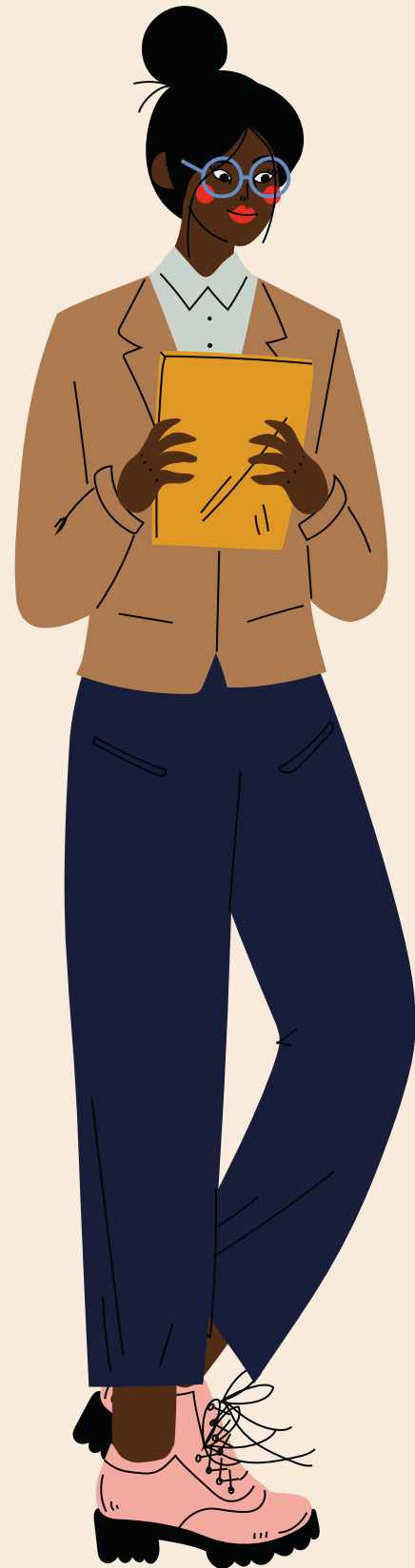


Nonprofit Leadership Models

Compiled by Strela Cervas
for Asian Pacific Environmental Network
2021



Methodology & Interviewees



Purpose: In 2021 during the APEN leadership transition, this research helped determine the next leadership model of APEN: sole Executive Director or Co-Directorship.

Methodology: Conduct 1-1 interviews with Co-Directors and sole EDs, analyze for themes.

Co-Directors Interviewed

- California Environmental Justice Alliance, Strela Cervas, former Co-Director
- Chinese for Affirmative Action, Vincent Pan, Co-Director
- Council of Community Housing Organizations, Fernando Martí, Co-Director
- Climate Justice Alliance, Marion Gee, Incoming Co-Director (three Co-Directors)
- Freedom, Inc., Kabzuag Vaj, Co-Executive Director
- Food Chain Workers Alliance, Joann Lo, former Co-Director
- Human Impact Partners, Solange Gould, Co-Director
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, Veronica Garibay and Phoebe Seaton, Co-Directors

Sole Executive Directors / President & CEOs Interviewed

- Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, Maricela Morales, Executive Director
- Communities for a Better Environment, Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Executive Director
- Greenlining Institute, Debra Gore-Mann, President & CEO

Values & Organizational Culture

Top 3 Core Values Named Across All Organizations:

- Racial justice and anti-racism
- Feminism and gender equity
- Climate Justice

Top 3 Ways Interviewees Describe their Organizational Culture

- Working in coalition
- Sustainability and wellness
- Share leadership / shared power



Benefits & Reasons for 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.



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

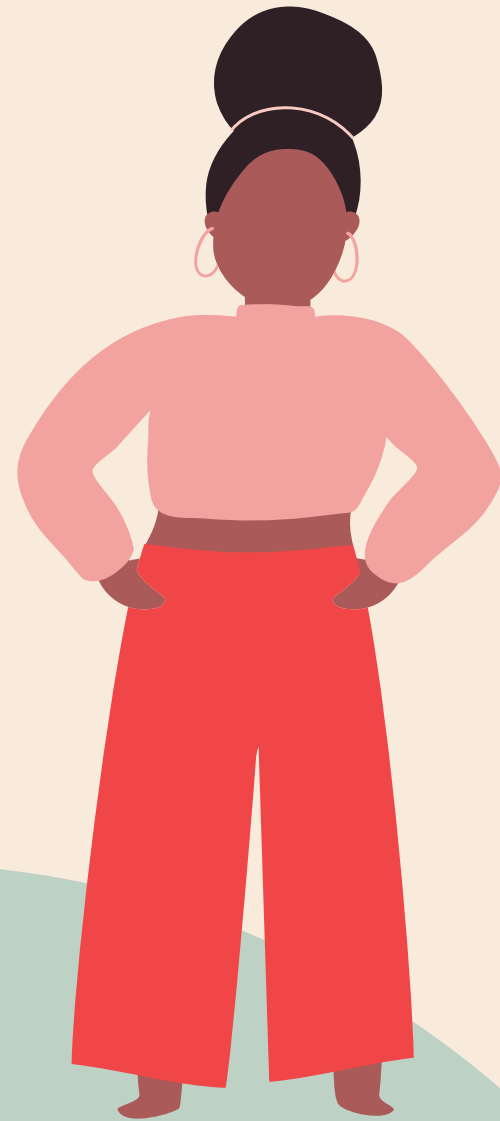
Benefits & Reasons for Sole ED/CEO Model



- **People-centered approach:** One major determinant of hiring the next leader of an organization is the people. Two sole ED/CEO organizations interviewed hired from within their organization citing the importance of succession plans and professional development of their own leaders.
- **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?



- **Succession planning and leadership pipeline:** In one case, the organization set an organizational culture of developing the Associate Director to become the ED.
- **Strong director-level staff:** The most tenured directors came from the community. There is a longevity and institutional knowledge of staff.
- **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.
- **Coaching:** Values-aligned coaching where ED can be vulnerable
- **Consultants:** Trusted external senior-level consultants that can take on work when capacity goes down.
- **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.

Challenges & Pitfalls

CO-DIRECTORS

- Lack of alignment on vision, values, and/or politics
- Lack of communication
- Roles and responsibilities not feeling fair/equitable
- Staff deferring to Co-Directors on all decisions
- Potential to side with-and form alliances with one Co-Director

SOLE EDS

- Sustainability - Lack capacity to do it all
- Expectation that ED needs to be an expert at everything: fundraising, HR, programs, operations
- Easily get scrutinized: As main decision-maker and face of organization
- Potential to be less collaborative because it's easier to make a decision and move

ACROSS THE BOARD

- Decision-making: Organizations that centers values of collaboration and inclusivity have a harder time with decision-making
- Capacity: Even with any type of organizational restructuring many report that the overall job is still unsustainable.
- Bias against female executive leadership



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, while some chose not to divide according to skill set.
- **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.



Co-Director Roles & Responsibilities

"How are roles and responsibilities divided?"

<<Examples>>



Organization	Fund Development	Programs	Oversight / Org Development / Operations / Budget	Internal Management / Supervision	HR / Conflict resolution	Work with Board	Public Face
<p>California Environmental Justice Alliance (former Co-Director model in 2017) Some shared responsibilities with mostly a “lead”. <u>Determined</u> who will be lead depending on skill set, interest, and capacity.</p>	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.
<p>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.</p>	<p>New funders: Shared.</p> <p>Current funders: Divided according to relationship.</p>	Divided according to initiative.	Shared	Shared. Each Co-ED supervised equal # of staff	HR Dept leads	Shared	Shared
<p>Climate Justice Alliance In 2021, CJA was hiring for three Co-Directors. The following is the projected division of roles.</p>	One lead (funder & operations). Members meet w/ funders.	<p>One lead in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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
<p>Council of Community Housing Organizations CCHO is a small organization that only had the two Co-Directors until six years ago. Currently, <u>only have</u> four staff.</p>	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

<<Examples>>



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. <u>Have 4-person Development Team.</u></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, <u>but model</u> 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.

Leadership Models

"How are decisions made?"

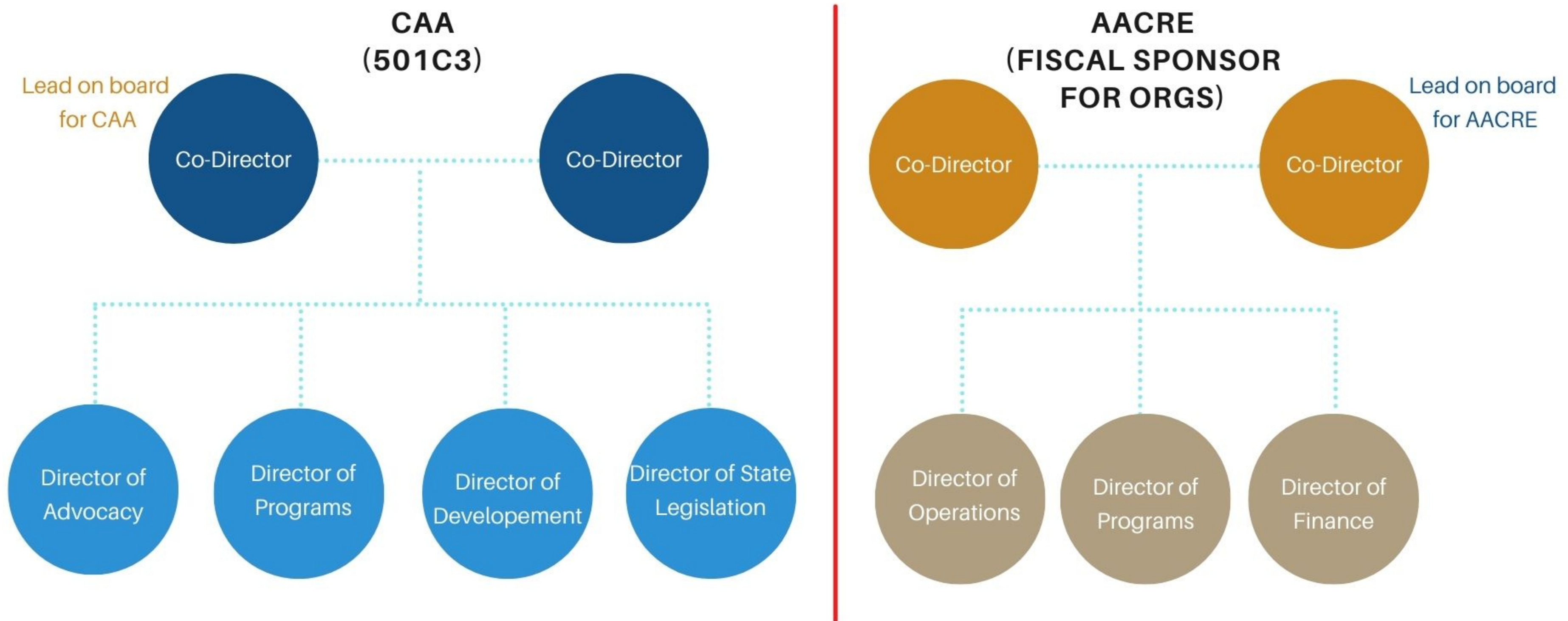
<<Examples>>



CHINESE FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION / ASIAN AMERICANS FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & EQUALITY

(35 STAFF AS OF MARCH 2021)

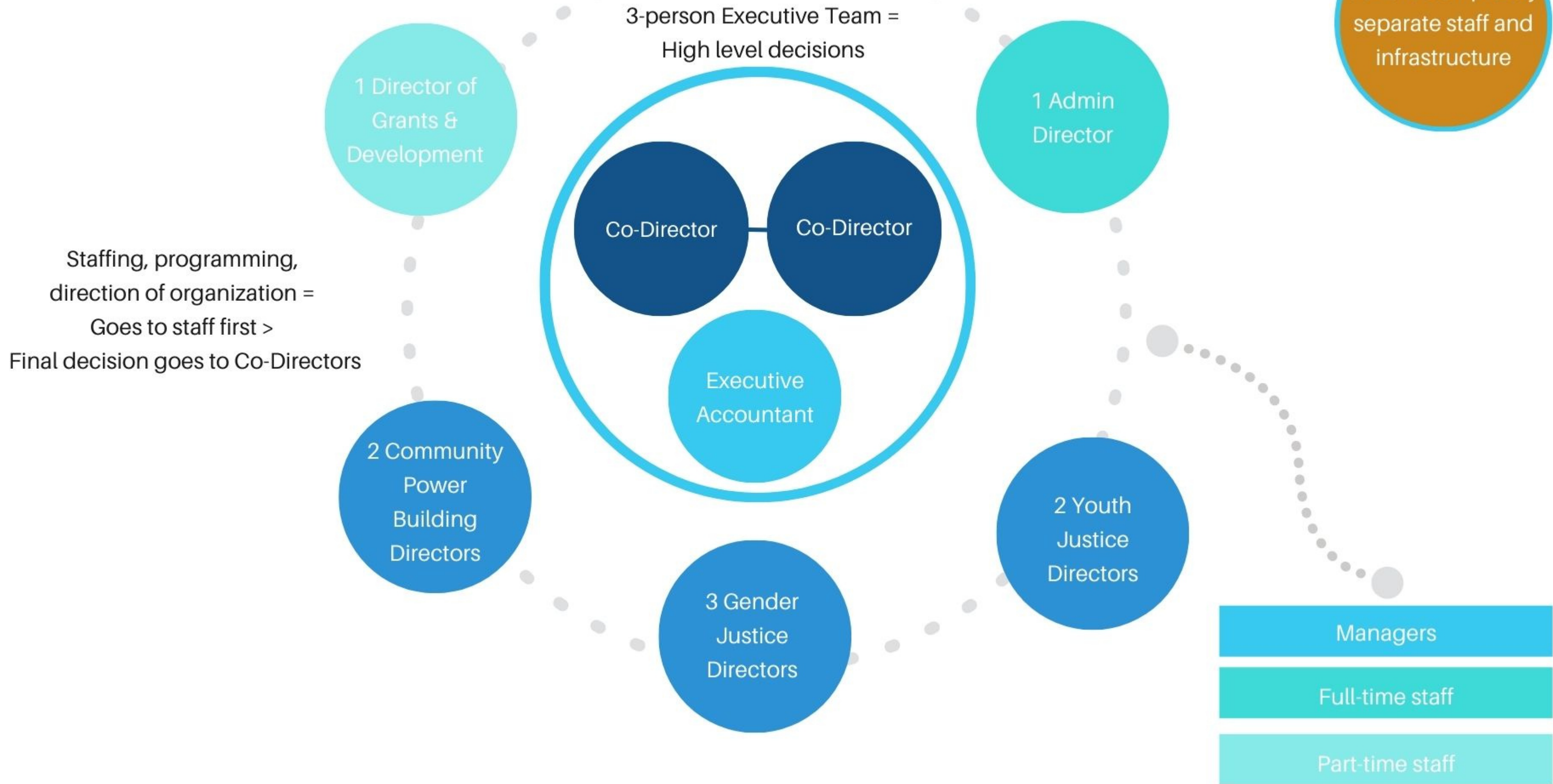
<< DIRECTORS >>



"We have no problems making decisions." -Vincent Pan

FREEDOM, INC. (30 STAFF)

<< EXECUTIVE TEAM >>

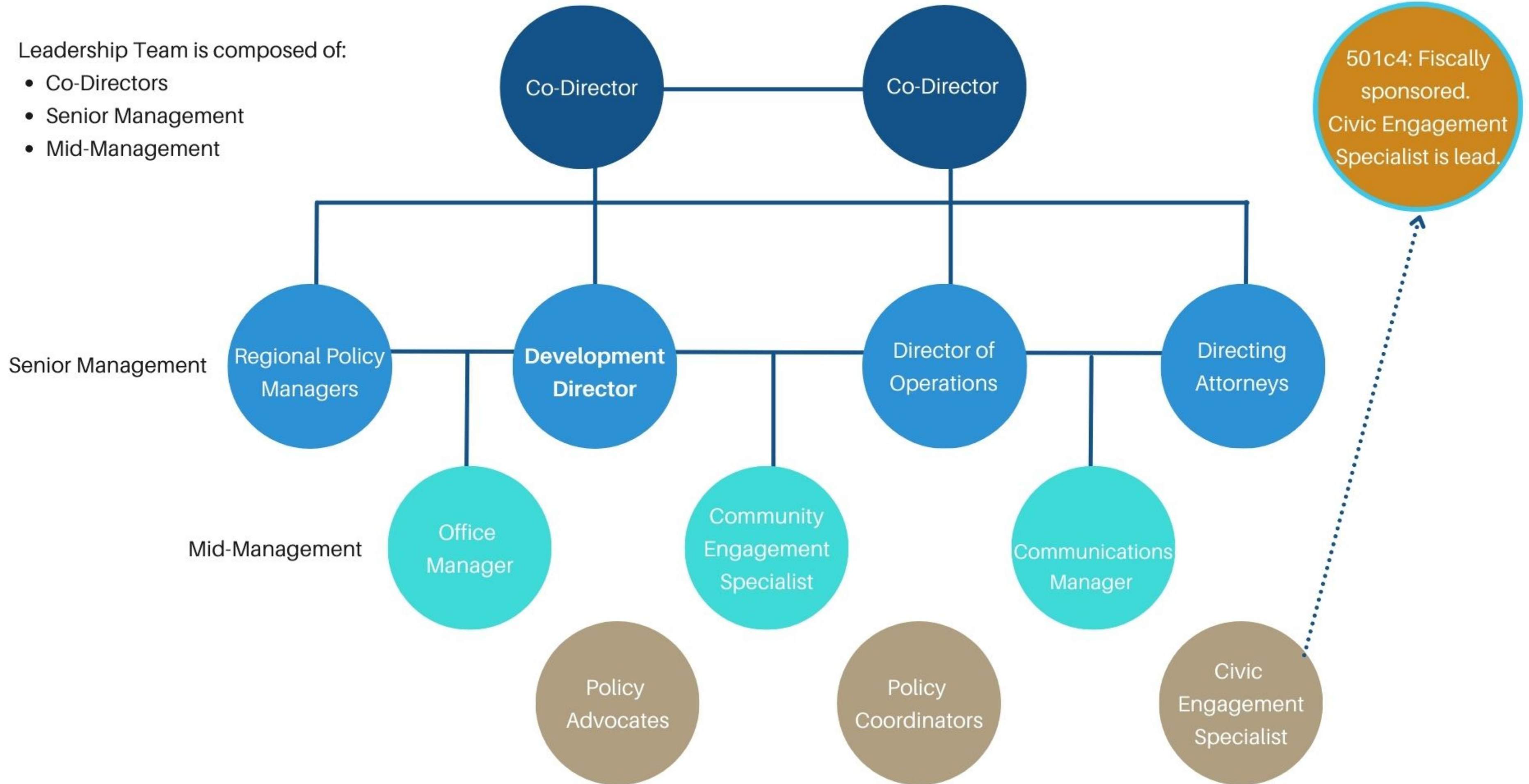


LEADERSHIP COUNSEL FOR JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY (29 STAFF)

<< SENIOR MANAGEMENT >>

Leadership Team is composed of:

- Co-Directors
- Senior Management
- Mid-Management

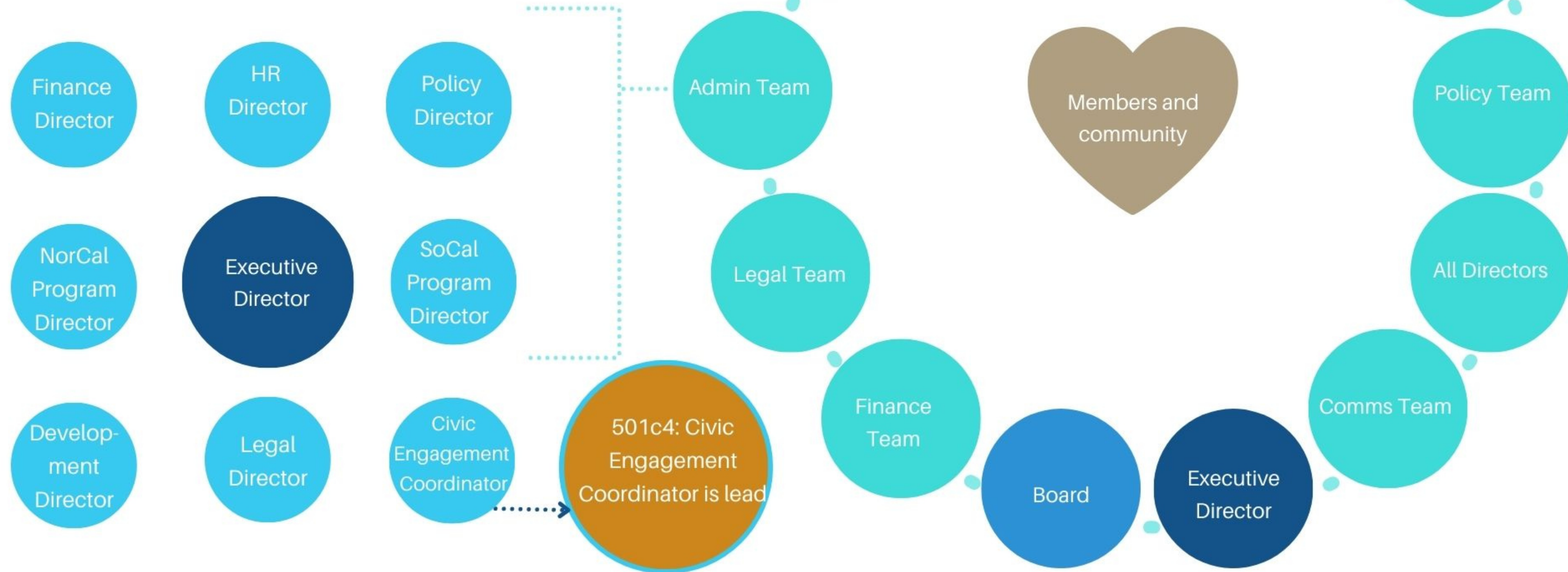


COMMUNITIES FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT (29 STAFF)

<< TRANSFORMATIVE ORGANIZING MODEL >>

Admin Team:

- Practices collective decision-making
- Conducts lead thinking and research for administrative, financial and development related-decisions so that each Team makes well-informed decisions



Decisions happen at "Team" level.



GREENLINING INSTITUTE (24 STAFF)

<< VICE PRESIDENTS >>

