Onboarding Playbook: Rethinking Executives' Integration

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Why an Executive Onboarding Playbook?

This playbook is in direct response to key insights gained through the 6th APEX Executive Work and Health Study results and our Advisory Services to Executives (ASE) client sessions over the past years, where there were direct calls for system-wide changes in key areas like strategic onboarding, inclusion, and psychological safety.

Inclusion, defined in the APEX study is: a sense of belonging; a voice at the table; a role in decision-making; and opportunities and resources for development.

Inclusion is the most potent moderator of wellbeing; it increases odds of:

- Job satisfaction by 319%
- Commitment by 266%
- Engagement by 168%
- Resilience by 65%
- Mental wellbeing by 34%

Why not then rethink and reimagine the way we onboard and strategically integrate new executives into organizations and teams and fast track their inclusion? This onboarding guide can also be used to ensure a successful re-entry into the workplace for executives who have been on extended leave of absence.

This playbook is the result of a review of onboarding best practices in many government departments and agencies, as well as academic institutions, followed by a comprehensive literature review of industry best practices from trusted sources and organizations like Deloitte, Korn Ferry, PWC, Gartner, Forbes, and Harvard Business Review.

Special thanks to Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Canada Revenue Agency, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, National Defence, Health Canada, Library and Archives Canada, Global Affairs Canada, FedNor, Women and Genger Equality Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and colleagues from the University of Montreal who contributed their time and best practices with APEX.
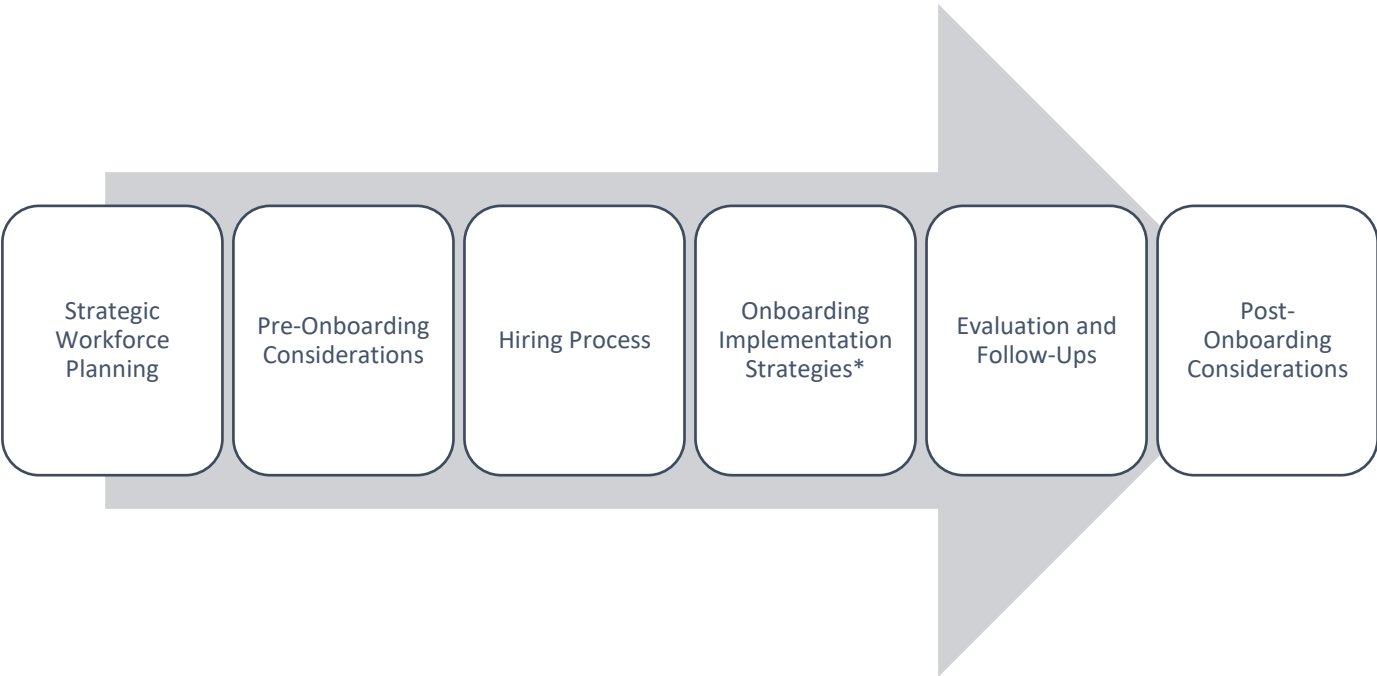
DID YOU KNOW?

On average, 35% of new executives make up our clientele in Advisory Services each year. Many new executives reported having a very poor onboarding experience or a very rough landing in their first executive role.

How to Use the Guide

It is our hope that departments and agencies, and executives responsible for the hiring process, will be inspired by the ideas, practical advice and guidance outlined within these pages. We hope that executives will also use some of these insights and considerations to advocate for what they need to succeed, accelerate their integration, make meaningful connections, and leverage all resources available.

This guide is part of a proposed integrated, strategic approach to onboarding and offers several considerations that go far beyond what we normally associate with onboarding in the federal public service. Use the guide as an *à la carte menu*!

Continuum of Successful Strategic Onboarding to Fast-Track Inclusion and Accelerate Development

| Strategic Workforce Planning | Pre-Onboarding Considerations | Hiring Process | Onboarding Implementation Strategies* | Evaluation and Follow-Ups | Post-Onboarding Considerations |

* Onboarding activities at three different levels, in a shared and distributed model:

1 - Organizational Level, led by Human Resources personnel

2 - Sector or Branch Level, led by executives in charge of the hiring process

3 - Individual Level, led by executives in onboarding situations

Preface

Effective onboarding and immersion into an organization's culture is key to attracting and retaining top talent and will also ensure an executive's successful integration in the workplace and accelerate a sense of belonging.

When planned and well executed, onboarding can instill confidence and inspire, allow executives to be productive from the outset, help them integrate into any organization's culture and understand their role in decision making and governance. The smooth transition and integration of newly appointed executives into their roles can be a determining factor in a person's decision to remain in the executive cadre and to succeed in their first few years.

As everyone learns differently and comes with a unique set of skills and lived experiences, it is crucial to personalize and adapt the onboarding program for executives appropriately to ensure an inclusive and psychologically safe environment, with special considerations for onboarding executives that are new to the public service, executives who are working remotely, and executives in more senior roles, as they set the tone, climate and influence the organizational culture.

APEX research shows that healthy cultures are commonly distinguished by shared understanding, psychological safety, and empathetic leadership. Few organizations build thriving cultures without teams that understand and collaborate well toward the purpose of helping others. Consider culture as a set of concentric circles. Organizational culture is the outer ring and depending on the size of the organization, different areas and functions serve as the middle rings—with an individual team the innermost ring of the culture. Senior leaders not only shape the overall culture but must also train leaders at all levels to pay attention to how their actions align with or misalign with that culture.

I hope that this playbook brings both the hiring manager of an executive and the new executive employee guidance and support to transition successfully into their role.

Nathalie Clément
Senior Advisor to Executives, APEX Advisory Services

Foreword by APEX CEO

I am delighted to share with you *APEX's Onboarding Playbook: Rethinking Executives' Integration*. Onboarding is just as important as the hiring process itself. Have you ever been onboarded to a new role and felt lost, overwhelmed or completely on your own? Imagine instead a smooth and scalable onboarding process customized to an executive's needs, a shared distributed model where Human Resources, the hiring manager, and the executive themselves co-create the ultimate onboarding experience to accelerate an executive's integration and a sense of belonging. Our objective with this playbook is to share best practices and onboarding considerations so that all executives feel included from the outset, and that they benefit from an enriched experience and accelerate their ability to successfully lead and support their teams.

APEX is fully committed to accelerating the professional development of executives and enriching their onboarding experience as they make the leap to the executive cadre. You will find outlined in this playbook concrete examples of partnership opportunities between individual departments and APEX. We encourage new executives to take advantage of the wide range of opportunities and activities tailored to them, including our Advisory Services for Executives (ASE), mentoring circles, APEX learning and development opportunities, and our Recognition of Entry into the Executive Ranks signature event where last year, we welcomed over 800 employees to the executive ranks.

An executive integration onboarding program, when successfully implemented, fast tracks executives to become productive, supported and valued from day one, and helps develop strong relationships and facilitate their integration and sense of belonging and psychological safety. Employees who enjoy a sense of belonging enjoy a certain level of well-being, which is reflected in their motivation, commitment, and loyalty over the long term.

Happy reading!

Carl Trottier
APEX Chief Executive Officer

Strategic Workforce Planning
Pre-Onboarding Considerations

Executive onboarding is more than a welcoming email, the handing out of a transition book or an overview of an organization's mandate and structure, and it goes way beyond the administrative and HR aspects most often associated with onboarding within the federal public service such as security aspect, computer, building access, etc.

Executive onboarding should be designed thoughtfully, aimed at ensuring that every executive effectively integrates into their new roles and understands the culture and expectations of the organization. Each onboarding process requires tailoring and flexibility that considers the unique strengths of each executive, their areas for growth, the specific challenges inherent to their role, and their prior exposure and relative experience with being an executive. Onboarding executives remotely, for example, or onboarding an executive with no prior experience within the public service, will require a different approach and personalized onboarding strategies.

Pre-onboarding considerations should be strategically included in workforce planning and talent management discussions, succession planning and hiring strategies.

It starts with workforce planning strategies and considerations, such as:

- analysis of current skills and talent, with particular attention to employment equity representation for Indigenous, Black and racialized people, and persons with disabilities;

- analysis of future plans and potential influences, including the Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion;

- competency gap analysis (current and future, including cultural competencies gap);

- identification of key and hard to fill positions;

- knowledge transfer strategies;

- skills availability;

- team composition and diversity;

- sense of inclusion and psychological safety; and

- risk mitigation strategies.

A holistic review and analysis of these considerations will be key in the delivery of a tailored and personalized onboarding plan for each executive, at any level. As part of your onboarding strategy, consider [psychologically safe orientation strategies](#).

Furthermore, onboarding literature emphasizes the significance of new-to-role executives receiving integration support in five critical tasks: assuming operational leadership, taking charge of the team, aligning with stakeholders, engaging with the culture, and defining strategic intent. Make sure to empower your newly appointed executives with key critical developmental opportunities in these areas. For example, a new leader builds credibility by demonstrating awareness of important operational issues, quickly solving urgent problems, and identifying and achieving early wins. Help them build their 90-day plan in their new role.

Setting Aspiring Executives Up for Success

As part of talent management strategies and discussions, ensure aspiring leaders (EX-minus 1 and 2) in your organizations have access to a variety of internal and external resources and initiatives and can proactively manage their leadership journey.

- Help them access resources, sponsorship and leadership development programs and expose them to experiential learning. Some departments, like Environment and Climate Change Canada, developed a Leadership Development Curriculum to plan their leadership journey effectively and proactively over time, which facilitates a smooth transition to the executive cadre. If your organisation does not have such programs, consider the [Mosaic Leadership Development Program](#) and the [Aspiring Directors Program](#).

- Consider mentoring, coaching, allyship, micro missions, job sharing or job shadowing initiatives, and exposure to senior management. Empower executives to cultivate a growth mindset and nurture a culture that views skill development as a continuous process.

- Support employees from different demographic groups to access networks, communities, and senior managers with similar identities as them (Indigenous People, Black and racialized employees, religious minority, persons with disability, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities). It is important for aspiring leaders to 'see themselves' in senior levels and have the opportunity for engagement, as not all career paths and lived experiences are similar.

- Help them meet, maintain or exceed their bilingual profile by accessing and using free interactive tools such as [Mauril](). What steps, formal and informal, can you take with aspiring leaders to ensure readiness on this front?

- Invite them to join various networks and communities of practice within or outside the organization. Help them build relationships and gain exposure to senior leaders. For example, invite leaders to orientation sessions or informal coffee chats with deputies or associate deputy ministers.

DID YOU KNOW?

APEX, in collaboration with the National Managers' Community, developed a Practical Guide for Aspiring Executives.

Many departments and agencies are already promoting the guide as part of their Leadership Development Programs.

Hiring People-Centric Leaders

During the hiring process, and as per the Policy on the Management of Executives, senior leaders must recruit an executive workforce that includes people first leaders that are accountable for delivering results for Canadians and embody the Key Leadership Competencies and the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector in their actions and decisions.

Focus should be on understanding the candidates' leadership styles, character, and their experience in creating and promoting healthy and psychologically safe environments. An individual who is considered for executive leadership positions should be able to demonstrate a proven track record in this area and display strong people management and communications skills, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution skills.

Onboarding starts at the interview stage

During the interview stage, hiring executives should be able to clearly articulate the challenges associated with the position, the current workplace culture, including employment equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and anti-racism considerations, their expectations for the role, and how results and leadership competencies will be measured. In addition, senior leaders should be prepared to answer questions around flexible work arrangements, the importance of setting healthy boundaries and clear expectations around hours of work, leadership style preferences, questions around psychological health and safety of the team (creating a safe and welcoming environment) and determine ways to regularly obtain upward feedback on the climate created by new executives joining the organization to ensure alignment.

Best practices in this area include behavioural questions during the interview and reference checks, asking for copies of recent leadership assessments or 360-degree feedback result exercises, systematically asking candidates to describe their leadership and communication styles, and including questions on the role of leadership in well-being and in creating a culture of care and psychological safety.

It is also important to be aware of your own leadership style and potential bias. Recruiting a candidate that is the 'best fit' can sometimes lead to the phenomenon of groupthink. While in the short term this may result in simplified decision making, different perspectives, experiences and values produce more robust conversations and analysis, often resulting in better quality products for the workplace, and for Canadians.

When we hire for leadership positions, it is essential to look for character traits such as:

- Judgement
- Humility
- Active listening skills
- Strong work ethics
- Clear morals and values
- Honesty
- Emotional intelligence: empathy, compassion, vulnerability

- Positive and non-abrasive communication style and conflict resolution skills
- Courage to have critical conversations
- Agreeableness
- Trustworthiness
- Kindness
- Openness to diversity of styles, approaches and opinions, and other cultures

Considerations for Onboarding Executives Remotely

To enrich the onboarding experiences of remote, regional executives or executives onboarding in a role abroad, emphasis should be made on connecting these executives with colleagues with similar lived experiences for peer support, coaching, mentoring, and networking. Help them connect with regional leaders, pair them with a senior regional buddy, help them connect with regional executives in other departments, as well as in headquarters, or other executives abroad for effective peer support. Ensure that all accommodation and safety procedures are in place on their first day.

Facilitate linkages and connections with headquarters, share information on governance, give them a regular voice as part of formal governance or via your management meetings. Make sure they feel they are at the table during meetings, even if they are across the country.

Be respectful of time zones when organizing team meetings and bilateral discussions; and depending on the role and nature of duties to be performed, ensure regional executives have the support needed after what is considered core hours in the National Capital Region.

Consider the possibility of having the executive visit the national office or another regional office within the first few months to make connections and integrate the information.

Keep in mind: Many executives in regional roles have additional local responsibilities in Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) such as being the most senior official onsite with responsibilities and building authorities. The level of local corporate support may vary as well. Be informed and conscious of these additional commitments.

DID YOU KNOW?

APEX Reflections and Best Practices Guide contains additional practical advice on conducting effective hybrid meetings as part of an inclusive approach.

Onboarding Implementation strategies
Considerations for Human Resources

This section contains several ideas and best practices that can be scaled and tailored to the capacity of each organization!

Successful executive onboarding requires close collaboration between all human resources disciplines and the hiring executives. These teams should work together to ensure seamless transitions and provide an integrated experience for new executives. HR should be showcased as one cohesive team, actively supporting executives throughout the onboarding process using a phased approach over a period of approximately six months. It is recommended that a single point of contact in HR (often executive services in larger organizations) be given to a new executive hire, and that the new hire be paired with a senior leader who can act as an onboarding peer ("Buddy") and ally who will help accelerate the onboarding experience of the executive.

To avoid overwhelming new executives with information, it is essential to define must-know information versus good to know and resources that can be consulted as needed. These resources can be in the form of concise guides, checklists, or online modules that new executives can access whenever they require specific information or guidance, allowing them to learn and apply knowledge at their own pace, improving their overall onboarding experience.

Understanding the timing and nuances of the executive performance and talent management cycle for executives is also critical. Small, targeted sessions by HR can serve as reminders to executives about how the process and available tools work within their organization.

Example of a Comprehensive Executive Onboarding Program at an Organizational Level

Pre-Arrival or Day 1

- Welcome email

- Sharing of comprehensive onboarding guide

- Identification of an organizational "buddy", ideally at a more senior level, and not in the same sector/branch as the new executive, and who knows the organization and its culture really well

- Equipment, system access, delegation authorities and accommodations are in place

First Weeks

- Personalized meet and greet meeting between HR and executive, especially for senior leaders and executives that are new to the public service

- Learning roadmap and overview of services and resources available

- Provide information on performance and talent management cycle and encourage senior leaders responsible for managing executives to provide clear and measurable written commitments at the outset

- Clearly state expectations in terms of expected leadership behaviours, IDEAA[1], the CTA[2] and values and ethics (culture)

- Offer group orientation sessions on what it means to be an executive and invite senior leaders to share leadership stories

First 3 Months

- Orientation sessions for new executives

- Meet and greet with senior leaders

- Pulse check with executives – How are they doing?

- Introduction of APEX mandate and services, and ambassador in their organization

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[1] Inclusion, Diversity, Employment Equity, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism (IDEAA)
[2] Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service - Privy Council Office - Canada.ca

- Ensure key mandatory training is on track by executive

- Proactive efforts to speed up transfer of files if new to the department

- Pay attention to special accommodations needs and requirements

First 6 Months

- Personalized HR sessions with executives on the health of their organization

- Conversations for breakthroughs and possibilities – How's the executive doing? Would coaching or mentoring be beneficial?

- Networking activities

Fiscal Year

- Regularly and proactively share with APEX the names of new executives for the recognition of entry into the executive ranks annual event

- Orientation session with executives on how year-end performance management and talent management discussions work

- Post-onboarding considerations

- Remind executives of their specific accountabilities with respect to the climate they are creating as leaders

- Consider, as appropriate, and in discussions with the hiring manager, the need for leadership style and climate assessments

Considerations for Executives Responsible for the Hiring Process

As previously referenced in this guide, the executive onboarding experience starts with the hiring process. You have selected the best candidate for your organization, now is the time to deliver on the promise made during the hiring process and show people-centric leadership practices in action!

Pre-arrival considerations

- Carefully prepare your communications strategy - how will the appointment be received? Are there any considerations that should be flagged? It will be important to manage any issues in advance of the new executive's arrival.

- Discuss strategic onboarding with your executive team – make it a priority to create a welcoming environment – set clear expectations in terms of expected behaviours and how the entire management team can provide a supporting and caring environment. Focus on concrete actions to build inclusion and sense of belonging from day one. Pay particular attention to new Indigenous, Black or racialized people and persons with disabilities and ensure that your executive teams value and implement anti-racist and inclusive practices, as per the Call to Action. Promote [training and learning opportunities](#) in this area.

- Assign them a branch or sector "buddy" that will show them how the team operates, where processes are located, where they can find information about the entire branch and organization, the current culture (such as PSES results, diversity and inclusion surveys, anti-racism surveys, etc.), governance, how decisions are made, etc.

- Look at your current onboarding practices and existing documentation. Are there any gaps? Are there any people management frameworks, team charters, operational plans, budgets, HR overviews (organizational charts, vacancies, workforce demographics, grievances or other labour relations issues, inclusion and anti-racism initiatives), checklists, corporate presentations to assemble in a Branch or Sector onboarding guide? Be mindful not to overload the new executive with non-critical information at this point.

- Ask yourself key questions: have you been open and transparent during the hiring process about your vision for the team, the mandate, key immediate priorities, and objectives? If not, prepare your conversation ahead of time to provide early guidance on performance management objectives. Give some thought to what a preliminary briefing on the health of their organization, from your perspective, would look like. Any challenges in attracting and retaining members of employment equity groups?

Upon the executives' arrival

- Be prepared to have a discussion on values and ethics, including health, wellness, inclusion and anti-racism, and expected behaviours in this area. Make your executives feel comfortable asking all sorts of questions and creating an environment where they are accepted and feel safe raising questions without fear of any judgement or reprisal.

- During their first few months, make time and space for regular/frequent discussions and interactions. Prioritize relationship building and genuinely care about their onboarding experience and listen to what they are saying they need to succeed during this transition period. Tailor your approach to their specific needs.

- Take every opportunity to introduce new executives to team members, peers, colleagues, and senior management. Organize conversations on psychologically safe approaches, workload management, mental health, wellbeing, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in the workplace considerations. Put organizational culture on the agenda.

- Develop together their priorities in terms of mandatory and on-the-job training requirements.

Keep in mind…

- Consider having a return to work strategy that will help re-integrate executives returning from various types of leave. Stay in regular contact when appropriate. These employees aren't often included in executive onboarding efforts, but their transitions can be just as challenging as those faced by new hires.

- Offer onboarding support to employees who are acting in an executive role for a few months, and clearly articulate expectations while providing support. Ensure transparency with respect to talent management and succession planning. Be clear and honest if you have no plans to appoint them beyond the acting period and articulate why.

Example of a Comprehensive Executive Onboarding Program at a Sector or Branch Level – Led by Executives Responsible for the Hiring Process*

Pre-Arrival or Day 1

- Welcome email and communications strategy to announce the arrival – Co-create it with the executive onboarding

- Adjust pre-onboarding activities to individual needs. Some like to receive pre-reading material, meet and greet colleagues and employees in advance

- Sharing of sector/branch onboarding guide(s), briefing books, people management frameworks, org charts, LR issues, etc.

- Assign branch or sector "buddy"

First Weeks

- Personalized meet and greet between the hiring manager and new executive

- Preliminary discussion on key mandate and deliverables

- Provide clear written commitments and results that the executive will be responsible for that will tie into the talent and performance management discussion at the end of the year, including IDEAA3[3] and the CTA4 [4]

- Prioritization of workload and people management priorities

- Overview of services and resources available at the branch or sector level - ie networking, mentoring, coaching, reverse mentoring, job shadowing, etc

First 3 Months

- Meet and greet with senior leaders in the branch and sector

- Introduction to branch and departmental governance – how decisions are made, etc.

- Regular pulse check with executives – How are they doing?

- Introduction of APEX mandate and services, and ambassador in their organization

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[3] Inclusion, Diversity, Employment Equity, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism (IDEAA)
[4] Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service - Privy Council Office - Canada.ca

- Ensure key mandatory training is on track by executive. Prioritize and adopt risk-based approach

First 6 Months

- Conversations for breakthroughs and possibilities – How's the executive doing? Would coaching or mentoring be beneficial?

- Any gaps in the branch or sector executive's onboarding experience?

Fiscal Year

- Work with HR to include new executives on list to share with APEX for the recognition of entry into the executive ranks annual event

- Provide constructive and transparent feedback to executives, ask for upward feedback

- Assess best practices and gaps in branch or sector onboarding experience

*Integration at this level should be customized to meet the unique needs of executives in their new roles, hence why it should be led by the direct supervisor, supported by sector/branch resources and with HR as applicable.

Considerations for Executives in Onboarding Situations

Take control of your pre-onboarding and onboarding experience and learn to advocate for what you need to succeed, whether in a long-term acting capacity or as an executive onboarding indeterminately in a new role or new to the executive cadre.

If there are no formal or comprehensive programs in your organization or sector, use this playbook as inspiration for creating your own opportunities and suggesting activities that will enrich your onboarding experience.

Start creating your own network at the executive level to get a better sense of the current culture and what is expected at the organizational level, and craft learning path strategies that will work for you. Find communities of practice and colleagues that provide a safe space to share challenges and successes.

In your early days as an executive, leverage all resources and initiatives offered in your organization and within APEX, and consider asking for coaching to help you build your first 90 days as an executive, to accelerate your development, and establish healthy boundaries from the outset.

Through self-reflection during your first year, determine what you need to enhance your effectiveness in an executive role. Confront your beliefs and biases, broaden your perspectives, and be part of additional conversations with various networks and communities of practice. Ask for genuine feedback and be humble. Are there opportunities for you to encourage feedback, both formally and informally, either via leadership assessments or climate surveys, or team building workshops?

Leverage the power of relationships with your manager, colleagues, and employees to enable strong, strategic, and authentic discussions that will propel you to new heights through collaborative leadership practices.

At the heart of building a culture of care and psychological health and safety is building trust, setting the stage for open and honest two-way discussions that identify barriers to success, and learning opportunities for growth and development. Remember this for yourself and promote this culture in your team.

Example of a Proactive Executive Onboarding Strategy – Led by Executives Themselves

Pre-Arrival or Day 1

- Proactive outreach to hiring manager to ask any top-of-mind questions before your arrival

- Ask about communications strategy – Offer to co-create the welcome email if appropriate

- Make sure to let your hiring manager know of any accommodation or requirement for your successful onboarding

- Advocate for what you need!

- If appropriate, take the opportunity to have a meet and greet with key employees or colleagues prior to your arrival

- Ask for any onboarding toolkit, checklist or people management framework, team charter, operational plan, reporting for the current year, budget information, team/workforce demographic information, PSES results, org charts, LR issues, etc.

- Ask if a branch buddy can be assigned to you over the next few weeks

First Weeks

- Take every opportunity in your first weeks to meet your supervisor, colleagues, and your direct reports

- Initiate preliminary discussions with your supervisor on performance management objective, mandate, expectations

- Work with HR to understand how the talent management process works for executives and how IDEAA [5] principles are integrated into HR practices.

- Based on information received from HR, prioritize your learning activities over the next year

- Evaluate and prioritize people management priorities (any critical staffing needed, issues to manage, HR decisions to be made, targeted EE processes to close representation gaps, etc.)

- Prioritize your onboarding activities and strike the right balance with everything else you have to do and learn in your first months

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[5] Inclusion, Diversity, Employment Equity, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism (IDEAA)

- Build your 90-day plan in the role and look for opportunities to co-create it with your manager

- Ask if mentoring, coaching or sponsorship is available

First Three Months

- Focus on building relationships and people management strategies with your direct reports

- Ask for a briefing from HR on the health of your organization. Proactively address perceptions, look for opportunities for early wins on addressing concerns. Look at the demographics of your team: who's not at your table?

- Look for opportunities to network and interact with senior leaders in your branch, sector or organization depending on your role and need to establish key connections with stakeholders and partners

- Get introduced to branch and departmental governance and your role in it

- If an organizational buddy hasn't been assigned to you, ask HR if one could be assigned to you. Or you may proactively seek one yourself

- Practice self-reflection and self-care – How am I doing? What do I need to continue, stop or do differently?

- Don't hesitate to leverage learning opportunities and services offered by APEX, your professional association

First Six Months

- Conversations for breakthroughs and possibilities – How am I doing? Would coaching or mentoring be beneficial?

- Establish regular conversations with direct reports, peers and your supervisor and ask for feedback

- Any gaps in my onboarding experience- How am I feeling?

- Ensure you are on track with key mandatory training. Prioritize and adopt risk-based approach in collaboration with your manager

Fiscal Year

- Work with your manager and HR to have your name included on the list of new executives that is shared annually with APEX for the recognition of entry into the executive ranks annual event

- Seek and be prepared to receive constructive feedback on your first year as an executive. Ask questions around how performance and talent management discussions work

- Integrate the feedback in your learning and development plan for next year

APEX's Role in Supporting Executive Strategic Onboarding

APEX is keenly focused on supporting executives to successfully navigate and excel throughout their career journey, whether they are new to the executive cadre or to the public service or are onboarding in a more senior role. We rely on our Confidential Advisory Services for free advice, practical tools and resources, and intelligence from our leadership surveys, Executive Work and Health Study, and other relevant data to ensure a specific focus on the wellness and leadership development of executives. We also leverage partnerships with external stakeholders to deliver our programming that provides training, support, and a mentoring network to specifically assist new executives. We partner with various HR teams and various departments for the delivery of onboarding sessions or information to executives and we rely on our network of APEX ambassadors to be allies in this area. We are also proud of our partnership with the regional councils to encourage networking and meaningful connections amongst regional executives, better support them and tailor our events and services to their needs.

Visit our New Executives Programs and Events Page to see what we have planned for new executives!

Our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility webpage provides valuable resources to connect with diversity networks as well as resources for supporting accessibility- all in one place.

Every year, in November, APEX hosts the Recognition of Entry into the Executive Ranks Ceremony – a highly anticipated in-person event that provides an incredible learning and networking opportunity. In addition, new executives will benefit from a free membership in their first year.

APEX is also pleased to partner with the Canada School of Public Service and the National Managers Community (NMG) for specific activities aimed at aspiring executives. APEX regularly hosts panel discussions with seasoned leaders on making the leap to the executive ranks. Panelists share observations and opinions on the role of executives and the challenges and opportunities of the transition. These facilitated discussions also offer candid insights and inspirations to aspiring and new executives to prepare for the change in role, mindset, and responsibilities. To complement the sessions, a joint Practical Guide for Aspiring Executives was developed between APEX and the NMC.

Final Thoughts

We hope that you found this playbook useful and inspiring! Successful executive onboarding is a shared experience and responsibility. Use it as a reference to leverage best practices and build upon your existing onboarding activities to propel executives to their peak performance in a shortened timeframe and challenge the status quo.

Do not hesitate to reach out to APEX Advisory Services for more information on any of the proposed best practices mentioned in this guide, share additional practices, and look for opportunities to enrich your various onboarding initiatives or personal experiences as an executive.

''There is absolutely no step more important in bringing on a new executive than that of onboarding. A new executive will feel isolated or included based on the onboarding provided in their early days. This will shape the health and trajectory of their career journey.''

-   APEX CEO