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Race to the Start: A Transition in Action

The time between an election and an inauguration—commonly referred to as “the transition”—is an important phase in any new governorship. During this time, policy priorities are shaped and an administration is built from the ground up.

Just days after Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner’s election, Civic Consulting Alliance was asked to lead a comprehensive strategic assessment of policy and operational issues facing the incoming administration.

Civic Consulting Alliance mobilized the private sector, which provided more than 40 consultants from eight partner firms. In a massive collaboration, these firms curated the very best strategic insight from constituencies around the state. In the process, the team engaged 132 committee members across 12 functional areas to provide guidance.

The result was one of the most comprehensive transition plans ever produced at the state level for an incoming governor.

Challenge

One of the most vulnerable moments for any government—at any level—is the transition from one chief executive to the next. Overnight, a campaign team turns its focus from winning an election to running a government. This can be a disorienting process. A slow or cumbersome transition will, at best, put a new administration on its hind legs from the start. At worst, critical day-to-day operations can be disrupted.

At the federal level, presidential candidates receive preparatory briefings, office space and transition staff many months before the election. At the state level, the process is less defined.

The challenges facing any governor-elect are daunting. Beyond the appointments and legislative strategy, there are major policy and operational considerations. Newly-appointed agency directors have their own transitions to manage and functional learning curves to climb. How does a new administration start to understand, and then manage, Illinois’ \$66 billion budget—inherited virtually overnight?

Beyond the budget and policy decisions, the administration must listen to, and represent, constituencies with diverse interests and opinions across the state.

The transition timeline is unforgiving. In our last gubernatorial election, the new administration had just 44 business days to get to the starting line.

Action

Just after the election, Governor-elect Rauner’s team contacted Civic Consulting Alliance and asked for assistance mobilizing an operation the scope and scale of which had never been attempted before in Illinois. The objective of the effort was to identify challenges and opportunities in policy and operations, and to engage hundreds of stakeholders, to help the new administration hit the ground running on behalf of every resident of the State.

Civic Consulting Alliance immediately began to work on what it’s done best for 25 years: Mobilizing the private sector to bring pro bono expertise and capacity to a public interest initiative. In a matter of days,

Over

Fast Facts

Team and Work:

- 44 policy co-chairs
- 132 committee members
- More than 40 consultants (33 full-time) from eight partner firms
- 1,400 pages of policy memos reviewed
- 2,500 idea submissions reviewed

28 transition co-chairs were appointed across 12 functional areas:

- Agriculture
- Economic Development
- Education
- Emergency Management
- Energy, Environment, Utilities and Natural Resources
- Health and Human Services
- Information Technology
- Infrastructure
- Intergovernmental Efficiencies and Local Government
- Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
- Operations
- Veterans

44 policy co-chairs and 132 committee members representing a wide cross section of Illinois stakeholders and interested parties were announced shortly thereafter. Altogether, more than 40 consultants (33 full-time) from eight partner firms, including Accenture, Bain & Company, The Boston Consulting Group, Colliers International, Deloitte LLP, EY, Leff Communications and McKinsey & Company, contributed their time and expertise to manage this effort.

The teams interviewed hundreds of experts, requested and read more than 1,400 pages of policy memos, and reviewed more than 2,500 ideas submitted by the general public through a website. Collectively, they dedicated thousands of hours to identifying promising strategies from other states, developing insights and drafting recommendations.

From the outset, the teams were guided by several principles: to be comprehensive in evaluating policies; to be rigorous and fact-based in their analyses; and to be inclusive and nonpartisan, ensuring that promising ideas were considered regardless of the source.

Results

On January 9, the team published a report, "Building a Better Illinois: Report of the Transition Co-chairs to the Governor-elect," which provided a framework for the new administration. The report contained a new vision for Illinois in each of the 12 policy areas, 46 critical strategies for each area, and 81 ideas that the administration could act on in its first hundred days.

The teams also hosted transition briefings for the new directors appointed by the Governor, covering both policy and operations. For each, the teams produced a comprehensive onboarding packet, as well as a framework for the transformation of the State's IT and operational capabilities.

There is a great American tradition of wishing the best for a new administration after a hard-fought campaign. But wishing, to steal a phrase, is not a strategy. Thanks to an extraordinary effort by a host of civic-minded private-sector companies and hundreds of residents from across the state, the Illinois Governor and his administration came to the starting line with a wealth of information and perspective and hit the ground running.

Partners

Accenture
Bain & Company
The Boston Consulting Group
Colliers International
Deloitte LLP
EY
Leff Communications
McKinsey & Company