Gov Lab

A Gubernatorial Transition Manual

FROM PRIMARY DAY THROUGH THE FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

A Gubernatorial Transition Manual: From Primary Day to Election Day

Winning a gubernatorial election is a monumental achievement that requires exceptional skill, experience, and qualifications. Yet, entering office brings a set of profound—often new—challenges. Governors face relentless scrutiny, severe time constraints, and immense public pressure. They must transform ambitious campaign promises into immediate, impactful results.

The transition lays the groundwork to achieve those results. This manual, and GovLab's customized services, will help you ensure it is successful.

At GovLab, we work with pro-democracy gubernatorial candidates and Governors—from primary day to Inauguration Day and through the first year—to implement transitions and build the infrastructure needed to govern effectively. Learn more at www.gov-lab.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This manual was a collaborative effort, drawing on the collective wisdom of former governors, transition directors, and senior executive staff who have successfully navigated the complexities of political handovers. Their insights helped us produce a guide that is both practical and strategically sound.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the following primary authors and contributors whose expertise made this resource possible.

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This manual is a testament to the shared commitment of these individuals to fostering successful leadership transitions and effective governance.

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A Note to Our Readers: This manual is intended solely for informational, educational, and operational guidance purposes. Nothing contained in this manual should be construed as legal advice, nor should it be relied upon as a substitute for consultation with qualified legal counsel.

A MESSAGE FOR THE CANDIDATE

Today, you are a candidate. Soon you may be governor. This manual will help you and your staff prepare for that reality.

There are three efforts to consider: the **campaign, transition,** and **governing.** Though distinct, considering them in parallel readies you for the future.

This manual is based on advice from people who have walked in your shoes—former governors, transition leaders, and chiefs of staff. Each state varies greatly, and there's no one "right way." But with this resource, you'll be better prepared as you determine the best transition approach—and GovLab coaches are also available to help you customize to your state.

This manual highlights strategies, tactics, and tips to bolster your transition and, once in office, your governing. At the highest level, our advice is to:

- **Embed your values and priorities into transition structures.** Define your approach early so you can effectively embed your values, priorities, and supporting structures into your transition and administration, and be ready for governing on day one.
- **Establish pre-election transition infrastructure.** Prepare the transition plan, leadership team, and related infrastructure before Election Day so you're ready to launch immediately upon winning.
- **Stand up official transition post-election and transfer campaign assets.** Once you win the election, take a victory lap, quickly assess and transfer campaign assets that will support the transition effort, launch the official transition, and unwind the campaign.
- **Launch long-term structures to achieve your goals.** Turn your vision into reality by setting clear goals, deploying impactful strategies and communications, and building the management and stakeholder engagement systems to get it all done.

Right now, winning should remain your primary focus. Most of this manual covers **tactical work we recommend you place in the hands of a trusted, transition-oriented advisor** (*not* your campaign manager, who must remain laser-focused on your campaign). Choose someone who can begin discreetly implementing critical steps, while you **focus on winning.** Soon this manual will also be a resource for your transition director, and, later, your chief of staff.

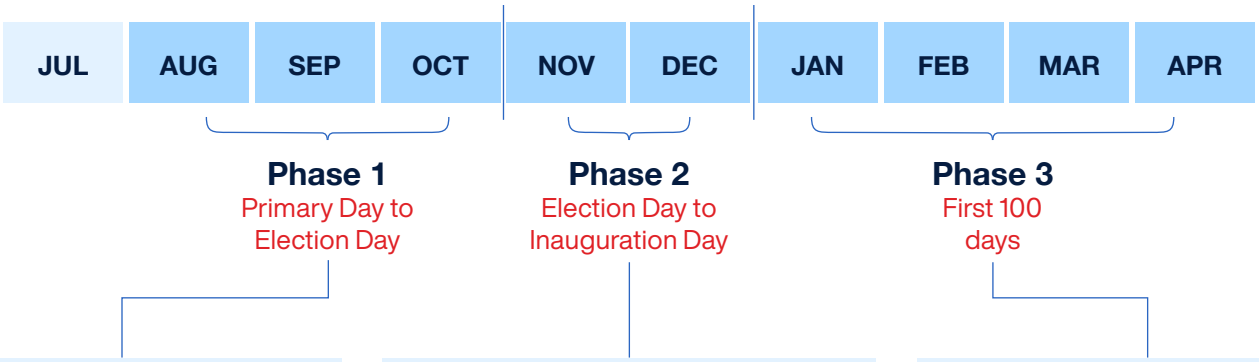
There are sections written specifically for you. Skim the manual and keep an eye out for sections that say "For the Candidate," "For the Governor-Elect," and "For the Governor."

For your reference, we've also included a high-level overview of milestones for your transition, starting from primary day through your first 100 days.

SAMPLE TRANSITION TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

Gubernatorial Transition Milestones

PRIMARY DAY THROUGH FIRST 100 DAYS



MILESTONES

August
- Transition Director Hired
- Transition Values, Goals & Plan Set

September
- Transition Leadership Hired
- Landing Team Members Identified

October
- Office Space Secured & Website Developed
- State Transition Lead Identified
- Landing Team Members Set
- Transition Team Org Chart & Hires Identified

MILESTONES

November
- Chief of Staff Hired
- Official Transition Launched
- Governor & Governor-Elect Meeting
- Values Shared
- Landing Teams Activated
- Exec Office & Agency Staff Hired
- Honorary & Steering Committees Formed
- Inauguration & Activities Planned

December
- Exec Office & Agency Staff Hired
- Campaign Wound Down & Select Infrastructure Kept
- Cabinet Orientation
- Workflows & Decision-Making Processes Established
- Strategy to Advance Priorities Set

MILESTONES

January
- Budget Final
- Exec Office & Agency Roles Set
- Legislative, Communications & Stakeholder Strategies Activated
- Year 1 Goals Defined & Tracking Systems Built

February
- Goals to Actuals Tracked

March/April
- First 100 Days Accomplishments Shared

1. From Primary Day To Election Day

TRANSITION TEAM BASICS

FOR THE CANDIDATE

Congrats! You won the primary. Now, you will turn your attention to the general election.

Your transition into elected office may seem far away, but it's right around the corner. Readying yourself for an effective transition now will save significant time and energy later.

A core **Transition Team builds transition infrastructure prior to Election Day** so you can launch the effort immediately upon your victory and hit the ground running on day one. The Transition Team will oversee transition staff and stakeholders in numerous roles; identify, recruit, and onboard your administrative personnel; help you set goals for your first 100 days in office; and deliver a successful inauguration.

Though each transition varies in size, scope, and level of formality, the roles and functions should be clear, internally and externally (post-election). Depending on your state's laws and compliance rules, pre-election Transition Team members may be: volunteers, paid for with private funds, paid for by state transition funds, or "on loan" from their current employers (state or other government, private sector, nonprofit, philanthropy, etc.).

You still need to win the election, so your attention—and the full attention of the campaign staff—should be centered on that task. To safeguard this critical work, **the transition should *not* be seen as an extension of your campaign** and **very few campaign workers should have a role or line of sight.** Compartmentalize your transition-related briefings and decision-making to keep you and campaign staff focused on the general election.

To make this possible, choose pre-election transition staff that you trust and give them agency to advance your vision. The key: **hire a transition director who can operate independently.**

A Note About Structure

Don't get hung up on the perfect structure. Make sure to put the key functions in place and scale them based on your needs and resources.

GovLab coaches can help you tailor your structure based on your context.

Hiring a Transition Director

Your transition director is the bridge between the current state (your campaign) and the future state (your tenure as Governor). The transition director leads the planning and execution of all activities from late campaign through swearing in. They ensure a seamless and efficient transition by aligning with you and coordinating on personnel decisions, policy development, stakeholder engagement and operations.

The Director should typically be **hired in August**, depending on your primary. Prior to Election Day, the transition director must work with your campaign manager to ensure any time you devote to transition decision-making is well used and not a distraction from the election.

An effective transition director balances speed and stability, while reinforcing your values. The Director has good judgment and high emotional intelligence. They understand your pressures, can balance outgoing and incoming leaders, and center your priorities. They adeptly manage the transition work, personnel, and stakeholders all at once, usually in less than 60 days. Their work allows you to take a proactive posture post-election and avoid a feeling of chaos.

Resource: *Job Description Templates*

Confidentiality

Information is currency during a transition. Many people will want the inside scoop. Confidentiality is critical. **Decide if you want transition staff to sign non-disclosure agreements.**

FOR THE NEWLY-HIRED TRANSITION DIRECTOR

You are a critical factor in the success of this transition. In a high-stakes race against time, your mandate is to lead, build, and execute.

Your responsibilities will include:

- **Establishing Transition Infrastructure:** Planning and building the transition framework.
- **Recruiting Top Talent:** Hiring transition staff, the Executive Office, and incoming Cabinet.
- **Launching Transition Teams:** Creating and managing functional transition teams and stakeholder committees.
- **Anchoring the Culture:** Defining and embedding the candidate/Governor-Elect's core values across the operation.
- **Driving Strategic Priorities:** Translating campaign promises into actionable goals, shaping the narrative and advancing an engagement strategy.
- **Planning the Inauguration:** Planning a seamless and impactful inaugural celebration.
- **Advising Leadership:** Guiding and supporting the candidate or Governor-Elect through hundreds of high-stakes decisions.

Prior to Election Day, you will do this work largely independently while the candidate focuses on winning the campaign.

This manual is organized chronologically, with the vast majority of the text written for you. Section 1, "From Primary Day to Election Day," and Section 2, "From Election Day to Inauguration Day," will be most relevant to your work. The subsections tailored for the candidate, Governor-Elect, and Governor, or the chief of staff are clearly cabined and labeled. Read the complete manual for full situational awareness.

Each section offers examples of approaches and frameworks other transitions have advanced—org charts, committee structures, hiring processes, etc. Don't be put off if these resources differ from your experience or needs. There's rarely one right way. Reach out to a GovLab coach for help adapting these resources.

We are deeply invested in your success.

HIRING OTHER PRE-ELECTION ROLES

The transition director will build a Transition Leadership Team. Core transition positions include a chief operating officer, deputy director, personnel director, and a lawyer. Their duties are outlined in the *Pre-Election Transition Roles chart.*

Note: It's essential that, in addition to the specific qualifications for the role, **some members of the Transition Leadership Team understand state government** and how it functions. The size and scope of the pre-election and official transition will influence budget needs and impacts.

PRE-ELECTION TRANSITION ROLES

Pre-Election Transition Role	Job Duties
Transition Director	• Identify vision and strategy for transition and first 100 days • Create transition structure • Establish reporting lines • Hire transition staff and chief of staff (if desired pre-election)
Deputy Transition Director	• Identify talent and support transition director • Create and manage stakeholder outreach plan • Establish structure and staffing for committees
Chief Operating Officer	• Develop policies and procedures for transition • Manage transition budget, payroll, and cybersecurity • Document management and archives • Link to administration back-office team

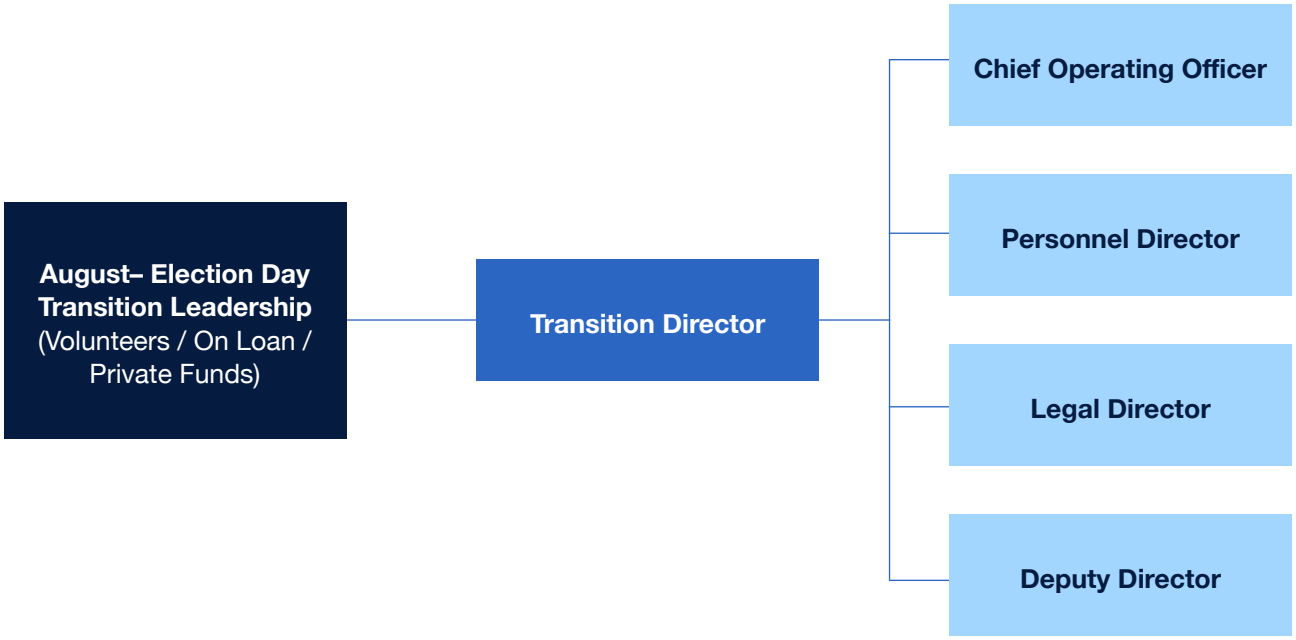
Personnel Director	• Establish recruitment and hiring processes and standards • Identify key roles to be filled post election • Draft job descriptions
Legal Director	• Provide legal guidance • Assess risk, process contracts and prepare executive orders • Draft requests to outgoing administration department heads
Other: • **Policy Director** • **Communications Director** • **Personnel Associate**	*The more infrastructure you build out pre-election, the more effective the official transition will be. These may be other roles to consider, based on your resources.*

TRANSITION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

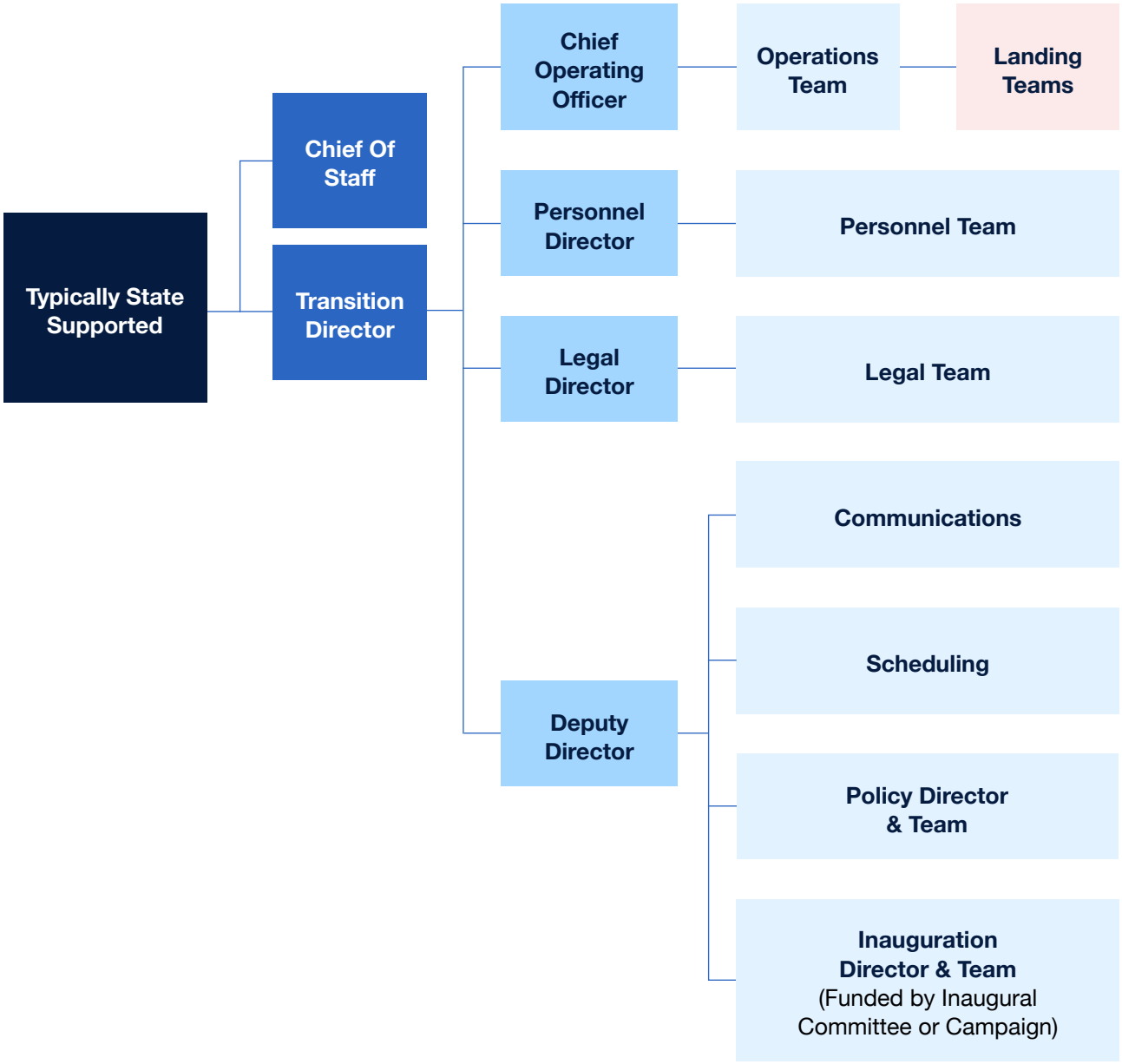
The transition is split into two phases: pre-election and post-election. From Primary Day to Election Day, the transition director and transition leadership will work on a plan to launch the transition the morning after the election.

They'll hold quiet conversations with trusted leaders and potential staff who will provide communications, personnel, policy, and scheduling support. Post-election, the directors of each function will set expectations and goals for transition outcomes, and will manage a team (and potentially committees) to achieve them.

SAMPLE PRE-ELECTION DAY TRANSITION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



SAMPLE POST-ELECTION DAY TRANSITION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



FOR THE CANDIDATE

Many candidates ask: *Should my campaign manager be my transition director?*

The short answer: Probably not.

You want your campaign manager 100% focused on winning the election. Taking their eye off winning to think about transition details could cost you your campaign.

Your Campaign Manager's Role

Pre-election, your campaign manager should be wired to act quickly, have complete message discipline, and excel at short term decision-making.

The transition director should think in longer-term horizons, drawing on their operational depth to build and assemble teams and establish inclusive processes.

Even if your campaign manager can shift their mindset, behaviors, and orientation to excel as a transition director, having them in that role draws valuable resources away from your campaign in the homestretch.

Campaign managers can have a role in the transition post-election. They know better than anyone the promises you've made, your campaign assets, and the most compelling messages. The campaign manager has also been the primary contact for many external stakeholders.

Many campaign managers become transition senior advisors or lead inaugural efforts post-campaign. But keep in mind that your campaign manager will need to close out the campaign before moving onto the transition or other initiatives.

Keeping these two roles separate also reduces burnout and helps signal a shift from campaigning to governing.

Early Chief of Staff Questions

You may also be considering whether your campaign manager should be your chief of staff, or if you should hire your chief of staff pre-election. We address those questions in Section 2, but you may want to review the content now to keep in mind as you consider these questions. A brief summary of our advice is that we recommend that you reflect on what type of leader you aim to be and the role of Governor. Then hire a chief of staff to complement your orientations. See "Applying Core Values" under "Transition Team Launch."

While we recommend hiring a chief of staff in November, an earlier hire grants the chief of staff more influence and ownership during the transition. Hiring during the transition still provides sufficient time for the chief of staff to orient and oversee key work. If the chief of staff waits to start until Inauguration Day, their initial focus will shift to establishing the systems, structures, and goals for the first 100 days.

Here's the pre-election transition timeline:

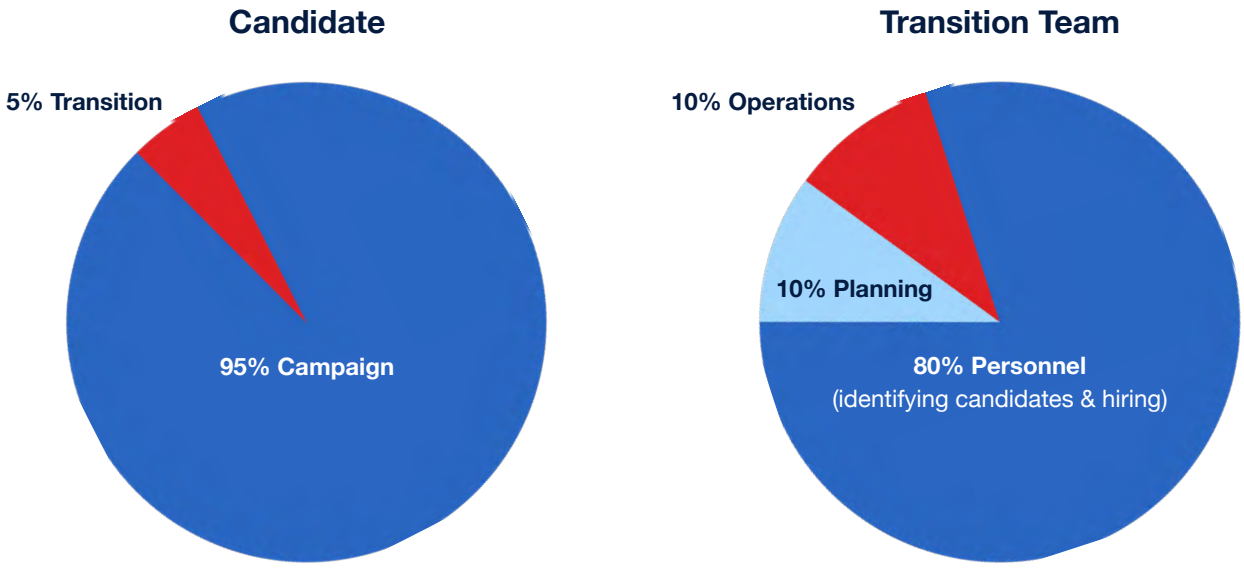
- **August:** The transition kicks off with a focus on hiring the transition director, transition leadership, and codifying the candidate's values.
- **September and October:** Planning ramps up. The transition director and team works to define the transition budget, roles, committees, Landing Teams, and infrastructure.

TRANSITION ROADMAP

August	September	October	November	December
Identify • Values • Transition Director • Transition Leadership Team	**Plan** • Budget • Positions Needed • Committee Structure	**Plan** • Website Development • Operational Needs • Landing & Official Transitions Teams • Committee Chairs • Current Governor Meeting	**Execute** • Website Launch • Hiring Chief of Staff, Cabinet & Exec Office • Committee Engagement • Communications • Policy & Budget Recommendations • Stakeholder Engagement • Inauguration Prep	**Execute** • Hiring • Committee Engagement • Communications • Policy & Budget Decisions • Stakeholder Engagement • Inauguration Prep

During the pre-election transition, the candidate and Transition Team time may be broken down like this:

PRE-ELECTION TIME BREAKDOWN FOR CANDIDATE AND TRANSITION TEAM



READYING LANDING TEAMS

Within a day or two of Election Day, the transition director will deploy Landing Teams to the state agencies. These teams will **compile baseline information on each department**, including organizational charts, number of employees, type of employees, liabilities, contracts, etc. Landing Teams should report that information to the Transition Team and then disband within one to two weeks.

More information on launching Landing Teams is in "Establishing Support Functions".

Determine in advance:

1. Whether to have a single Landing Team or multiple teams
2. Who the team(s) will report to
3. Who will be on the team(s)

The Landing Teams' members should be familiar with the systems of state government. Ideally, they would also have working knowledge of the department they are deployed to.

Line up the Landing Teams' members before Election Day so they can **begin their work immediately the day after the election.**

FOR THE CANDIDATE

Your values are the core beliefs and principles that guide your priorities, actions, and decisions. **They represent you at your best, they differentiate you, and they describe how you operate.** Your values should shape your policies, strategies, structures, and personnel decisions. They also influence whom you accept money from and whom you partner with.

Defining Your Values

You made your values explicit during the campaign. **Some will translate well to the transition and your administration—others will not.** For example, if you value a "sense of urgency," during the campaign, you may encourage quick resource shifts to maximize relevance, knowing adjustments can be made in real time. During the transition, you may push for prioritization and manage the team to meet tight deadlines. In governing, you may lead your team to deliver results at a pace the public can feel.

An example of a value that may not translate well is "accessible." On the campaign, you may have said "yes" to most events and stayed on site until you answered every question. On the transition, you'll ruthlessly prioritize a crush of public requests. Once governing, you and your team will say "yes" to events selectively and strategically.

Embedding Values in the Transition

Spend a few minutes defining your values and considering which you will prioritize. Values are different from goals. They are your compass as you advance your work together. Your Transition Team will embed them into the fabric of the transition and your chief of staff will model these values once governing.

SAMPLE VALUES

Values	Defined As	What It Looks Like
Transparency	Being open to public scrutiny	• Publicly share progress to goals • Engage the press and constituents • Explain why a decision was made
Good Governance	Centering facts, the rule of law, and a belief in government	• Value perspectives of public servants and experts • Consider data in decision-making • Center "customer" experience • Assess impact on taxpayer dollars
Respect	Due regard for others	• Treat people the way you want to be treated • Listen to dissent
Inclusion	Welcoming multiple perspectives and backgrounds	• Engage diverse stakeholders • Demonstrate interest in serving all residents statewide (not just those who voted for you) • Ensure staff reflects state demographics
Sense of Urgency	Moving quickly and purposefully	• Set ambitious deadlines • Drive work to completion • Make timely decisions
Discretion	Using good judgment; operating with care	• Hold confidential information • Consider impacts of actions

Resource: *Defining Your Values Worksheet and Sample*

WEBSITE AND PUBLIC RECORDS

Ideally, the transition **website will go "live" the night the candidate is declared the winner** (or the next morning). The purpose of the site is to:

- Share **information** about the transition
- Signal the Governor-Elect's **values**
- Help shape the administration's **narrative**
- Attract **candidates** (potential appointees and staff)

It also offers **transparency** around transition functions.

The transition website announces open positions and accepts applications. It may include transition timelines, progress reports and committee information, as well as information about the inauguration and related public events.

Develop the transition website in August or September. Plan for all data to be transferred to a state-sponsored server eventually. Integrate public records and retention laws into the build. In some states, the transition website's development must be coordinated with the state technology department.

Ensure the Transition Team understands the implications of complying with public records statutes and that their email and any data they produce may become publicly available. This may necessitate the use of a separate email domain from the campaign. The legal advisor can offer counsel and brief transition staff on this.

COMMITTEE MODELS

While the Transition Team focuses on functionally standing up the new administration, transition committees provide additional support, advice, resources, and recommendations, including on cabinet members. **They are a great place to engage volunteers and donors** eager to remain involved post-campaign.

If the Governor-Elect decides to form transition committees, the first step is determining which type.

- **Honorary Committees:** Are symbolic in nature, bring donors and respected names to the transition, demonstrate broad support, and offer advice and resources.
- **Steering Committees:** Have defined expectations and outcomes and engage heavily with the official Transition Team.

Honorary Committees **can be big and minimally (but planfully) staffed.** Designated transition leadership will stay in regular communication with the committees. Staff will provide updates, seek advice on topics within their areas of expertise, and request resources as appropriate. The committees will not make decisions, but will have set meeting schedules and clear expectations. Transition committees are often engaged in inauguration planning.

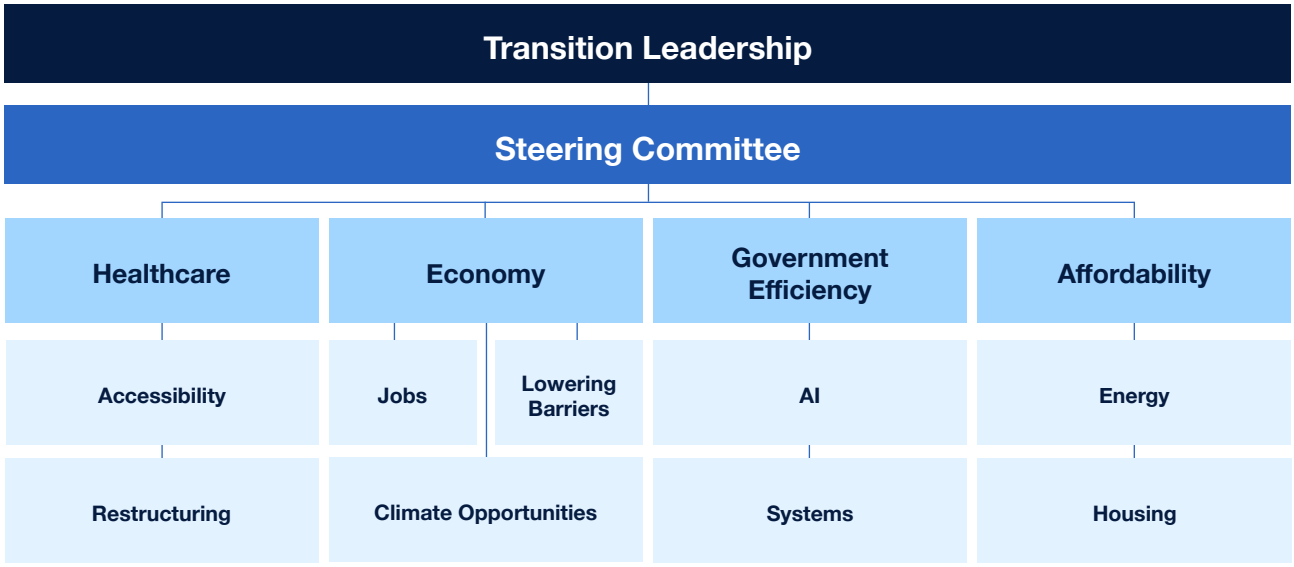
Steering Committees **require structure and staffing.** They have a specific charge and scope and actively engage with the official Transition Team, meeting regularly and reporting on progress to goals. They are often topic-based and policy-focused. For example, if the Governor-Elect's top priorities are healthcare, the economy and government efficiency, transition leadership may create a Steering Committee on each topic, charging the committees with providing the Transition Team with policy and budget recommendations. The recommendations could shape the administration's budget proposal to the Legislature, future policy and legislation, and/or agency initiatives.

Alternatively, committees could be organized by agency instead of by topic, focused on personnel, policy, and outcomes for that agency.

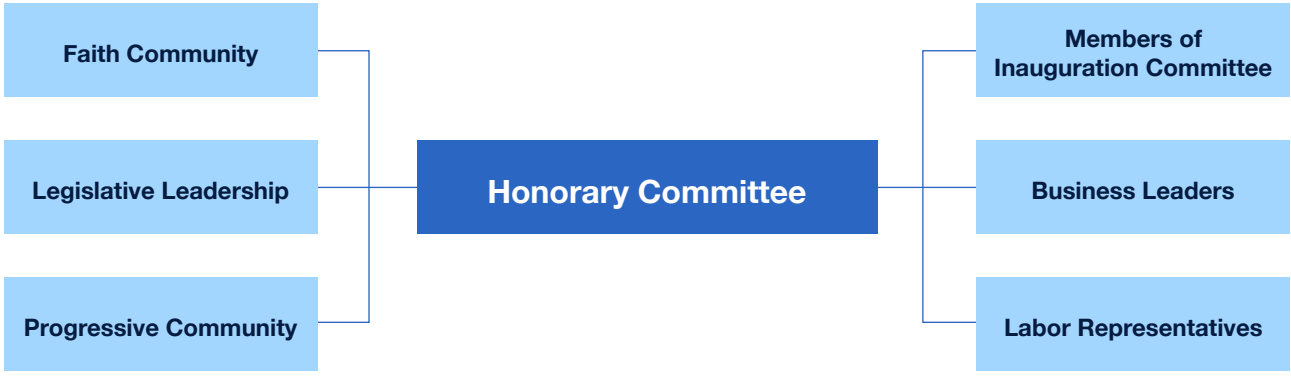
All committees should include members from various geographies, key constituencies, important coalitions, and **represent the demographic diversity of the state.** Serving on these committees is a public honor. Carefully consider who to invite and vet them well. Avoid the appearance of favoritism and conflicts of interest. Anticipate and plan for media reactions. Negative stories about committee members' backgrounds can disrupt progress. Once committee members have been selected, they should be briefed on expectations related to confidentiality, social media, and speaking to the media.

Once committees are set, select and announce chairs or co-chairs (and potentially subcommittee chairs). These announcements should be made soon after Election Day.

STEERING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE EXAMPLE



HONORARY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE EXAMPLE



BUDGET AND OPERATIONS

Most (but not all) states allocate funds for a gubernatorial transition. The size of the transition budget, often between tens of thousands to several million dollars, depends on the size of the state and the state's tradition. Standard transition expenses include personnel, technology and operational costs. Funding is typically available between the day after the election and the inauguration.

Before you build the transition budget, consider the following questions:

- Will the Governor-Elect want to build a large or small operation?
- Will the Governor-Elect keep most of the current administration's appointees or hire most of the Cabinet?
- Will the transition have office space or technology needs?
- Will the Governor-Elect have a big inauguration with multiple events or will it be a small affair?
- Does the transition need to establish an entity, like a 501c4 or limited liability corporation?

Considering the scope of the transition operation will help the Transition Team gauge expenses.

As part of the transition, it may be necessary to raise non-State money to pay for staffing, outside vendors, and/or inauguration activities not covered by state transition funds. For example, the transition director may want to hire a vendor quickly to vet the Cabinet or Executive Office personnel, offer Steering Committee funds or purchase inaugural "extras" like backdrops, teleprompters, programs, and giveaways. At minimum, the operation will require a pre-election transition secure email system, liability and professional insurance, and website development and management. As you assess your needs, review state laws to understand what is permissible.

Carefully prepare the transition and inauguration budget to determine what can be paid for by state dollars and what will need to be supported through a non-state transition fund.

The current administration has likely designated a team or individual to lead the transition on behalf of the state. Regardless of the candidate's relationship with the current Governor's Office, the state has a workforce that will be dedicated to the transition's success. They typically provide transition office space, computers, a draft budget, and onboarding for employees along with access to operational insights.

Find out who the correct points of contact are in **October**, at least two weeks before Election Day.

Resource: *Transition Budget Templates*

FOR THE CANDIDATE

At this point, you haven't won the election yet, but you expect you will. Here are two important things to consider during the transition.

Meeting Current Administration

Assuming you aren't running against the current Governor, and you trust the person to engage confidentially, **quietly meet with the current Governor and key leaders** prior to Election Day. A successful meeting can shape your access to future information.

While you may soon be the Governor-Elect, remind your team that there is only one Governor. Begin this relationship with respect for the Governor's time in office regardless of political posture or competition. Your first conversation can open the door to institutional knowledge and focus on what they see as unfinished business. **This is a time for listening.**

The meeting is a delicate matter—you don't want to be seen measuring the drapes before you win—so include questions like:

- What should I pay attention to?
- What matters have the most momentum right now?
- What's the biggest opportunity that you see? Greatest risk?
- What keeps you up at night?
- What advice would you give me for the first 100 days?
- What else should I know?

Share that you will have a designee leading your transition, but that you also hope to have further direct conversations with the outgoing Governor during the official transition.

In addition, engage other key state leaders (current or former), such as former chiefs of staff, transition directors, general counsels, or agency secretaries. Proactively seeking their early guidance can yield valuable insights for a successful transition and administration.

The Lieutenant Governor

The role of Lieutenant Governor varies state to state. In some states, the Lieutenant Governor runs on a ticket with the Governor. In others, the Lieutenant runs independently and may be from a different party. A Lieutenant Governor's statutory authority and duties differ state to state. The size and scope of the Office of the Lieutenant Governor may also have budget implications to consider—both in the transition and once in office.

Based on your context, **consider how you will engage the Lieutenant Governor.** If there is trust and alignment, you may invite the Lieutenant Governor to be part of the Cabinet, strategize together, and use the Lieutenant as a proxy. If there's low trust, keep the Lieutenant Governor at a distance.

There is no single, consistent model for engaging the Lieutenant Governor. Be sure to define the relationship you do have. Clarify if there is an executive partnership, portfolio, or policy that the Lieutenant Governor will be the lead on and how they might advise and engage you and your office.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

What if the election is contested and there's no decision on Election Day? Pre-election transition leadership should be ready for this remote possibility.

The candidate's posture during this time of uncertainty will depend on the circumstances. If you believe the candidate won the election and is the Governor-Elect, project confidence in communications and begin a robust transition. If the count is close, consider having the candidate keep a lower profile.

Regardless of the candidate's position, during a recount, litigation, or similar process, **continue to focus on the core needs of the transition: personnel, operations, and legal work.** Policy and legislative work, and all subcommittees can wait, if necessary.

Have a **clear message and a robust communications strategy** that reflects the candidate's posture and signals that they are prepared for governing.

While a recount (or related process) advances, the transition may not have access to state funds. Be prepared to pay staff and any legal fees with private dollars.

FROM PRIMARY DAY TO ELECTION DAY CHECKLIST

Download checklist

- ☐ Draft and communicate values
- ☐ Set transition goals and scope work
- ☐ Build pre-election transition budget
- ☐ Identify how the pre-election transition will be funded
- ☐ Hire transition director in July or August
- ☐ Establish confidentiality policy, including deciding on NDAs
- ☐ Develop official transitional organizational chart
- ☐ Hire Transition Leadership Team:
  - ☐ Deputy transition director
  - ☐ Chief operating officer
  - ☐ Personnel director
  - ☐ Legal advisor
  - ☐ Other positions hired if possible
- ☐ Hold public records training
- ☐ Identify chief of staff candidates and the Landing Teams' Members
- ☐ (If relevant) Scope Steering and Honorary Committee(s)
- ☐ (If relevant) Select Steering and Honorary Committee(s) chairs/co-chairs and members
- ☐ Establish official transition timeline
- ☐ Build transition website
- ☐ (If needed) Secure office space
- ☐ Create transition entity, separating state and private funds
- ☐ Contact state-side transition leads; understand processes and assets
- ☐ Meet with the current Governor (if appropriate) and/or respected experts/leaders
- ☐ Decide on a Lieutenant Governor engagement strategy
- ☐ Establish loose contingency plan for if election is close (recount needed) or contested

2. FROM ELECTION DAY TO INAUGURATION

EXTENDING THE CAMPAIGN'S IMPACT

The campaign is over, but the momentum built and lessons learned live on. The following sections will help the Governor-Elect and transition director take stock of campaign resources and decide which to leverage during the transition and/or governing.

Whether you are the Governor-Elect or the transition director, **review this section quickly, then dive into the more weighty transition material under "Transition Team Launch."**

FOR THE GOVERNOR-ELECT

You did it! Soon, you will be sworn in as Governor. A rare accomplishment and herculean feat.

Your immediate prize is the job of establishing the framework for governing in just a couple short months. The good news—there is a team behind you ready to go!

Taking a Victory Lap

You won! Let the team take a victory lap before winding down the campaign.

The victory lap is an opportunity for you and your team to **put an exclamation point on the strong support you've received** from voters. It lets the public see you immediately welcome them into your administration. There will likely be "insider" stories written about the strategies and tactics you deployed to win the race. Those are very important for your campaign staff to detail and celebrate.

Send a final "we did it!" campaign message to your list. Also, send personal "thank you" messages to key supporters and partners, leaving the door open for future collaboration. These supporters and partners may be helpful players in your transition or administration.

From election night forward, your voice turns to unity, signaling your commitment to advancing your promises and priorities. This may also be a good time to do a "listening tour." If you have a job (beyond being a candidate), you will need to close out that work as well.

If the election is contested, refer back to the "Contingency Planning" section.

IDENTIFYING CAMPAIGN ASSETS

Up until Election Day, campaign staff have spent immense energy pulling together a talented team, raising money, honing priorities and messages, and engaging the community. Now is a good time to **take quick stock of campaign assets to fully leverage them during the transition.**

- **Priorities & Promises:** What are the Governor-Elect's priorities and campaign promises?
- **Messaging:** What messages have been effective?
- **Stakeholders:** Which respected community leaders and supporters were engaged? What are their issue interests?

It's worth repeating that the campaign, transition, and governing phases are all very different experiences. Whereas the campaign is nimble, scrappy, and high-energy, with many people involved, the transition is planful, with a high degree of confidentiality. Governing is steady and implementation-oriented; it's where the Governor's priorities become reality.

During the campaign, the now Governor-Elect and campaign manager had a front row seat to **assess talent.** Understand their perspectives on how staff and/or volunteers' skills and experiences align with the roles that need filling. Specifically, who has been:

- A big picture and innovative thinker, helping to shape the Governor-Elect's vision and values?
- Policy-oriented, focused on issue platforms and priorities?
- An effective communicator with the media, community members, and/or with staff?
- A talented manager, improving systems and boosting culture and morale?
- Incredibly organized and methodical?
- Excellent at time management and attention to detail?
- Well-connected to VIPs, community leaders, and supporters?

These may be individuals to bring into the administration for roles in managing or supporting policy, communications, constituent engagement, inauguration planning, scheduling, or committee leadership.

Resource: *Campaign Assets Worksheet*

UNWINDING THE CAMPAIGN

Campaign wind-down is a complex logistical, tactical, and compliance challenge.

Campaign Funding and Infrastructure

Managing campaign funds effectively for future use is one key consideration. The Governor-Elect likely raised significant funds and will need to do so again. Keeping campaign accounts active provides ongoing access for fundraising, donor engagement, political messaging, and mobilization. **Plan for the Governor-Elect's ongoing political footprint**, including staffing and infrastructure. State laws differ. Coordinate with campaign legal counsel to design a compliant structure for account use during and after the transition.

Ongoing donor engagement via events and digital appeals keeps supporters active for inauguration fundraising and the next election cycle. Maintaining campaign-specific communication channels allows for a more political tone than official administration accounts allow, helping to mobilize the governor's political base around key priorities. Using a non-administration venue to promote accomplishments demonstrates follow-through on promises while building political power for the future.

Other Administrative Considerations

There are numerous administrative considerations and tasks:

- Obtain exit memos from campaign senior staff
- Generate a list of campaign promises; share with the Transition Team
- Retain infrastructure to support ongoing political footprint
- Pay vendors and outstanding invoices
- Terminate contracts
- Reconcile bank accounts and close out budgets
- File required finance reports
- Archive key documents
- Ensure data/privacy compliance
- Inventory, store, or dispose of equipment and technology
- Identify if social media accounts will migrate to your official channels or stay with the campaign

Consider retaining some staff on the campaign post-election to focus on the wind-down and generally be available as matters arise—as they surely will.

Resource: *Campaign Exit Memo Worksheet*

TRANSITION TEAM LAUNCH

FOR THE GOVERNOR-ELECT: ACTIVATING THE TRANSITION TEAM

As you step into the role of chief executive officer for your state, the scale and complexity of the mandate will come into focus. As Governor, you will oversee a multi-billion (or multiple hundred billion) dollar budget, run healthcare and corrections systems, lead thousands of state employees, command the National Guard, manage an insurance company, and regulate everything from elevators to elephants.

During the transition phase, you will gain critical information and recommendations to successfully govern. The transition leadership remains the central nervous system of the operation, supported by the Personnel, Operations, Landing, Legal, Policy, and Inauguration Teams, as well as a communications lead (and chief of staff, if hired). Each team is composed of qualified, trustworthy, seasoned staff and volunteers that bring credibility and have clear goals and expected outcomes. **Being on the Transition Team does not guarantee a spot in the administration.**

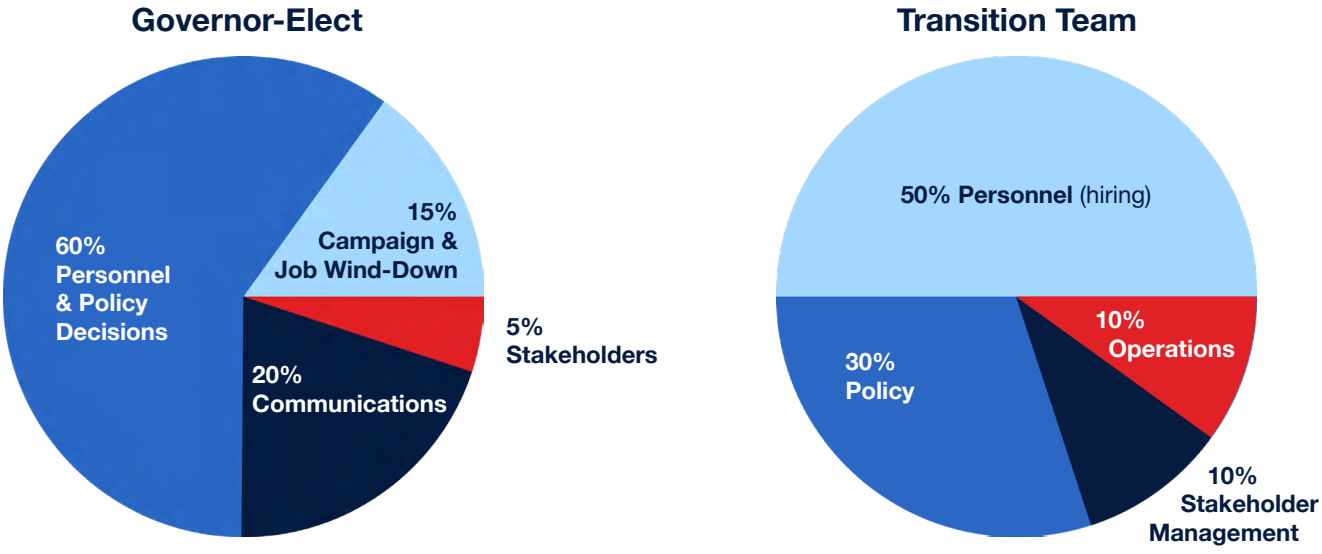
If you established Steering and Honorary Committees, their work will funnel into transition leadership as well.

Here's the post-election transition timeline:

- **November:** Official transition begins. Launch transition website, Landing Teams, and committees. Begin hiring based on org charts, ramp up transition communications, gather policy and budget recommendations, engage stakeholders and legislators. Plan inauguration.
- **December:** Work from November continues. Vet new hires, finalize budget and inauguration. Hold the first Cabinet meeting to share values, discuss priorities and set goals.

During the official transition (Election Day to Inauguration Day), time may be broken down like this:

POST-ELECTION BREAKDOWN OF GOVERNOR-ELECT AND TRANSITION TEAM TIME



APPLYING CORE VALUES

The Governor-Elect's values are the compass for the transition.

These were ideally set and communicated to the campaign and pre-election transition leadership. Upon transition launch, share them with the official Transition Team and committees. Transition leadership should model these values and ensure they shape staff behaviors and approaches, decisions, and communications. Often the Governor-Elect will communicate values in writing through a values statement or list. They may also be posted to the transition website. (See examples in Embedding Values in the Transition in the "Transition Roadmap" section.)

The chief of staff can hold a meeting with Cabinet members to share the Governor-Elect's values, priorities and early plans before Inauguration Day. This can help set the tone as they assume their roles. This meeting could also be an appropriate time to explain their roles during emergency response (more on this later in the "Preparing For Public Life" section).

FOR THE GOVERNOR-ELECT

Before you assume the role of Governor, spend some time reflecting on how you will approach the position. As Governor, public expectations will be enormous and unrealistic. You will never feel you have enough time or resources to accomplish your goals. Every decision will have a political dimension. Many of your initiatives will require legislative approval.

Though the challenges are real, the opportunities will be immense. You will have enormous power to set state priorities, define a message, convene stakeholders and solve real problems for the people of your state. You will drive impact through each action and decision. Through legislative action, the use of executive powers, and the power of your voice, you will have the opportunity to make a difference in hundreds of thousands—even millions—of people's lives.

Setting Your Approach: Role Archetypes

To be successful, you must have a firm understanding of your state's needs, your goals and commitments, and your personal strengths. **There is no one right approach.** By taking the time upfront to define your role, you will clarify for yourself and those around you how you want to lead. Then, you can build a team to complement and support you.

Here are common archetypes of governing leaders:

- **Administrator:** You are the chief executive, leveraging experience to drive organizational change, manage staff, and resolve matters swiftly. You focus on optimizing internal processes and strategic decision-making. Staff are tasked with presenting vetted options for your final approval, ensuring policy development does not consume your time.
- **Community Voice:** Your core mission is to represent and elevate previously underrepresented constituencies and deliver meaningful, needs-driven change. You prioritize gathering and integrating diverse community feedback, recognizing its significant weight in decision-making, even when it requires a more deliberate timeline for policy and administrative deployment.
- **Policy Expert:** You are driven by a commitment to solving complex public policy challenges. You deeply engage with the technical details of legislation and regulation. You view administrative functions through the lens of advancing core policy priorities.

- **Visionary:** Your aspiration to invent the future is your mandate. You focus on macro-level strategy, charting the big picture, and catalyzing change. You strategically delegate operational details and focus on realizing your vision.

Though no leader fits a singular, simplistic mold, it is worth considering what archetypes you gravitate toward (or away from!). **Your leanings will translate into behaviors.** For example, if you resonate with the "visionary" archetype, carve out time in your schedule to think strategically, discuss high-level policy solutions, and engage other executive thought leaders. Ensure your leadership team understands your vision and that you have senior leaders who can implement it.

Your Role as Governor

There is no universal job description for a governor. Executive powers vary widely state to state. Speak with legal counsel to understand yours. With that strong caveat, here is a rough sketch of what you might expect in the role.

Executive & Administration

- Oversees the State Executive Branch and ensures adherence to state laws
- Nominates and appoints officials to state executive branch positions, including cabinet members, department/agency heads, and members of various boards and commissions
- Develops and submits annual or biennial budgets and appropriations to the Legislature for review and approval
- Advances new and revised policies and programs through executive orders, budgets, and legislative proposals
- Drives organizational change, manages staff, optimizes internal processes, and makes high-stakes decisions

Legislative Engagement

- Sets the Executive Branch tone with the State Legislature; manages high-level relationships
- Proposes legislation and conveys policy priorities, starting with the State of the State
- Enacts or vetoes legislation
- Calls special legislative sessions

Stakeholder Engagement

- Shapes the public narrative
- Holds routine touchpoints with constituencies
- Convenes key individuals on important matters

Head of State

- Bolsters symbolic significance of matters and events with physical presence and/or voice
- Publicly recognizes major public and private state events

Commander-in-Chief

- Serves as the official state liaison to the federal government
- Captains the state's military, including the National Guard and State Police
- Responds to emergencies and disasters; directs operations, coordinates resources, and informs communications
- Grants reprieves, commutations of punishment, and pardons

Hiring Your Chief of Staff

Your chief of staff is critical to your administration's success. The importance of the role cannot be overstated.

It's hard to decide what type of chief of staff you need until you have a clear sense of what type of executive you plan to be. After reviewing the role archetypes and role description, carefully consider what traits best complement your skillset.

Do you need your chief of staff to be…

- The operations lead?
- An executive decision maker?
- The uber people manager?
- The chief legislative negotiator?
- The keeper of stakeholder relationships?
- All/some of the above?

Select a chief of staff accordingly. Then, build your Executive Office around the role.

On a practical level, **your chief of staff should be the prime driver of results.**

Your chief of staff will either start during the transition (ideal) or on Inauguration Day.

If your chief of staff joins the team during the transition, you will need to decide how to clearly divide work between them and the transition director during this very brief window.

Some electeds ask: Should the chief of staff be the transition director?

Maybe.

If the chief of staff is hired in August and has the skills to run the transition, there are benefits to having the person play this role. As transition director, the chief of staff would have significant influence in building the team they would later manage. They would also be able to assess and make foundational decisions using information from the Landing Teams.

Alternatively, an independent transition director may be selected because they've run a transition before. Someone who will not stay with the administration long-term may be more willing to make potentially unpopular decisions and/or deliver tough messages. They wouldn't need to personally worry about maintaining long-term relationships in the way that someone who will become the chief of staff might. Additionally, if the chief of staff worked on the campaign, having a separate transition director would allow for a much-needed break.

Resource: *Chief of Staff Job Description*

FOR THE INCOMING CHIEF OF STAFF

Welcome to the team! Your leadership during this critical window—and well beyond Inauguration Day—is foundational to the Governor's long-term success.

You are stepping onto a moving train. As you find your footing, keep these three transition strategies in mind:

1. **Establish clear ownership.** Entering the transition mid-stream, you will need to navigate existing dynamics. Collaborate early with the transition director to delineate your lane. Focus your energy on high-leverage initiatives with lasting organizational impact, such as Executive Office staffing and operationalizing Landing Teams' recommendations. Let the transition director manage the day-to-day operations of the transition.
2. **Support scalable foundations.** The transition period is your opportunity to work with the Governor-Elect to design the processes, structures, and workflows that will run the administration starting on Inauguration Day. Use this time to create that operational backbone of the administration. Investing in shaping the infrastructure now saves time later. Review Section 3 of this document for detailed advice on the first 100 days in office.
3. **Cultivate lasting relationships.** While the transition director brings highly-valued expertise, the role is temporary. You will own the permanent network. Keep a long-term horizon in mind when it comes to legislative and stakeholder relationships, especially when navigating sensitive political dynamics or delivering difficult news. Consider when the transition director might be a better messenger.

Maintain a tight, frequent feedback loop with the transition director. Partner closely to make immediate decisions, while keeping an eye toward post-Inauguration governance.

HIRING OTHER EXECUTIVE ROLES

Scheduler

The Governor's time is precious. The scheduler aligns that time with priorities. The role works closely with the Governor and understands who needs to be involved in which decisions and meetings.

The scheduler's decisions impact the Governor's wellbeing. A tired CEO makes mistakes. A CEO that hasn't exercised or eaten well makes mistakes. The scheduler understands this and carves out space for the Governor, while balancing the steady stream of incoming requests.

Once the Governor-Elect has a security detail, the logistics the scheduling staff coordinated during the campaign (from transportation to movement blocking) will shift to security. Coordination between departments surrounding events (e.g., communications, policy, and stakeholder outreach) and time management will stay with the scheduler.

If the Governor-Elect had an excellent scheduler on the campaign, consider bringing that person into the transition and administration. The pace of the transition is rapid, but it doesn't need to be chaotic. **The scheduler's job is to create order from chaos.**

Executive Assistant

While the scheduler handles the "when," the executive assistant manages the "what," offering direct administrative and operational support to the Governor. The role develops, edits, and filters communications, briefs and prepares the Governor for the day's events, handles follow-ups from meetings, and makes the Governor's "desk time" productive.

The executive assistant is an enormous support to the Governor. If the Governor needs something researched, they handle it. If the Governor needs more call time, the executive assistant talks to the scheduler and gets it done. If the Governor seeks context on an upcoming meeting, their executive assistant will provide it—or get the right people together for a briefing.

The person in this role will be deep into the details of the Governor's professional—and likely personal—life. They should match the Governor's style and needs, work well with the chief of staff, spouse, and family, and be a team player.

Resource: *Executive Assistant Job Description*

SHAPING THE NARRATIVE

There are very few days between Election Day and Inauguration Day. During that time, the Governor-Elect and transition leadership will work the communications lead to **build a steady drumbeat** of transition, personnel, policy, event, and stakeholder communications. Communications during the transition will likely be equal parts process and values. Thoughtfully sequencing announcements will strengthen public trust, convey the Governor-Elect's values, and build a narrative. As the transition moves from campaigning to governing, use communications to signal each shift.

Continuous communications will also generate the strategic pressure necessary to accomplish the Governor-Elect's goals. For example, if the Governor-Elect plans to sign an executive order to lower utility rates on the first day in office, highlighting the problem and related committee efforts during the transition readies both the public and the Legislature for what is to come.

A communications calendar is a tool for capturing what to announce and when. It supports the Transition Team in telling the transition story on a parallel track as the campaign victory messaging, without overlap. This message separation and ordering of communications can promote a clear narrative and build momentum for the administration during busy news cycles. **The Governor-Elect owns the narrative until Inauguration Day.**

Inauguration Day is the final communications exclamation point on the transition. The use of strategic leaks, stakeholder validation pre- and post-inauguration, and citizen stories on social media that highlight your speech priorities are a few ways to consider inauguration as more than just "a speech."

The pre-Election Day Transition Team should have already made a plan for the first week of the transition. Now that it's official, it's time to put that plan into action.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS CALENDAR

Week of…	Announcements
11/3	• Inauguration date and theme • Transition website launch • Formation of Honorary & Steering Committees
11/9	• Cabinet appointments: Group 1 • First Honorary & Steering Committees held • Inauguration tickets available
11/16	• Cabinet appointments: Group 2 • Meeting with incoming legislative leadership
11/23 (Thanksgiving Week)	• Cabinet appointments: Group 3 • Honorary & Steering Committees' outputs
11/30	• Cabinet appointments: Group 4 • Honorary & Steering Committees' outputs
12/7	• Executive Office staffing • Honorary & Steering Committees' outputs • Social media: Topics addressed via executive order Inauguration Day
12/14	• Cabinet appointments: Group 5 • Social media: Topics addressed via executive order Inauguration Day
12/21	• Executive Office staffing • Inauguration speech previews • Inauguration Day executive order previews

FOR THE GOVERNOR-ELECT: MEETINGS

The transition is brief and requires your active engagement. The transition director will set a structured, regular meeting schedule for you to discuss and decide on appointments, Executive Office hires, legal actions, stakeholder needs, communications, policies, executive orders, and other important matters, pulling in the appropriate people as needed.

If you want to engage in work midstream, discussing hot topics and upcoming decisions or needs, add routine 15-30 minute briefings daily or a few times a week from Transition Team leadership and directors on their top priorities (e.g., personnel, operations, legal, policy, inauguration).

Consider adding assigned time blocks to your schedule to begin to shape in-office protocols, like executive desk time to review materials and prepare for upcoming meetings and decisions. You will also have campaign wind-down needs—potentially up to a few hours each day during the transition.

A daily schedule of planned topic-based meetings will decrease the feeling of chaos and minimize one-off decisions.

SAMPLE TRANSITION DAILY SCHEDULE

6:00 AM – 8:30 AM	Personal time
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Review news and schedule
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	Campaign thank you calls Current job close out Inauguration work
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	Interviews with appointees/cabinet
11:30 AM – 12:45 PM	Lunch and break/catch up
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Executive desk time
2:00 PM – 2:15 PM	Transition Leadership Team, directors briefing
2:15 PM – 3:00 PM	Interviews with appointees/cabinet
3:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Policy/legal discussion or stakeholder meeting
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Earned and social media prep/engagement
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Agency overview and budget discussion
6:00 PM – 6:15 PM	Wrap up, next day agenda decisions

ESTABLISHING SUPPORTING FUNCTIONS

To see how all supporting functions and teams connect to each other, refer back to the "Sample Post-Election Day Transition Organizational Chart" in the "Transition Team Basics" section.

OPERATIONS TRANSITION TEAM

The Operations Team's charge is to **ensure that the machinery of state government continues smoothly during the transition:** essential state services, regulatory functions, and internal processes. Team members should have strong operational backgrounds and be interested in implementing the Governor-Elect's vision through the functions of state government. The Team reports to the transition operations lead (e.g., chief operating officer), collaborating and coordinating with the Legal Team when needed.

Launching Landing Teams

Following the Election, the Operations Team quickly **deploys Landing Teams to each agency, department board, and commission** to learn their organizational structure, number and type of personnel, major contracts, and budget. The teams identify top challenges, pending litigation, and issues requiring immediate attention, creating an individualized risk assessment. That information is reviewed by the Operations Team, then shared with the Transition Leadership Team and other relevant functions.

Landing Teams members' presence can have a significant impact on morale in an office. They should enter carefully and with a high degree of emotional intelligence. The first question Team members' will get is: "Will I keep my job?" And they won't have an answer. Prepare them for their important work and **ensure they recognize that the situation is delicate.**

The Landing Teams' work is completed **one to two weeks after Election Day.** They then disband. Depending on your management capacity and level of volunteer interest, you could have one central Landing Team or numerous teams (e.g., one for each agency).

Resource: *Landing Team Memo Worksheet*

PERSONNEL TRANSITION TEAM

The Personnel Team designs and leads the effort to hire the Cabinet, Executive Office, and board and commission positions. **The hiring process is where the transition begins to execute the Governor's vision and values.**

The director of the Personnel Team must be able to handle an intense, high volume of applications, have good political judgment and an equity orientation, and be able to navigate bureaucracy (all these hires are made through the state system) with an eye towards long-term workforce planning. This will be one of the toughest jobs to fill during the transition. Given the pressures of the role, this person needs to have thick skin. Personnel Team members ideally have expertise in the areas they are hiring for. Their job is to provide the transition director, chief of staff and/or the Governor with options (rather than advocate for specific individuals).

This resource outlines a centralized hiring process, but some states will vet and hire teams by department, department groupings, or leadership levels across state government. This can be effective, and at some point the recommendations should be centralized for the appropriate decision-maker.

Hiring

Establish a clear administration staffing target and empower the Personnel Team to meet it. While gaps will inevitably emerge once the Governor-Elect is in office, having a foundational executive structure in place before Inauguration Day is critical. **Prioritize quality over speed.** Poor hires can foster inefficiency and toxic cultures. If the right candidate is not immediately apparent, expand your search. Don't settle for a poor fit.

Though most apply through the transition website, top candidates will likely be identified by referrals from transition and campaign staff, committee members, and stakeholders. There will be immense pressure to hire certain people based on relationships, campaign connections, constituencies, or politics. While recognizing the symbolic nature of your decisions, **focus on hiring "impact multipliers"**—talented, aligned, motivated individuals who are going to inspire and lead others to achieve the Governor's goals. They will embed the Governor's values, advance their priorities and adeptly manage the highest risk areas of the state. They may also assist in future hiring in their agencies, divisions, or units.

SAMPLE MUST-HAVES FOR SCHEDULER ROLE

- **Experience Profile:** Proven track record of scheduling in a fast-paced high-volume high-stakes political environment
- **Organization and Time Management:** Aligns time and priorities, manages significant volume without things falling through the cracks, and meets deadlines
- **Adaptability:** Pushes work forward through obstacles, while also maintaining flexibility, understanding that circumstances can change quickly
- **Discretion and Professionalism:** Maintains strict confidentiality, models reason and calm under pressure, and maximizes impact
- **Attention to Detail:** Tracks even the smallest details and maintains accuracy in a fast-paced high-volume environment, spots for potential errors and resolves them proactively
- **Collaborative:** Coordinates with colleagues and external partners to deliver a values-aligned, priority-focused schedule for the Governor

The Personnel Team will **define and vet "must-have" criteria** for administration staff, including technical skills, values, and experience level. They will create job descriptions and interview questions, plan interview panels, and conduct reference checks. Interview questions and exercises should test for "must-have" qualities, using a hiring rubric to score candidates. Panelists should reflect diverse perspectives and identities, have position-relevant backgrounds, and differ for each interview round. Plan to hold at least two interviews, and have panelists complete and submit hiring rubrics after interviews. Decisions will be made centrally or by designated agency leads. The Governor should focus time on hiring executive leadership (and direct reports) and delegate the hiring of other roles.

Resource: *Candidate Evaluation Scoresheet*

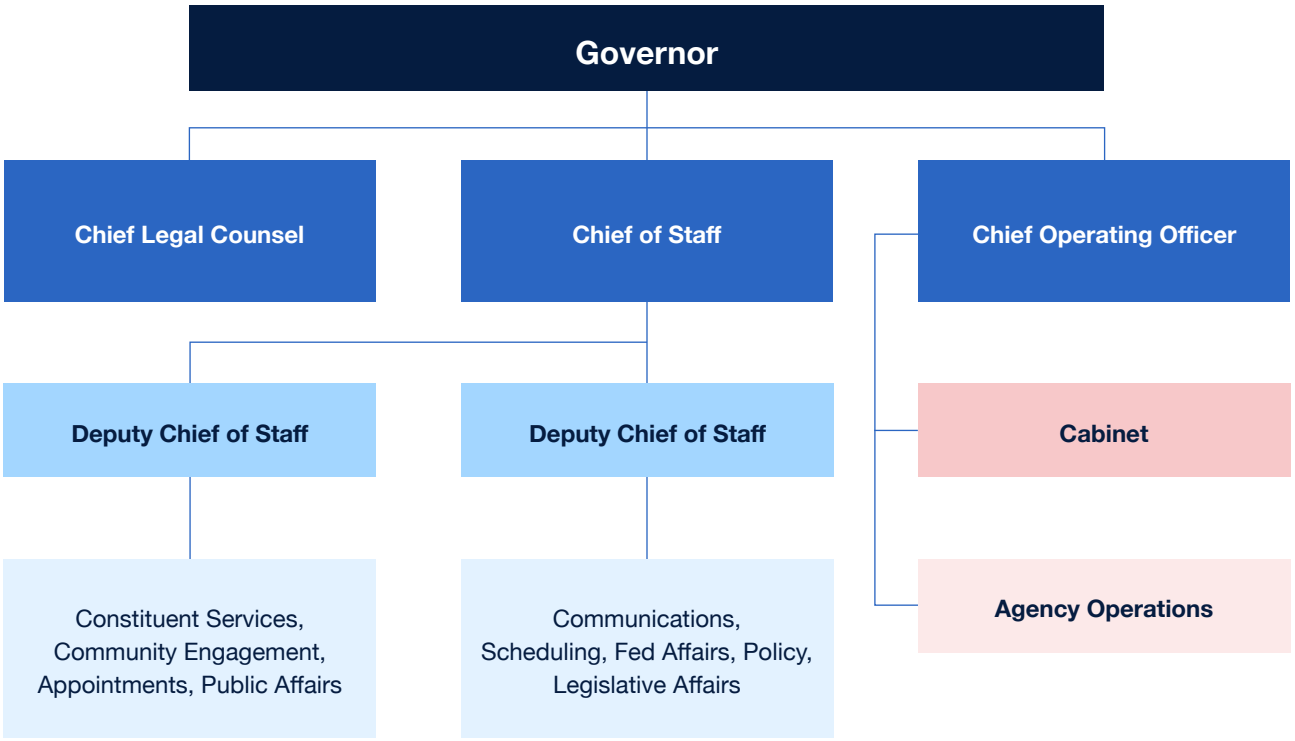
Executive Organizational Chart

The size of an Executive Office varies by state. Some states operate with a team of 10, while others hire 100 or more executive staff. Regardless of the size of the office, the charge for executive staff is to **translate the Governor's vision into action.**

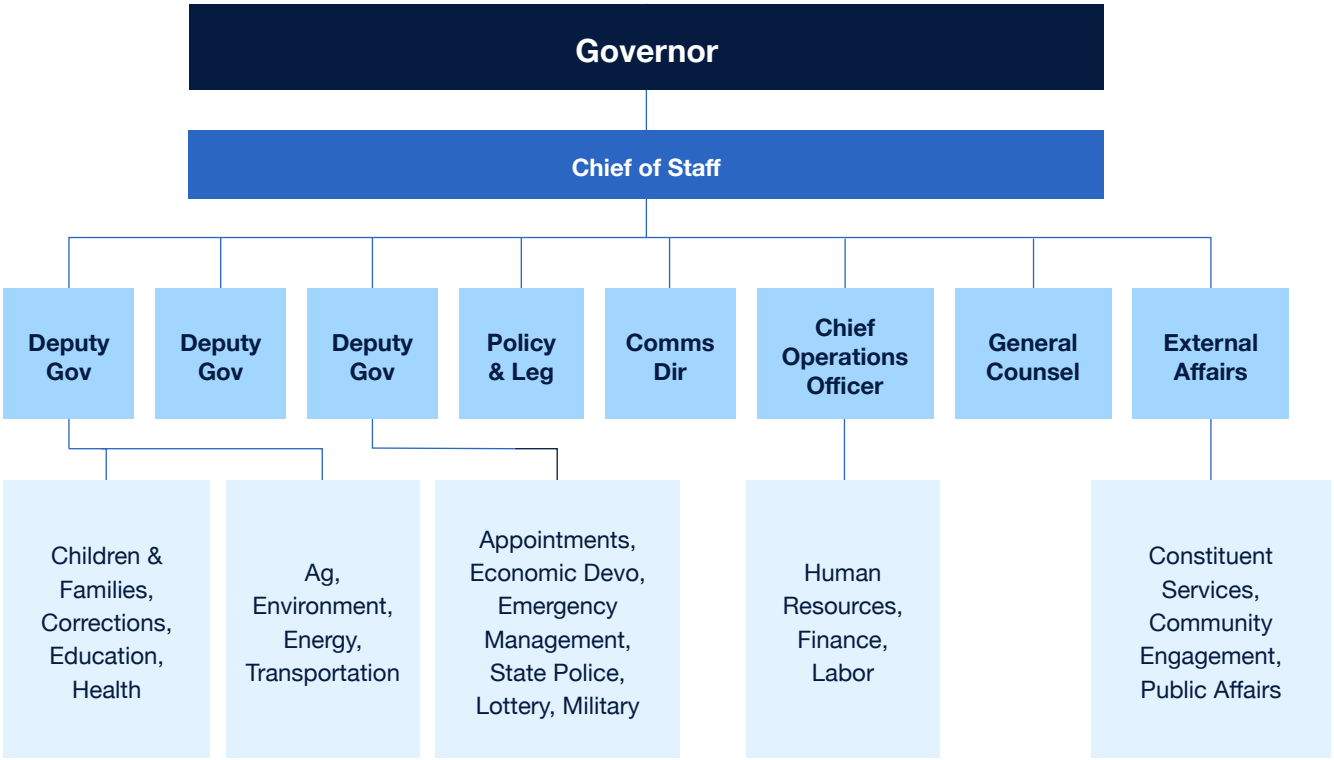
KEY EXECUTIVE OFFICE POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Position/Team	Responsibility/Function
Chief of Staff	Oversees Executive Office and strategic initiatives; works with staff to execute the Governor's vision, priorities and goals
Chief Legal Counsel & Legal Department	Provides strategic legal guidance; ensures administration follows all applicable laws and is in compliance
Chief Operating Officer & Cabinet Affairs	Administers operational policies and procedures, handles day-to-day communication with the Cabinet, and drives process improvements
Legislative Affairs	Monitors legislative developments, builds relationships with policy markers, and advocates for legislation
External Relations & Community Relations	Cultivates and sustains strong external partnerships with stakeholders; effectively engages and collaborates with communities
Policy	Identifies and develops policy options, makes recommendations on policy positions, and works to advance strategic policies
Federal Affairs	Manages relationships with federal government; advocates for legislation, funding, and regulations that benefit the state
Constituent Services	Directly supports constituents: provides helpful information, connects them to resources, and shares messaging
Communications	Develops clear, consistent messaging to engage constituents, elevate goals, and strengthen public presence across all mediums
Appointments	Manages the identification, vetting and coordination of candidates for boards and commissions
Scheduling	Coordinates Governor/executive calendars, meetings and logistics to ensure the strategic use of time
Executive Assistant	Manage Governor communications, prepare Governor for the day, handle follow-ups from meetings, and make "desk time" productive
Operations (HR, Finance, Residence)	Oversee Executive Office personnel and financial matters; manage residence staff and needs

SAMPLE EXECUTIVE OFFICE ORGANIZATION CHART - EXAMPLE 1



SAMPLE EXECUTIVE OFFICE ORGANIZATION CHART - EXAMPLE 2



Cabinet Appointments

The Cabinet advances the Governor's values and priorities through work in their agencies and departments. In addition to their subject matter expertise, a strong cabinet member exhibits political, policy, and administrative talent. They act as an extension of the Executive Office, not disconnected figureheads or activists. The information provided by the Landing Teams will be valuable as the Governor-Elect, transition leadership, and Personnel Team considers the skills and experience profile needed for each agency lead.

The Governor may consider retaining appointees from the prior administration. In that case, look for evidence of values-alignment, talent, and support for the Governor's agenda. Talent alone is not reason enough to keep someone, unless they provide a limited, typically apolitical function (e.g., grants manager; fleet car director, etc.). Communicate separations directly, respectfully, and quickly.

If the state has a unionized workforce, engage the union early. Listen to their needs and concerns. Share the Governor's values and information about the hiring process. Establishing an early working relationship can help shape transition personnel actions and prevent any union concerns from playing out in the media.

The formal appointment process varies state to state. Consult legal counsel about the state's specific appointment process.

APPOINTMENT SELECTION PROCESS



Vetting

Vet hires to avoid unforced errors early in the administration. Establish a tiered procedure, with Cabinet, Executive Office leadership and high-ranking non-cabinet agency appointees receiving full vetting and other appointed positions receiving partial vetting. Vetting can range from political to financial to criminal for sensitive positions.

Vet all appointees—even close friends of the Governor, well-known entities, and campaign staff. Once vetting is complete, consider the information and assess how to mitigate risks. **Keep the information confidential.**

Resource: *Vetting Checklist*

POLICY TRANSITION TEAM

The Policy Team is **responsible for mapping campaign promises to an implementation timeline**—determining what is realistic on day one, 100 days in, and one year into the administration. This Team also plays an important role in legislative and stakeholder engagement. If the transition establishes topic-based steering committees, the Policy Team can suggest committee members and work closely with chairs to guide that work, reviewing and shaping processes and recommendations.

Policy Team members should have policy experience and strong relationship-building and relationship-management skills. Their outreach to VIPs, constituencies, legislators, and supporters will be seen as an extension of the Governor. Through their work, Team members will develop a theory and strategy for how the Governor-Elect's policy goals will be achieved via the budget, legislative or executive actions, and public messaging. **For their work to be maximally useful, their charge must be specific, with clear deliverables.** Their proposals should be run by legal staff and vetted by transition leadership before being advanced to the Governor for consideration.

LEGAL TRANSITION TEAM

The Legal Advisor oversees the Legal Team, analyzing the information gathered by the Landing Teams, assessing risk, and gaining a better understanding of the Governor's executive powers. Based on the Landing Teams' feedback, the Legal Team works with state department liaisons to **understand the State's legal position.** The administration likely inherited many lawsuits. The Team will index the ones with the highest exposure based on deadlines and strategic implications. They should provide the Governor with recommendations on which to continue, settle, or change positions on.

All appointees should be reviewed by the Legal Team to ensure they meet the qualifications and comply with eligibility requirements. Some may also need legislative approval. The Team should prepare materials for the approval process, and brief and run practice sessions for appointees.

As part of the campaign unwinding process, staff will have created a list of the Governor-Elect's campaign promises. The Legal Team **knows the Governor's constitutional and statutory powers.** They should review this list and inform the Policy Team of what can be done immediately with executive powers and what needs legislative or budget action.

The Legal Team also supports the transition's operations lead on contracts and liability insurance, and implements necessary steps to follow the Freedom of Information Act, open meetings policies, and records laws. The full Transition Team should be trained on and routinely reminded of what is **public versus privileged communications.**

INAUGURATION TRANSITION TEAM

The Inauguration Team is responsible for planning, executing, and raising funds for inaugural events, within legal and ethical bounds. Members will work closely with financial staff to understand what state funds are available and what private funds are needed. They engage volunteers, campaign donors, former campaign staff, VIPs, and others to plan inaugural events.

Some governors are excited to get into the details on Inauguration Day events; others are not. At minimum, the **Governor-Elect should sign off on high-level decisions** like the theme, location, and invitees. Most of the inaugural work should be delegated to allow the Governor-Elect to focus on higher-stakes transition activities.

STEERING AND HONORARY COMMITTEES

Refer back to the "Transition Roadmap" section for an introduction to Honorary and Steering Committees.

If the Governor-Elect decided to create Honorary and/or Steering Committees, now is the time to activate them. Formally invite the members, select chairs, and announce the Committees' formation. **Each committee should be staffed, have a clear charge, and report back on goals and progress.** Their work should be strategic. Many members will have been long-time supporters and should be sufficiently appreciated by the Governor-Elect.

Given that the **Honorary Committee is primarily symbolic and advisory,** their charge might be to provide guidance on transition matters. For example, they could provide advice on the location of the inauguration party, potential board and commission members, or ideas for cabinet members. Honorary Committee members may also serve on the Inauguration Team, or act as a de facto inauguration committee, helping with sponsorships or endorsements for inaugural events.

Steering Committees will have outcomes based on their specific topic or function area. For example, if the Governor-Elect is focused on bringing down healthcare costs, transition leadership might create and charge a Healthcare Committee with identifying the five most viable ways to cut costs in the system. Avoid busywork, which wastes time and energy and could lead to future frustration.

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

The Governor's budget should proudly answer the question: ***What do we value enough to fund?***

The budget effectuates campaign promises and provides a starting place for budget negotiations with the Legislature. Positioning the Governor's priorities for success begins with developing not just a complex spreadsheet, but a strategy to secure the spending plans needed to advance the Governor's goals.

Budgets are often the only must-pass bills for a state legislature and create a significant leverage point not just for spending, but other policy priorities as well.

Depending on the state, the Governor-Elect may inherit the budget decisions of the prior administration. It's important that the transition director understands what, if any, flexibility there is to address current year issues. The State Budget Office will provide the transition with the fiscal year forecast and timeline for the Governor's year one executive recommendations. Expect that the incoming administration have little discretion over most state funds, which are typically restricted to specific spend, or federal funds that largely pass through the state to administer programs or pass on to outside organizations.

Revenue forecasts play a critical role in understanding resources available for the budget. Understand how revenue and budget development teams work together and the timing of when decisions are needed in order to make the departments and process meet the transition and Governor-Elect's needs.

Finally, budget office staff may be able to give a more objective analysis of what's working and what could be improved upon in state departments.

PREPARING FOR PUBLIC LIFE

FOR THE GOVERNOR-ELECT: RUNNING YOUR OFFICE

During the transition, you will begin to establish the systems you'll use to run your office.

Aligning Time and Priorities

The first decision you'll make is how you will align your time and priorities. Which meetings will you hold, delegate, and decline? **How you spend your time communicates what is important to you.** As you attend events, speak with constituents, and cross paths with staff, you will feel pressure to commit to meetings. Don't. Send them to your scheduler. The scheduler will work closely with your chief of staff and executive assistant to understand your needs and priorities. They are the one person who has the full picture of your time. Their job is to help you use it strategically.

Meet with your scheduler regularly. Try a daily 15-minute tactical meeting, as well as a monthly meeting to look at trends. In addition to decision-making, management, and meetings oriented toward advancing priorities, set aside time for strategizing. Over time, your meetings will establish a natural rhythm.

GOVERNOR'S DAILY SCHEDULE IN OFFICE

7:30 AM – 7:45 AM	Review daily topics and schedule
8:00 AM – 8:30 AM	Executive Team meeting
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Senior staff meeting (join 1-2 times per week)
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	Meetings with legislators
10:00 AM – 10:45 AM	Media/social media
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	Internal meeting on upcoming decisions, (e.g., cabinet/policy/ legislative)
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch and desk time
1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	Travel to event
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM	Press conference or event open to the media
3:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Stakeholder meeting and/or business recruitment
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Travel back from event
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Executive desk time

Decision-Making

The majority of your time will be spent making decisions. **Focus your attention on decisions that will have the greatest impact.** These might include: strategic decisions tied to your priorities, matters of great risk/reward to the state, major leadership personnel shifts, whether to reorganize aspects of state government, and/or matters related to representing your state nationally or internationally. Delegate the rest.

Whether you've been more in the weeds or more hands-off, it's now **time to become an expert at delegating.** There's a team of experts and leaders around you. Once you identify the vision, values, and outcomes you seek, guide implementation and let your team use their agency and autonomy.

If a decision involves significant resources, is a notable shift, and/or is controversial, consider getting input before you make it. That input could range from a few calls to trusted advisors to stakeholder meetings around the state. Input provides you with important perspectives and political cover once you've made the decision.

It can be helpful to understand how the previous administration made important decisions—not because you need to operate similarly, but because agency staff may start with that understanding as their default. Learning what was considered an important decision, and then who in the prior administration was responsible for it, will help you get a sense of what will be expected of you and your team, and what you may want to change when you take office.

Personal Security and Family Considerations

On election night or Election Day, you likely received executive protection (your security detail). Being watched at all times will be an adjustment. Some governors find it freeing; others see it as a burden. The fact is: **you have no choice.** It's the job of select members of the State Police to keep you safe. That means you'll need to shift your behaviors and let go of the way things used to be, at least for the duration of your term.

Use the transition to understand who your detail lead is, what the threat environment is, your exposure, and the tools that will be used to limit those vulnerabilities.

Preparing Your Family for Public Life

While your name was the one that appeared on the ballot, the journey into public life is a **shared endeavour with your family.** Although they will have navigated the scrutiny of the campaign trail, transitioning into the Governor's Office brings a new set of complexities and will require a significant lifestyle change for your entire family.

While every state maintains its own traditions, many jurisdictions afford first partners and spouses the status of public officials, which may include personal protection provided by state law enforcement. In certain instances, these security protocols are extended to include your children as well.

The first spouse or partner will have the opportunity to define their unique role. Some choose a highly visible path, championing key administration priorities, while others prefer to maintain their professional careers or remain independent of government affairs. Get clear and aligned about their intended approach early on.

For many, this transition involves relocating to a new city or coordinating new educational arrangements for children. These changes are deeply personal and complex, often requiring a **shift in expectations around privacy.**

To support your family's readiness, and with the understanding that state resources vary, here are helpful actions to take:

- Identify a point person on your team to coordinate family schedules and logistical requirements
- Establish clear boundaries regarding dedicated family time and expectations for public appearances (e.g. setting limits on the number of night or weekend events you will do each week)
- Provide transparent guidance regarding privacy expectations for all family members (e.g. social media, photos, children's names, etc.)
- Meet with your security team to ensure you understand and feel comfortable with the plan for your family's security
- Speak with your children's school about privacy and security expectations
- Assign a staff member to the first spouse to coordinate scheduling, communications, and public appearances
- Determine the extent to which the first spouse or partner may be subject to gift rules, public record laws, financial disclosures, or other requirements

We highly recommend arranging a meeting between your family and the outgoing governor's family. This personal exchange can be incredibly helpful in addressing practical questions about the residence and easing the transition for children as they enter this new chapter. Routinely connecting with other sitting first spouses can also be quite valuable.

Practical Considerations

- **Where You'll Live:** Many states have a governor's residence. If that's the case in your state, decide if you are moving. If so, decide what you will do with your current residence and work with the governor's residence director to coordinate a move.
- **Gifts:** People are excited you won the election! They will send gifts. Talk to your legal advisor to understand gift acceptance and disclosure requirements.
- **Public Records Laws:** Understand your public records laws, both for the transition and once you are in office. The media and the public will request information and you'll want to be prepared for those requests immediately after Election Day.

Meeting with the Outgoing Governor

In meeting the outgoing Governor, the first consideration is: **friend or foe?** That answer will obviously influence your approach.

If "friend": Seek the outgoing Governor's advice. Their insights could be valuable; they've been hard-earned!

If "foe": Assume a more extractive posture. The meeting does not have to be pleasant for it to be productive.

Regardless of the nature of your relationship, once you're in the room, aim to accomplish several goals:

- Gain critical information
- Secure a commitment that you will be notified of major changes between now and when you take office, including budget and personnel
- Create a system and points of contact for information flow and responses to requests from you or the Transition Team

Schedule this meeting as soon as possible after the election. Consider whether your chief of staff, transition director, or other staff should be in the room. This could save you follow-up time and give them needed context. Find out who the outgoing Governor will have in the meeting. If you met previously, build upon the information you already received.

Questions for the meeting might include:

- What are the biggest challenges facing the state right now?
- What do you see as the biggest opportunities?
- What have your priorities been? What related initiatives are currently moving forward?
- Do you have current legislative priorities for the "Lame Duck" session?
- (If not asked during the prior meeting) What keeps you up at night?
- What major contracts or lawsuits should I be aware of?
- (If not asked during the prior meeting) What advice would you give me for the first 100 days?
- I understand the transition into office is tough on the whole family. Any advice there? Would you be open to my partner reaching out to yours?
- What else should I know?

Being Ready for an Emergency

Critical and high-profile incidents will very likely occur during your time as Governor. School shootings, civil unrest, and natural disasters happen unexpectedly and unfold rapidly. Have a plan for these eventualities. The chief of staff should have templates provided by your emergency response director that can be modified quickly depending on the circumstances. All functions of your office and many of your agencies will be engaged in an emergency response.

Governors are defined by how they handle a crisis, and the effectiveness of your administration can be tied to your response. Meet with emergency response leads during the transition and consider pulling the Cabinet together to learn emergency response models (e.g., Incident Command System). Hold tabletop exercises before Inauguration Day or within the first two weeks. An emergency can occur on day one.

PLANNING FOR INAUGURATION DAY

It's late in the transition. The Inauguration Team and committees have been working hard to plan inaugural events. The Governor-Elect has decided the theme, events and activities, and the communications team has begun publicity. Now it's time to consider their first major speech for the Governor.

Questions to consider:

- What headline does the Governor-Elect hope to achieve? What is the core message the Governor-Elect aims to communicate?
- How will the speech create the conditions to advance the Governor-Elect's priorities?
- Will it focus on themes or specific policies?
- Does the Governor-Elect want to persuade, reassure, contrast, and/or build momentum?
- What will be the tone?
- How will the Governor-Elect acknowledge legislative leadership? Will the Governor-Elect call on them to implement specific policies or be broad in their aspirations?
- Will the Governor-Elect offer direction or make a request of the public?

The inauguration speech provides immense opportunity to create the conditions for future impact. It is also celebratory!

As part of the celebration, the Inauguration Committee might add features like a children's choir or have the military play the national anthem. Include as many geographies, constituencies, and stakeholders as possible, demonstrating that the Governor-Elect is working on behalf of the entire state. Organizers can include honorary roles and additional speaking roles, or capture voices in videos or other media. Have Inauguration Committee chairs review what past governors have done and pull forward what serves the Governor-Elect.

This is the Governor-Elect's first major event as Governor; **it should be run with precision.** Given the complexity of the inauguration activities, a team of volunteers and paid staff will be needed to execute the Governor-Elect's vision. A point person should create a detailed schedule ("tick tock") to assure all movements are synced and aligned. From the military flyover, family coordination, VIP seating, briefings for stakeholders and media, this event will take every team member moving together.

FROM ELECTION DAY TO INAUGURATION DAY CHECKLIST

Download checklist

Campaign Wind-Down

- ☐ Celebrate election victory
- ☐ Recognize contributions of campaign staff, volunteers, and supporters
- ☐ Assess campaign assets (priorities, staff, messaging, supporters, community leaders)
- ☐ Obtain exit memos
- ☐ Create list of campaign promises
- ☐ Identify ongoing political infrastructure needed
- ☐ Methodically wind down campaign, retaining necessary longer-term infrastructure
- ☐ Identify campaign staff ripe for administration
- ☐ (If holding) Complete listening tour

Official Transition

- ☐ Meet with outgoing Governor
- ☐ Draft values statement
- ☐ Create official transition leadership structure
- ☐ Set meetings and reporting structures
- ☐ Draft Executive Office org chart
- ☐ Set communication plan; build communications calendar
- ☐ Hire chief of staff, scheduler, and executive assistant
- ☐ Activate Landing Teams; secure, review and respond to team reports
- ☐ Establish Operations, Personnel, Legal, Policy, and Inauguration Transition Teams/functions
- ☐ (If relevant) Launch Honorary and Steering Committee(s)
- ☐ Vet, hire, and orient Executive Office and Cabinet
- ☐ Assess legal risk
- ☐ Understand and communicate public records laws and ethics requirements
- ☐ Establish policy positions
- ☐ Finalize budget
- ☐ Understand emergency response protocols; orient Executive Office and Cabinet

About You as Governor

- ☐ Define role and leadership approach
- ☐ Identify Governor-level decisions; delegate others
- ☐ Set decision-making process, meeting schedule and briefing approach
- ☐ Hold meeting between the incoming and outgoing Governors' families
- ☐ Understand security detail's needs and approach

Inauguration

- ☐ Set size, scope, and budget
- ☐ Decide on theme
- ☐ Plan events
- ☐ Send invitations
- ☐ Write speech
- ☐ Prepare day of schedule; prep leads

3. THE FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

ADVANCING PRIORITIES

FOR THE GOVERNOR

Your path to governing is laid out before you.

On the campaign trail, you outlined your priorities. In the transition, you translated those priorities into goals. Now, you must achieve them. **Focus your staff and preserve your time on proactive work**—it is all too easy to fall into the trap of reacting to events of the day.

Though you were just recently elected, you won't receive much of a "honeymoon." The public has high expectations, and based on the commitments you campaigned on, expect you to follow-through on them as soon as possible. The first 100 days is an arbitrary benchmark, but the media is paying attention, and so should you. Use the urgency it generates to set near-term goals.

You will need quick wins to cement a narrative that you are an effective leader. The quickest wins will likely come through executive actions. While you have developed a legislative strategy, do not wait for the legislature to act before embarking on your agenda. You have the entire body of the state government to push for your priorities; use them aggressively.

Direct your chief of staff to review your priorities and consider:

- What can be accomplished through executive order?
- What can be accomplished by agency resource shifts?
- What needs to be enacted in legislation?
- What can be advanced through the budget?
- Are there legal actions that must be taken?
- How should the Executive Office and agencies be structured to accomplish them?
- Are the right personnel in place?
- Is a public education campaign necessary?
- Does the messaging need to shift?

Once you identify the pathways to advance your priorities, consider the chronology and set trackable goals. This activity lends itself to Cabinet input and could be used for an early retreat that rolls into a future strategic plan.

Resource: *Identifying Pathways for Priorities Worksheet*

Messaging and Communications

On the campaign trail, you named the challenges and opportunities facing the state. During the transition, you tapped the right people and built infrastructure to address them. Now, as you set priorities and goals, roll out executive orders, and launch legislative initiatives, **you will begin to shape what you will ultimately be known for.**

Designate a spokesperson (e.g., communications director) and team to center your priorities, monitor what's driving news cycles and evolving—in the state, politics, and the world—and shape your communications as conditions change. Together, determine:

- Which messages will be in your voice and which won't
- The appropriate forum (e.g., local, state, national media)
- When to hold press conferences, issue statements, or deploy social media.

You are not the only one shaping a narrative. Understand which constituencies (e.g., advocacy groups, legislative leaders, media, etc.) are working to influence what messaging and customize strategies to push communications in your direction. Use the modes of communication that map to the target audience. For example, if you aim to shift legislators' positions, engage the capitol press corps. If you want to activate supporters, do real-time social media.

Hold short daily meetings to evolve your message—then stick to it. The facts won't change, but your framing should. Tailor to the target audience.

Agency communications are an extension of your office; they should amplify your message and never conflict or distract from it. Make sure your Executive Office Communications Team is tightly coordinated with agency spokespeople. Establish a "No Surprises" rule with agencies so that they don't make news without you knowing about it first.

FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF

It's time to launch the governing operation you have planned for months. You are positioned to deliver quick wins, navigate the state's most significant challenges, and advance the Governor's agenda. This section of the manual is for you.

Advancing the Governor's priorities will require the following skills:

- Defining and tracking goals across the administration
- Ensuring the right talent is placed in key roles
- Aligning time and priorities to support goals
- Setting expectations, managing personnel, and navigating organizational dynamics
- Cultivating relationships with legislative leaders and key stakeholders

- Deploying strategic communications and messages
- Streamlining information flow and decision-making processes
- Advising the Governor to maximize their effectiveness
- Leading through crises

While the chief of staff role is immense, you are not working alone. **The Executive Office is the engine for delivering on the Governor's promises.** You have already designed the organizational chart during the transition, now it is time to effectuate it.

An early task will be **setting goals.**

TRANSLATING PRIORITIES INTO TRACKABLE GOALS

The Governor's impact and legacy depends on the chief of staff's ability to drive results. That means translating priorities into trackable goals. In this process, draw on resources created by the Policy Transition Team and topic-based transition Steering Committees, and engage the Cabinet and Executive Office.

We recommend using a **SMARTIE**[1] framework:

- **Strategic:** Reflects an important dimension of what you seek to accomplish
- **Measurable:** Includes standards to clearly determine whether a goal has been met
- **Ambitious:** Represents significant progress
- **Realistic:** Is possible
- **Time-Bound:** Includes a clear deadline
- **Inclusive:** Considers and involves those most impacted
- **Equitable:** Addresses systemic injustice and/or inequities

Once the goals are set, your job is to break them into pieces, delegate implementation to executive and agency staff, track progress, and communicate back to the Governor.

Resource: *SMARTIE Goals Worksheet*

Resource: Goals Progress Tracker

1 Framework established by The Management Center.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE MANAGEMENT

The Executive Office acts as the administration's command center, responsible for both proactively advancing the Governor's agenda and coordinating the daily flow of information, decisions, and responses. Effective management is vital to its performance.

STAFF ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Staff know their position titles and have a general sense of their responsibilities. As staff assume their roles, **set clear expectations including attitudes and approaches** that reinforce the Governor's values. Use written expectations to ensure clarity and provide a basis for performance accountability. Use check-ins to get aligned with staff on what success looks like for their role.

In addition to setting the expectations for individual performance, it is important to **set the tone for how the Governor's office functions** internally and presents itself externally to the rest of the State Government and to the public. The chief of staff may want to issue a short document laying out those expectations.

Examples of Executive Office operating expectations:

- Be a model of our values and culture expectations.
- Align time with priorities whenever possible.
- Protect the Governor's time, energy, and privacy.
- Do not commit to anything on behalf of the Governor; all Governor-level requests go to Scheduling.
- Advance decisions to and share information with the Governor only after the information has been vetted by the chief of staff.
- Respect each other. Listen, assume best intent, and bring a growth mindset.
- Communicate. Provide context as appropriate and keep necessary parties in the loop.
- When you identify problems, offer solutions.
- Be clear about ownership. Ensure every priority, project, and task has an owner.
- Account for impact. Understand that Executive Office requests have a big ripple effect on agency time/energy and can sometimes divert attention from other priorities.

DELEGATION

The chief of staff is the conductor in a statewide orchestra. On behalf of the Governor, the chief runs the show, ensuring each player is synchronized and effective.

That means becoming an expert delegator, guiding instead of doing the vast majority of day-to-day work and allowing each team member to fully own their roles. The chief of staff is the only person who knows what everyone has been assigned to do, and it is up to them to make sure that lanes are clearly understood.

Effective delegation involves:

1. **Aligning on expectations** about the who, what, where, when, and why—and a little on the how
2. **Staying engaged at the right level** (e.g., check-ins, progress reports, etc.)
3. **Creating accountability and learning:** managing to deadlines and offering feedback along the way
4. **Adjusting the approach** based on the experience level of the individual and the context

Given the chief of staff's positional power and tight schedule, it's easy to fall into the pattern of offering direction before it's needed. The chief should resist the urge to offer quick fixes or direction for three reasons:

1. Specialized staff are likely more expert on the topic than the chief of staff; their context can be helpful.
2. You want to develop leaders who can run large operations without step-by-step instruction.
3. Staff will watch and model the chief's behavior in their management, over time reducing their team's overall impact.

Instead, **approach check-ins and briefings with curiosity.** Listen closely and ask probing questions. Use repeat-backs to check for understanding and alignment ("So I'm hearing X, Y, and Z. Is that right?"). With larger projects, ensure roles and lanes are crystal clear.

In some cases, the chief of staff will want to provide more guidance or be more in the mix. For example, if the matter is high-stakes or the staff member is less experienced.

Overall, routinize signaling trust and providing support without undermining work.

FOR THE GOVERNOR: DELEGATION TIPS

You are the head of state. Focus your time and attention on what you can do, and leave the rest for others to accomplish. Realistically, you will **delegate everything except select decisions.**

In order to delegate well:

- **Define what success looks like.** State the outcome you expect. Share any opinions on the who, what, where, when, and why.
- **Leverage your vantage point.** Your perspective is singular. Share resources only you have been exposed to (e.g., a company promoting a new relevant technology, a community connection, etc.)
- **Stay engaged on priorities.** Judiciously request progress reports and/or strategy sessions on the few matters most important to you.

FEEDBACK

As staff execute their work, give feedback generously. It's how they'll learn and how the office will reach peak performance. Providing feedback early and often will also normalize it.

Three types of feedback are:

- **Positive Feedback:** Recognizes specific choices a person made that led to a positive result. Specify the behavior or action and the impact.
  - Example: "You told a really compelling story during your speech. The audience was engaged, asking questions, and offering suggestions."
- **Developmental Feedback:** Focuses on continuous improvement. Be clear about what they did, the impact, and how it could have gone better.
  - Example: "At the next presentation please spell out acronyms so the public can easily understand what you are trying to communicate."
- **Corrective Feedback:** Something needs to change or there will be negative consequences. Don't make judgments or assumptions. Instead, share the specific behavior, why it matters, and what needs to change.
  - Example: "You've pulled me into the last three negotiations. I need you to get to a place where you can handle these meetings on your own, because I don't have time to be involved in all of them. Let's talk about what is holding you back."

Use The Management Center's CSAW Model (Connect, Share, Ask, Wrap Up) for giving effective feedback.

Seek feedback, too (from the Governor, staff, and colleagues). Most people will not provide feedback unless asked. When you ask, make it easy for them to respond. If you say, "Do you have any feedback on that meeting?" they will likely say "No." If you say, "I was pleased with my early facilitation of that meeting. I think I laid the groundwork for a structured conversation. I have concerns that my wrap up and next steps were vague. What are your thoughts on my close and overall facilitation?" they are more likely to respond because self-reflection demonstrates openness.

FOR THE GOVERNOR: FEEDBACK TIPS

Giving feedback helps your staff meet your needs and maximize their impact. Do it regularly and thoughtfully, recognizing your words hold great weight.

- **Offer specific praise.** Saying "good job" might make staff happy, but they won't remember what they did well later. Be specific.
  - Example: "Thank you for building such a strong relationship with Tracy. It really delivered for us today."
- **Level up performance.** Don't sweat the small stuff, but if you see an opportunity for someone's performance to go from good to great, share it directly or through the chief of staff.
  - Example: "Attendees had more questions, but we had to leave. This issue is important enough that I'd like Sam to stay behind next time to do additional Q&A. It will avoid frustration later."
- **Course correct.** If behavior needs to stop or change right away, say that.
  - Example: "The security detail didn't have the address for the event and we drove around for 20 minutes. The delay meant that we were behind schedule most of the day. Please make sure this doesn't happen again."

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Communications to the Governor

Know what information the Governor expects to receive and provide it. **Be smart about the timing and context.**

Examples may include:

- Matters of significant financial and/or litigation concern to the state
- High-profile media inquiries and breaking news
- Major incidents involving State Police, State Prisons, and/or National Guard
- Important legislative matters and leadership positions
- Investigation and/or ethical matters
- Enforcement matters
- Significant Executive Office or Cabinet leadership personnel shifts
- Legal actions being taken against the state by the federal government
- Major health emergencies or updates

Ensure there are effective reporting lines to deliver this information and be clear about response times and communication methods (e.g., text, email, call). For example, the Governor must be told of an active school shooting immediately. An executive staff resignation can be communicated during a routine briefing later that day or week.

Match the degree of context with the exigency. For most issues that arise, there will be multiple perspectives and relevant areas of expertise within the Executive Office and state agencies. Create a process where the Governor can benefit from the best collective wisdom of staff. This could require a coordinated memo with multiple sign-offs or a joint briefing.

FOR THE GOVERNOR: WHAT YOU SHARE WITH EMPLOYEES

As you've moved from the campaign to the transition to governing, your positional power has grown, your profile has increased, and you've become less accessible. **What you choose to communicate to the Executive Office and state employees will be noticed and acted upon.** Musings will become mandates that can drain time and resources. Be careful and strategic in what you communicate, to whom, and when. In each event of your day, whether internal or external, have a deliberate plan and message. Expect that it will be acted upon.

Reserve candid conversations, brainstorming, and venting sessions for a select internal group with the clear understanding that it's not a forum for direction and action. Your chief of staff should make sure such opportunities are built into your schedule.

Your internal communications can help motivate (sometimes weathered and beleaguered) employees to do their jobs well on your behalf. Communications from you may include: your values, new Cabinet members, recognition and rewards, the death of a prominent leader, a major achievement for state government, how a particular event or decision advances your agenda, etc. Individual communications, like a short note of gratitude or recognition, are always welcomed and motivating.

Assume everything you communicate will be shared with the media. Depending on your state, your internal communications could also be a public record and/or used in pending litigation.

Meetings

During the transition, the Governor was much more in the weeds of each decision and meetings were highly detailed. It's impossible to operate at such a granular level now—and not recommended.

Establish a consistent meeting schedule for the Governor. These meetings should align with the Governor's priorities, be efficient, and include the right people at the right time. The scheduler acts as the gatekeeper, while the executive assistant handles meeting preparation and email management. Ask the Governor to say, "I'm not sure what my schedule is, but here is the person to contact." **If the Governor doesn't say "Yes," the scheduler won't have to say "No" later.** Given the realities of the Governor's schedule, most meetings will be declined.

The Governor's time is precious. So is executive leadership's. Pull together meetings when there's a need for discussion, alignment, a decision, or when the topic is sensitive. Meetings should have a purpose, owner, and outcome. The purpose of the meeting should be clear to the Governor and attendees ahead of time. The Governor should not have to ask why the meeting is happening.

SAMPLE MEETING SCHEDULE

6:00 AM – 7:30 AM	Personal time
7:30 AM – 7:45 AM	Review daily topics and schedule
8:00 AM – 8:30 AM	Executive team meeting
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Senior staff meeting (join 1-2 times per week); Review news and schedule
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	Meetings with legislators; Campaign thank you calls; Current job close out; Inauguration work
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Media/social media; Interviews with appointees/cabinet
11:00 AM – 11:45 PM	Internal meeting on upcoming decision (e.g., cabinet/policy/legislative)
11:45 AM – 1:00 PM	Lunch & Desk Time
1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	Travel to event; Executive desk time
1:45 PM – 2:15 PM	Press conference or event open to the media; Transition Leadership Team, directors briefing
2:15 PM – 3:00 PM	Interviews with appointees/cabinet
3:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Stakeholder meeting and/or business recruitment; Policy/legal discussion or stakeholder meeting
4:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Travel back from event; Earned and social media prep/engagement
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Executive desk time; Agency overview and budget discussion
6:00 PM – 6:15 PM	Wrap up, next day agenda decisions

Resource: *Event Request Form Sample*

DECISION-MAKING

Though the Governor and Transition Team practiced decision-making during the transition, the pace and range of topics significantly increases once in office. Staff should know what decisions they can make, what needs to go to the chief of staff, and what must go to the Governor. Begin with more decisions coming to the chief of staff (or Governor, if appropriate). Over time and a track record of success, expand the decisions that are delegated.

Provide the Governor with options related to the decisions at hand, and be ready with a recommendation. Ensure the relevant perspectives in the Executive Office and state agencies have been accurately reflected in the option set. If differences exist, work them out ahead of time, or—if necessary—fairly present them to the Governor as part of the decision-making process.

The chief of staff plays a vital role in ensuring that decision-making processes (whether conducted via meetings, paper documentation, or other communication channels) are clearly understood by all parties, including the Governor. While these processes may vary based on the Governor's preferences and public records requirements, it is essential that every gubernatorial decision is well-informed and documented.

FOR THE GOVERNOR: GUBERNATORIAL DECISION-MAKING

Decision-making is a significant portion of your job. Given your position and limited time, **it's important to decide on matters appropriate for your role.** Delegate the rest.

As you assess what must come to you for a decision, **consider the degree of risk and level of importance.**

Potential matters for you to decide:

- Directional strategy on priorities
- Communications approach
- Legislative strategy
- Major budget matters
- Cabinet and senior executive staff hiring
- Emergency declarations
- Executive or administrative reorganizations
- External stakeholder hot topics
- Litigation matters

In the decision-making process, **consider and communicate your "decision mode."** Your decision mode conveys the type of input you seek and lets those around you know how to engage. Decision modes include:[2]

1. **Tell:** The decision is made. You share it and make yourself or others available to answer questions. Ask questions like, "Do you have any questions about how we're moving forward?"
2. **Persuade:** You have a near-final approach. You aim to get stakeholders on board, but will consider a few shifts if they lead to significant improvement. Ask questions like, "What do you think it'd take to implement this well?" and "What still needs to be clarified?"
3. **Test:** You have a draft and want to know how it lands with an audience. There could be better ideas out there and you're open to them. Ask questions like, "What could you imagine going wrong with how we're approaching this?" and "What's an outcome you'd absolutely want to avoid?"
4. **Consult:** You seek ideas and feedback on a concept. The input will shape the outcome. Ask questions like, "What could make this idea even better?" and "If you were in my shoes, what would you do?"
5. **Joint:** You are open to input from the trusted collaborators you've assembled. You are open to a consensus decision or a majority vote. Ask questions like, "Which path would you vote for?" and "What do you think we should do?"

The amount of input should correlate with the number of people impacted and how controversial or precedent-setting the matter is.

As you're planning, be clear on the following:

- What decision you need to make
- Who the decider will be (whether it's you, or someone you designate)
- Your decision mode
- Who you'll ask for input
- What questions you'll ask

2 Framework established by Monitor Consulting and adapted by The Management Center.

FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF: YOUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GOVERNOR

Your relationship with the Governor is paramount. There is no more important professional relationship in the administration.

You must become an expert at "managing up."

1. **Understand the Governor.** What are the Governor's strengths? Weaknesses? Work habits? Needs? When do they do their best work? What helps the Governor stay focused and/or motivated? If you have a strong relationship, ask these questions. If your relationship is new or fragile, study the Governor's patterns and (with permission) speak with their close friends and confidants to get answers.
2. **Cultivate emotional intelligence.** This includes self-awareness and self-management strategies, perspective-taking, and empathy. For example, when you are surprised or embarrassed, your reaction might be: fight (argue), flight (leave), freeze (go blank/shut down), or fawn (overcommunicate and overcorrect)? Identify and practice self-regulation strategies to stay grounded (e.g., breathe, visualize the next step, take a break, talk to a close colleague). When faced with major roadblocks, understand and tap into what motivates you. A Governor is not a superhero. They get tired, crabby, and stressed like the rest of us. Routinely consider the Governor's experience and use the infrastructure around them (e.g., scheduler, executive assistant, relationship with spouse) to help them be their best.
3. **Know your sphere of control.** You have a powerful job—and are often not the ultimate decision-maker. You oversee information flow, relationship management, people management, prioritization, resource shifts, strategy, messaging, and more. You likely influence the Governor's decisions, and there will be times when you and the Governor disagree, sometimes strongly. Leading up to and in those moments, recognizing your sphere of control (what you can control and what you can't) will help your mindset.
4. **Get clarity on what's delegated.** The Governor delegates to you and expects you to deliver. If you are unclear on what the Governor is asking, clarify. Ask questions like: What does success look like for you here? What level of priority is this work? I'm thinking X, Y, and Z should be involved. Do you feel strongly about including anyone else? Does a deadline of X seem on target? See tools shared in the "Delegation" section. These can also be helpful as you manage up.

Resource: *Focusing on Your Sphere of Control Worksheet*

AGENCY MANAGEMENT

Agencies translate policy into practice. Engaging them effectively helps maximize results. Staff are overseen by often-rotating appointees. These grizzled employees tend to be sensitive to interactions with the Executive Office, and information travels fast. Signaling respect, taking care in Executive Office management, communicating (see "Internal Communications" section), and investing in professional development and recognition programs can earn trust and inspire staff confidence.

Managing agencies will be a major continuing effort for the Executive Office. It is important to establish the right reporting structures and cadences to make sure the Office has sufficient insight into activities, while balancing that against placing unnecessary reporting workload on the agencies that distracts from their mission execution.

REPORTING STRUCTURES AND MEETINGS

Led by Cabinet members, each agency reports to an Executive Office contact. Reporting structures vary based on the size and scope of the administration. Cabinet leads may report to the chief of staff, deputy chiefs of staff, deputy governors, a chief operating officer, chief administration officer, or others. **Agency heads representing the Governor's top priorities should report to staff closest to the Governor.** Establish a structure for routine reporting (e.g., weekly written updates).

Share the Landing Teams' findings as soon as appointees are hired. Inform them of the Governor's agency-oriented priorities and seek their input on next steps. **Hold routine check-in meetings** to handle timely items and make decisions, and less frequent stepback meetings to track progress-to-goals. Create opportunities for deeper dives on key priorities and sensitive matters. While agencies will be continually acting on their statutory and regulatory mandates, they should also be reminded of and held accountable to the Governor's priorities.

Organize cabinet meetings frequently enough to reinforce a collective purpose, maintain alignment, set (or reset) expectations, promote collaboration, and drive outcomes.

Cabinet meeting agenda items might include:

- Values review and discussion
- Annual goals and priorities
- Legislative and/or budget strategy
- Communications and messaging
- Shift in and/or new policy
- Case study
- New data and/or statewide trend
- Cross-department initiatives

Create clear lines of communication from the Executive Office to state agencies. Establish specific points of contact to communicate directions or request information. Communications from multiple Executive Office staff can quickly swamp and confuse an agency, which will treat all such requests as priorities. Calls from the Governor's Office create big ripples in the government pond.

ENGAGING AGENCY STAFF

Encourage Cabinet members to hold early listening sessions and one-on-ones with career staff leaders. They should review any past morale surveys to better understand each agency's needs—and, later, administer their own. The Governor may also want to do early listening and values-sharing sessions with select agencies, depending on the administration's priorities and the state of the workforce.

Be clear on the Governor's expectations around agencies engaging the media. What matters will the Governor respond to? What will the agencies take the lead on?

Share hiring and management expectations. Will the Cabinet leads hire all open agency appointee positions moving forward or will the Governor's office want to sign off? How will performance management issues with appointees be handled? Consider if there are agency-oriented events that the Governor should attend or other expectations to communicate.

EXECUTIVE ACTIONS AND POWERS

Each Governor has unique legal authority. That authority can be demonstrated through a variety of legal actions and directives. **Understand what authorities the state grants.** Common examples include:

- Executive Orders
- Proclamations
- Administrative Directives
- Emergency Declarations
- Vetoes
- Rules and Regulations
- Inter/intragovernmental Compacts

Beyond the legal actions themselves, the authorities can be used to send a message, set up legal challenges, or to direct the State workforce on where to focus.

WORKING WITH THE LEGISLATURE

The Executive Office has **two primary goals** in working with the current Legislature: 1) get the budget adopted; and 2) advance the Governor's priorities.

PASSING THE BUDGET

The budget is how the Governor invests in their priorities. Persuading the Legislature to adopt the Governor's budget requires a thoughtful, carefully calibrated strategy. Build relationships with legislative and financial committee leadership directly, through office proxies, and through the budget director.

Understand key players' needs. Election years tend to speed up budget negotiations. Negotiators want to hit the campaign trail. Use those moments strategically. **Decide early what the Governor is willing to trade in negotiations.**

ADVANCING YOUR LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Rather than having one big bill adopted by a certain date, expect to advance the Governor's legislative agenda over years. **Consider the three to five "must pass" bills.** Assess the strength and weight of your most strategic legislative relationships, the Legislature's interests, evolving politics, and public sentiment. Sequence legislation for momentum, starting with popular wins to generate goodwill. Remain disciplined and focused on priorities.

Build a public narrative, using the Office's communications to create a sense of inevitability. Understand how and when the administration has political capital and leverage the Governor's voice at the exact right moments. **Timing is everything.** Control the calendar and use deadlines advantageously.

Create powerful coalitions of respected, impacted, and interested stakeholders. Flex relationships and coalitions to neutralize opposition. Separate policy and messaging bills from governing bills.

LIAISING WITH THE LEGISLATURE

Establish a legislative liaison for the Executive Office. This role (or team) maps the legislative strategy, manages relationships, and tracks legislation. The liaison is the proxy for the Governor in the Capitol, and helps shape the Governor's positions on the legislation that will land on their desk. The role has a close working relationship with legislative leadership, committees, and staff, influencing the timing and feasibility of legislation, anticipating and preventing problems, and seizing opportunities. **The liaison should be an exceptional negotiator on behalf of the administration.**

Most state agencies will also have a legislative liaison, playing a similar role on behalf of their department. These liaisons act in close coordination with the Executive Office and should be considered part of the team to mobilize and lobby the legislature to advance the administration's priorities.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

FOR THE GOVERNOR: STAYING CONNECTED

On the campaign trail, you were actively networking and earning votes, accessible to all. Being Governor can feel like a 180-degree shift, as you focus singularly on using the power of the Office strategically to advance priorities for the good of your state. With that said, there are still ways to stay engaged personally.

- **Do an early listening tour.** When you are first in office, go to each county and hear what's working, what's not, and what constituents want you to prioritize. Meet with major constituency groups.
- **Use connections as advisors and/or validators.** Invite them to join a state advisory committee, board, or commission. Hold occasional private dinners and invite their thinking on specific issues. Ask them to raise their voice or flex their relationships with key legislators, decision-makers, or the media around your priorities.
- **Attend public hearings and forums related to your priorities.** If there's a major local issue or a hearing on a piece of legislation, attend with staff. Set the tone and then listen. You can gain perspective by attending for only 15 minutes, while signaling the importance of the gathering.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement can create early momentum for the administration, provide third-party validation, and support constituent case work. It also allows for two-way communication with the Executive Office, and will likely be visible and celebrated.

Develop an engagement strategy that complements the Governor's priorities.

- Do you need to build a coalition to pass legislation?
- Do you hope to improve a service delivery system?
- Do you want to address an acute local issue?
- Do you need to take the temperature on a new initiative?

Executive Office actions should reflect the Governor's aims. Organize engagement by geography or constituency.

Connecting with people based on where they live rather than what they believe is a practical and powerful way to engage people on **location-influenced** priorities. They share lived experience and will have relevant, actionable feedback. It also draws local and state legislators by district, providing the opportunity for you to publicly recognize, praise, and/or hold them accountable to commitments.

Constituency-based engagement is organized around a shared interest, role, or impact. Youth, business owners, labor unions, educators, and advocacy organizations are a few examples. These stakeholders offer depth on a topic, providing information on trends and emerging issues. They can share what has been tried before, the outcome, and realistic short- and long-term solutions. These stakeholders often mobilize networks and advocate publicly. Build credibility and capacity with unlikely or unusual allies for shared wins, and expect that all constituencies will lobby the Governor and Executive Office on their positions.

ONGOING ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Akin to the Honorary and Steering Committees during the transition, volunteer advisory bodies can provide information, feedback, and recommendations on select topics or priorities (like healthcare, environment and energy, education, and business). They can also be an **effective forum to maintain and leverage community connections.**

A committee's **charge and expectations should be clear** and all members must understand public records laws. Members should go through an ethics screen and might include academics, advocates, community leaders, heads of foundations, business owners, etc.

The potential policy, technical, and public relations benefits of creating advisory committees should be weighed against the costs:

1. Staff resources to manage the logistics of the committee
2. Governor and Executive Office time to ensure members—particularly high profile members—receive attention and appreciation for their efforts
3. Potential for unhelpful (or even counterproductive) outcomes that do not advance the Governor's agenda

WORKING WITH STATE EMPLOYEE UNIONS

States have labor laws that guide how the employer (the State) and the public employee unions work together to set wages, discuss working conditions, and resolve day-to-day issues. Covered under this are employee rights, who can unionize, and what can be negotiated. State laws vary. Speak with your legal counsel about your specific state's labor laws.

If the state has a unionized workforce, agency and office personnel leads will work with union members to settle personnel disputes and address culture and training issues. Consider what role the Executive Office should have in these matters. The Governor typically assigns a prime negotiator on the state contract and signs off on tradeoffs and the final product.

There are natural tensions between how the State retains its authority to run operations and the union's rights to protect fairness, consistency, continuity, and workers' voices in the process. There are also budgetary constraints. The Governor's philosophy, the legislative environment, budget conditions, and public opinion can shift the relationship between employer and union quickly. To mitigate this, **establish a relationship with the union early.** Communicate clearly and consistently. Implement agreements on time and without fanfare.

FINAL WORDS FOR THE GOVERNOR

Trusted Confidants

As Governor, you are joining an exclusive group. Including territories, only 55 leaders hold the position at a time. It can be isolating. You will rely on advisors and close confidants. As you build your circle, consider these three attributes: **trust, discretion, and perspective.**

Be intentional and keep the circle small. Select people with complementary skillsets to you and one another. Diverse perspectives can offer multiple topical and/or functional viewpoints, including political, communications, policy, or operations.

Many Governors pull close people from earlier chapters in their lives—loyal and tested campaign managers, former colleagues, mentors, or personal friends who understand how they think. They also typically engage their closest staff as confidants.

Whomever you choose will need to be pressure-tested in the current context. Can they handle sensitive information without leaking? Provide honest advice? Offer good judgment? Do they have a personal agenda? Are they focused on credit and power, or the outcome? Look for patterns in behavior and actively manage who is in or out of your circle. Model the behaviors you expect of others.

Establishing a Healthy Routine

You are amazing! And, you are human. It's impossible to be your best self every day. A healthy routine helps you show up consistently, grounding you in the basics and preparing you for the daily unknowns.

Build a schedule that reflects your body's natural rhythm. If you are a morning person who likes to take an hour walk with the dogs, start your day in a way that allows for that—without getting up at 4am (unless you want to)! If you need snack breaks, let your scheduler know and add that time to your schedule.

Establishing routines will cut down on the mental energy you need to spend on sleep, movement, and food. Once your time is protected and operationalized, you and your family can rely on your routines, and the Executive Office team will expect them.

THE FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE CHECKLIST

Download checklist

Advancing Priorities

- ☐ Determine pathway for each priority (e.g., executive order, agency shift, legislation, budget)
- ☐ Develop SMARTIE goals
- ☐ Establish progress tracker
- ☐ Create systems to shape, calibrate, and communicate key messages (internally and externally)

Executive Office Management

- ☐ Define roles and expectations for executive staff and agency leads
- ☐ Identify and communicate types of work will be delegated/kept at what level
- ☐ Share what success looks like on delegated work
- ☐ Build structures and systems to stay engaged at the right level (e.g., more important = more engaged)
- ☐ Give routine feedback (e.g., one-on-one check-ins with reports)
- ☐ Map and communicate what information must be shared with the Governor
- ☐ Identify the types of communications that will come from the Governor
- ☐ Set a consistent meeting schedule for the Governor, Executive Team, and Cabinet
- ☐ Clarify what decisions the Governor wants to make and what decisions will be delegated and to whom

Your Engagement with the Governor

- ☐ Understand Governor's needs through behavior patterns and/or speaking with close confidants
- ☐ Know triggers and have strategies to manage them
- ☐ Understand sphere of control
- ☐ Design approach to get clear on what success looks

Agency Management & Legal Authorities

- ☐ Share Landing Teams findings with agency leads
- ☐ Set expectations on priorities and tracking
- ☐ Build reporting structures to the Executive Office
- ☐ Establish decision-making and communication expectations
- ☐ Understand state's authorities granted to the Governor

Working with the Legislature & Stakeholders

- ☐ Develop strategic relationships
- ☐ Craft and pass a budget that reflects your priorities
- ☐ Build a community and stakeholder engagement strategy to advance priorities
- ☐ Cultivate support geographically and by constituency; building impactful coalitions
- ☐ Establish a relationship with unions
- ☐ Leverage the Governor's role strategically (e.g., listening tours, public forums)
- ☐ Pass top priority bills

For the Governor

- ☐ Governor builds a helpful, appropriate, and strategic inner circle
- ☐ Governor establishes a healthy routine

ABOUT GOVLAB

A LEADERSHIP LABORATORY FOR GOVERNORS

At GovLab, we work with **pro-democracy gubernatorial candidates and governors**—from primary day to Inauguration Day and through the first year—to implement effective transitions and build infrastructure that maximizes results for your first 100 days in office and beyond.

GovLab is a leadership laboratory, not a school. We offer **best practices,** guides, and tools so you don't need to learn the hard way. You get hands-on **workshops, mentoring** from current and former governors, and **individual coaching** from people who deeply understand the ins and outs of governing. We work with you to customize systems, structures, and approaches to your state and context. Your unique insights and experiences contribute to a foundational body of knowledge that supports both current and future governors.

- **Post-Primary through Election Day:** We support you in **setting the direction** for the transition.
- **Election Day through Inauguration Day:** We assist in **shifting control**: activating the formal transition infrastructure, winding down the campaign, securing personnel, and shaping your narrative as Governor.
- **First Year in Office:** We help you **steward state government.**

Our Services

We offer scalable services focused on the transition and first year in office.

- **Coaching & Consulting:** Get tailored strategic, leadership, managerial, and operational advice and hands-on implementation support. We can help you build structures, systems, processes, and management solutions.
- **Peer Learning:** We offer timely, confidential workshops for principals and senior leaders on topics like defining your role, setting up transition infrastructure, goal-setting, and building a compelling narrative. Plus, opportunities to network with current and/or former Governors.
- **Written Resources:** Get guides and tools on leadership, management, and transition best practices.

Who We Are

GovLab is composed of seasoned former chiefs of staff and others who have supported gubernatorial transitions and state administrations. Our work is shaped by current and former values-aligned Governors who want to pay their experience forward.

What makes GovLab unique:

- **Our values.** We apply a pro-democracy screen to those we serve and the work.
- **We engage early**—even before the election—to maximize a Governor's success.
- **We are not armchair advisors.** We are helpful and practical. We get in the mix quickly and add immediate value.

Contact GovLab at www.gov-lab.org. GovLab is a project of States Leadership Action.

APPENDIX

Transition Planning Checklists

1. FROM PRIMARY DAY TO ELECTION DAY

Job Description Templates
(Transition Director, Chief of Staff, Executive Assistant, Scheduler)

Defining Your Values Worksheet and Sample

Transition Budget Templates
(August through Election Day; Election Day through Inauguration)

2. FROM ELECTION TO INAUGURATION

Campaign Assets Worksheet

Campaign Exit Memo Worksheet

Landing Team Memo Worksheet

Candidate Evaluation Scoresheet

Vetting Checklist

3. THE FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

Identifying Pathways for Priorities Worksheet

SMARTIE Goals Worksheet

Goals Progress Tracker

Event Request Form Sample

Focusing on Your Sphere of Control Worksheet

Transition Planning Checklists

This resource contains checklists for the following:

- Primary Day to Election Day Checklist
- Election Day to Inauguration Day Checklist
- Inauguration Planning
- The First Year in Office Checklist

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

From Primary Day to Election Day Checklist

- ☐ Draft and communicate values
- ☐ Set transition goals and scope work
- ☐ Build pre-election transition budget
- ☐ Identify how the pre-election transition will be funded
- ☐ Hire transition director in July or August
- ☐ Establish confidentiality policy—including deciding on NDAs
- ☐ Develop official transitional organizational chart
- ☐ Hire Transition Leadership Team:
  - ☐ Deputy transition director
  - ☐ Chief operating officer
  - ☐ Personnel director
  - ☐ Legal advisor
  - ☐ Other positions hired if possible
- ☐ Hold public records training
- ☐ Identify Chief of Staff candidates and Landing Team Members
- ☐ (If relevant) Scope Steering and Honorary Committee(s)
- ☐ (If relevant) Select Steering and Honorary Committee(s) chairs/co-chairs and members
- ☐ Establish official transition timeline
- ☐ Build transition website
- ☐ (If needed) Secure office space
- ☐ Create transition entity, separating state and private funds
- ☐ Contact state-side transition leads; understand processes and assets
- ☐ Meet with the current Governor (if appropriate) and/or respected experts/leaders
- ☐ Decide on a Lieutenant Governor engagement strategy
- ☐ Establish loose contingency plan for if election is close (recount needed) or contested

From Election Day to Inauguration Day Checklist

Campaign Wind-Down

- ☐ Celebrate election victory
- ☐ Recognize contributions of campaign staff, volunteers, and donors
- ☐ Assess campaign assets (priorities, staff, messaging, donors, community leaders)
- ☐ Obtain exit memos
- ☐ Create list of campaign promises
- ☐ Identify ongoing political infrastructure needed
- ☐ Methodically wind down campaign, retaining necessary longer-term infrastructure
- ☐ Identify campaign staff ripe for administration
- ☐ (If holding) Complete listening tour

Official Transition

- ☐ Meet with outgoing Governor
- ☐ Draft values statement
- ☐ Create official transition leadership structure
- ☐ Set meetings and reporting structures
- ☐ Draft Executive Office org chart
- ☐ Set communication plan; build announcement message block calendar
- ☐ Hire chief of staff, scheduler, and executive assistant
- ☐ Activate Landing Teams; secure, review and respond to Team reports
- ☐ Establish Operations, Personnel, Legal, Policy, and Inauguration Transition Teams/functions
- ☐ (If relevant) Launch Honorary and Steering Committee(s)
- ☐ Vet, hire, and orient Executive Office and Cabinet
- ☐ Assess legal risk
- ☐ Understand and communicate public records laws and ethics requirements
- ☐ Establish policy positions
- ☐ Finalize budget
- ☐ Understand emergency response protocols; orient Executive Office and Cabinet

About You as Governor

- ☐ Define role and leadership approach
- ☐ Identify Governor-level decisions; delegate others
- ☐ Set decision-making process, meeting schedule and briefing approach
- ☐ Hold meeting between the incoming and outgoing Governors' families
- ☐ Understand security detail's needs and approach

Inauguration

See detailed inauguration checklist on next page.

- ☐ Set size, scope, and budget
- ☐ Decide on theme
- ☐ Plan events
- ☐ Send invitations
- ☐ Write speech
- ☐ Prepare day of schedule; prep leads

Inauguration Planning Checklist

Budget

- ☐ Budget (ceremony, celebrations)
- ☐ Fundraising targets and donor tiers
- ☐ Sponsorship packages
- ☐ Inauguration date and time

Secure venues

- ☐ Swearing-in ceremony
- ☐ Inaugural address
- ☐ Parade (if applicable)
- ☐ Inaugural ball(s) and reception(s)
- ☐ Interfaith service (if applicable)
- ☐ Confirm all permits and city coordination

Programs

- ☐ Define theme
- ☐ Draft run of show
- ☐ Select speakers and performers
- ☐ Coordinate oath of office
- ☐ Script and minute-to-minute agenda (“tick tock”)
- ☐ Design visuals

Logistics

- ☐ Stage, podium, seating
- ☐ AV, power, lighting
- ☐ Credentials
- ☐ Volunteers

Communications

- ☐ Launch
- ☐ Press announcements of events and schedule
- ☐ Credentialling

- [ ] Speech
- [ ] Livestream and broadcast partnership
- [ ] Social media

Invites

- [ ] Guest list
- [ ] RSVP tracking
- [ ] Seating Chart
- [ ] Accessibility and accommodations
- [ ] Public access plan

Briefings

- [ ] Legislators
- [ ] Cabinet and appointees
- [ ] Caucus members
- [ ] Major county elected officials (if applicable)
- [ ] Staff
- [ ] Washington D.C. partners
- [ ] Key lobbyists
- [ ] Community leaders

The First Year in Office Checklist

Advancing Priorities

- ☐ Determine pathway for each priority (e.g., executive order, agency shift, legislation, budget)
- ☐ Develop SMARTIE goals
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Working with the Legislature & Stakeholders

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- ☐ Establish a relationship with unions
- ☐ Leverage the Governor's role strategically (e.g., listening tours, public forums)
- ☐ Pass top priority bills

For the Governor

- ☐ Governor builds a helpful, appropriate, and strategic inner circle
- ☐ Governor establishes a healthy routine

Job Description Templates

This resource contains templates of job descriptions (including some sample language) for the following roles:

- Transition Director
- Chief of Staff
- Executive Assistant
- Scheduler

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

TRANSITION DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

<Paragraph about your administration here>

The Transition Director leads the planning and execution of all activities between the campaign and swearing in. The Director ensures a seamless and efficient transition by aligning with the Governor-Elect to coordinate personnel decisions, policy development, stakeholder engagement, and operations.

More details on the work and qualities of the Transition Director are below.

What You Do

The Transition Director is focused on establishing and managing the transitional infrastructure that established the foundation for the new administration.

Specific responsibilities are:

Executive Engagement

- Align with the Governor-Elect on plans, key decisions and sequencing, and make decisions that reflect the Governor-Elect's values and perspective
- Provide routine progress reports

Transition Planning

- Propose transition goals and timelines
- Set transition staffing and reporting structures
- Embed the Governor's values into the transition process
- Establish hiring principles
- Clarify budget and compliance constraints

Transition Team Management

- Select Transition Team members
- Set expectations and divide work
- Model Governor's values and reinforce desired culture
- Monitor and guide progress
- Ensure communication and accountability across teams, committees, and functions
- Advance hiring process for Chief of Staff, Scheduler, and Executive Assistant
- Oversee Executive Office and Cabinet hiring
- Maintain clear separation between campaign and official resources

Stakeholder Engagement

- Prioritize and respond to the needs of internal and external stakeholders
- Bring significant opportunities or concerns to the Governor-Elect

Who You Are

You are a seasoned, goal-driven professional accustomed to working in high-stakes, fast-paced environments. You routinely make high-profile decisions under pressure. You are steady, trusted, and bring significant emotional intelligence to your work. You are known for your leadership, management, and organizational skills.

The specific qualities we seek in a Transition Director include:

- **Alignment**: Understands and shares the Governor's values and perspective
- **Strategic thinking:** Adeptly drives to outcomes, assessing risk and opportunities, and ordering actions to maximize impact
- **Judgment:** Practices discernment and deftly balances tensions and multiple viewpoints to make sound decisions under pressure
- **Sense of urgency:** Actions reflect the understanding that there is no time to waste, but does not make hasty or ill-considered decisions
- **Management:** Seasoned at aligning strategies, tactics, and people to achieve lasting results; skilled at identifying talent and holding people accountable
- **Organization:** Stays on top of priorities and work streams, meeting expectations and deadlines
- **Inclusive:** Recognizes varying backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences as a strength, while aligning team on a common mission; sets the tone and expectation that everyone belongs here

What Else You Should Know

<Information about the application process and salary here>

CHIEF OF STAFF JOB DESCRIPTION

<Paragraph about your administration here>

The Chief of Staff translates the Governor's priorities into reality through the skillful oversight of policy development, legislative engagement, legal affairs, stakeholder management and agency operations. The Chief of Staff directly manages the Executive Office and reports to the Governor.

More details on the work and qualities of the Chief of Staff are below.

What You Do

The Chief of Staff is focused on establishing and managing the administration. Specific responsibilities are:

Strategic Leadership

- Align with the Governor on plans, key decisions and sequencing
- Understand and share the Governor's values and perspective
- Drive the Governor's policy agenda, legislative agenda, and communications strategy
- Provide routine progress reports

Management

- Set goals, expectations and workstreams
- Model the Governor's values and reinforce desired culture
- Monitor and guide progress
- Ensure communication and accountability across Office and agencies
- Lead hiring process for executive and senior management
- Maintain clear separation between campaign and official resources
- Clarify budget and compliance constraints

Stakeholder Engagement

- Prioritize and respond to the needs of internal and external stakeholders
- Manage VIP relationships
- Bring significant opportunities or concerns to the Governor

Who You Are

You are a seasoned goal-driven professional accustomed to working in high-stakes, fast-paced environments. You routinely make high-profile decisions under pressure. You are steady, trusted and bring significant emotional intelligence to your work. You are known for your leadership, management and organizational skills, as well as your political acumen and discretion.

The specific qualities we seek in a Chief of Staff include:

- **Strategic thinking:** Adeptly drives to outcomes, assessing risk and opportunities and ordering actions to maximize impact
- **Judgment:** Practices discernment and deftly balance tensions, multiple viewpoints and political sensitivities to make sound decisions
- **Sense of urgency:** Actions reflect the understanding that there is no time to waste
- **Management:** Seasoned at aligning strategies, tactics and people to achieve lasting results; skilled at making decisions under pressure
- **Organization:** Stays on top of priorities and work steams, meeting expectations and deadlines
- **Inclusive:** Recognizes that the team has a common mission, but widely varying backgrounds, perspectives and experiences; sets the tone and expectation that everyone belongs here

What Else You Should Know

<Information about the application process and salary here>

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT JOB DESCRIPTION

<Paragraph about your administration here>

The Executive Assistant is responsible for providing direct administrative and operational support to the Governor. This role ensures the Governor is prepared for daily meetings and events, and manages all follow up. The Assistant coordinates closely with the Scheduler and Chief of Staff.

More details on the work and qualities of the Executive Assistant are below.

What You Do

The Executive Assistant is focused on optimizing the Governor's time. Specific responsibilities are:

Meetings & Events

- Synthesizes and summarizes information
- Compiles briefing documents, reports, and presentations
- Follows up on action items
- May provide logistical support at organizational events
- Travels with the Governor as needed

Communications

- Manages the Governor's email and contacts
- Drafts correspondence to stakeholders and internal communications

- Takes notes in meetings and disseminates appropriate information
- Fields calls and requests

Project Management

- Researches topics as directed by the Governor
- Manages project
- Follows up on action items

Administration

- Ensures operational efficiency and responds to office needs
- Tracks the Governor's expenses and prepares reports for reimbursement and billing

Who You Are

You are a seasoned goal-driven professional accustomed to working in high-stakes, fast-paced environments. You routinely make high-profile decisions under pressure. You are steady, trusted and bring significant emotional intelligence to your work. You are known for your adaptability, management, and organizational skills.

The specific qualities we seek in an executive assistant include:

- **Collaborative:** Proactively communicates with colleagues to ensure the Executive Office leaders have the information they need to thrive.
- **Organization and Time Management:** Aligns time and priorities, manages significant volume without things falling through the cracks, and meets deadlines.
- **Adaptability:** Pushes work forward through obstacles, while also maintaining flexibility, understanding that circumstances can change quickly.
- **Discretion and Professionalism:** Maintains strict confidentiality, models reason and calm under pressure, and maximizes impact.
- **Attention to detail:** Tracks even the smallest details and maintains accuracy in a fast-paced high-volume environment.
- **Self-Starter:** Brings a "spirit of yes" to the work, charting a path forward and pushing through obstacles that arise.

What Else You Should Know

<Information about the application process and salary here>

SCHEDULER JOB DESCRIPTION

<Paragraph about your administration here>

The Scheduler is responsible for managing the daily and long-term calendar for the principal, ensuring that time is used effectively and aligned with strategic priorities. The role serves as the central coordination point for scheduling requests from internal (policy, communications, operations teams) and external stakeholders, balancing competing demands while maintaining discretion and precision.

More details on the work and qualities of the Scheduler are below.

What You Do

The Scheduler is focused on ensuring the Governor's time is maximized to advance the priorities of the Administration. Specific responsibilities are:

Calendar Management & Strategic Prioritization

- Collaborate with the Chief of Staff and team to understand priorities and make scheduling decisions accordingly
- Participate in scheduling and message block meetings to align on upcoming priorities
- Own and manage daily, weekly and long-range calendar
- Evaluate and prioritize meeting requests
- Ensure appropriate balance between internal meetings, public events, travel and personal time
- Anticipate scheduling conflicts and proactively resolve them

Meeting & Event Coordination

- Coordinate logistics for meetings, briefings and events
- Work with team to ensure principal is prepared with materials
- Sequence meetings to maximize efficiency
- Coordinate in-state and out-state travel

Who You Are

You are a seasoned, goal-driven professional accustomed to working in high-stakes, fast-paced environments. You routinely make high-profile decisions under pressure. You are steady, trusted and bring significant emotional intelligence to your work. You are known for your adaptability, management and organizational skills.

The specific qualities we seek in a scheduler include:

- **Organization and Time Management:** Aligns time and priorities, manages significant volume without things falling through the cracks, and meets deadlines
- **Adaptability:** Pushes work forward through obstacles, while also maintaining flexibility, understanding that circumstances can change quickly
- **Discretion and Professionalism:** Maintains strict confidentiality, models reason and calm under pressure, and maximizes impact
- **Attention to detail:** Tracks even the smallest details and maintains accuracy in a fast-paced high-volume environment, spots for potential errors and resolves them proactively
- **Collaborative:** Coordinates with colleagues and external partners to deliver a values-aligned, priority-focused schedule for the Governor

What Else You Should Know

<Information about the application process and salary here>

Defining Your Values Worksheet and Sample

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

See Sample Values below.

Value	Defined as	What it looks like

Sample: Values

Value	Defined as	What it looks like
Action	Move quickly	▪ Bring a sense of urgency to the work ▪ Don't let important and/or concerning matters sit; resolve them
Accountability	Explain, justify, and take ownership of our actions.	▪ Be fully committed to delivering for the citizens of our state ▪ Take responsibility for missteps and mistakes ▪ Deliberately work toward our goals and priorities
Collaboration	Work effectively with others	▪ Build and work with atypical coalitions ▪ Listen to the needs of those who disagree with us ▪ Be willing to compromise in favor of meeting shared goals
Community Centered	Valuing community perspectives	▪ Invite community members to provide input on decisions ▪ Give weight to lived experience, local needs and perspectives
Discretion	Using good judgment; operating with care	▪ Hold confidential information ▪ Consider impacts of actions
Efficiency	Performing without wasted time or effort	▪ Reduce waste ▪ Increase speed of service delivery ▪ Streamline systems and decision-making processes
Equity	Fairness; building systems and conditions for all to thrive	▪ Strive to understand different peoples' needs and create conditions where all state residents can thrive ▪ Remove barriers to equal opportunity ▪ Reduce disparities in outcomes across groups
Follow-Through	Do what you committed to do	▪ Give great focus to fewer things and obsess about doing them well ▪ Provide periodic updates on progress toward long-term objectives.
Fun	Enjoy the work	▪ Build relationships and a sense of togetherness ▪ Feel the privilege of what you can achieve in your role ▪ Celebrate success

Good Governance	Centering facts, the rule of law, and a belief in government	▪ Value perspectives of public servants and experts ▪ Consider data in decision-making ▪ Center "customer" experience and advance results ▪ Assess impact on taxpayer dollars
Humility	Holding a modest opinion of one's own importance or rank	▪ Attribute success to the whole ▪ Work consistently for the people of the state
Inclusion	Welcoming multiple perspectives and backgrounds	▪ Engage diverse stakeholders ▪ Demonstrate interest in service to all residents statewide (not just those who voted for you) ▪ Ensure staff reflects state demographics
Innovation	Introducing new approaches	▪ Focus on implementing bold, new solutions ▪ Move with intention to prioritize new ideas ▪ Be willing to fail and try again
Integrity or Ethics	Adherence to moral and ethical principles	▪ Do the right thing every time even when no one is watching ▪ Act with honesty, openness and transparency ▪ Consider the spirit and the letter of the law
Public Interest	Benefit to the public	▪ Promote the common good over narrow special, private, or individual interests
Respect	Due regard for others	▪ Treat people the way you want to be treated ▪ Listen to dissent
Sense of Urgency	Moving quickly and purposefully	▪ Set ambitious deadlines ▪ Drive work to completion ▪ Make timely decisions
Transparency	Being open to public scrutiny	▪ Publicly share progress to goals ▪ Engage the press and constituents ▪ Explain why a decision was made

Campaign Assets Worksheet

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

Priorities & Promises

What are your priorities and campaign promises?

Messaging

What messages have been effective?

Staff

Which staff may have transferable skills? Consider who is...

- A big picture and innovative thinker, helping to shape the Governor-Elect's vision and values?
- Policy-oriented, focused on issue platforms and priorities?
- An effective communicator with the media, community members, and/or with staff?
- A talented manager, improving systems and boosting culture and morale?
- Incredibly organized and methodical?
- Excellent at time management and attention to detail?
- Well-connected to VIPs, community leaders, and donors?

Name	Skills

Donors

Who are important donors? What are their issue interests?

Name	Issue Interests

Community Leaders

Which respected community leaders were engaged? What are their issue interests?

Name	Issue Interests

Campaign Exit Memo Worksheet

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

A campaign exit memo provides a post-mortem that you/your campaign manager can reference before launching your next campaign. It also helps you understand if there are any liabilities or loose ends to tie up before assuming office.

Each senior staff member (campaign manager, deputy campaign manager, communications director, field director, etc.) should draft or contribute to an exit memo.

Key Data

- Margin of victory
- County and demographic voting data
- Paid media performance
- Digital metrics
- Voter contact metrics
- Campaign org chart

Capturing the Playbook for Winning

- **Strategy**
  - What was our campaign plan and strategy going in? What adaptations did we make along the way, and why?
  - What strategic choices, decisions, actions significantly influenced our path to victory?
  - What's your analysis on the data above?
- **Voter Contact**
  - What type of voter contact did we do in which places (registration, IDs, persuasion, turnout)?
  - Who conducted our voter contact (volunteers, staff, paid canvassers, phone, other)? In which places? How did we decide what type of program to run where?
  - What was the structure of our field program (staff and/or volunteers)? How was turf broken down across the state? How did constituency organizing play a role?
- **Coalitions/Endorsements**
  - How did coalitions and/or endorsements impact the campaign?
  - What VIPs boosted our efforts? How? Was the timing a factor?
  - What political challenges did we encounter, and how did we deal with them?

- **Messaging**
  - What messaging worked well overall?
  - What key messages resonated with which demographics?
  - How did the timing or sequencing of messages impact the outcome?
- **Vendors**
  - What vendors did we use?
  - What was their performance?

Challenges

- **Strategic Inefficiencies**
  - What were our strategic missteps? How might we avoid them in the future?
  - Where did we believe a set of facts, but the reality was different?
- **Gaps**
  - What resource gaps did we experience?
  - Were there any data or information gaps of note?
- **Execution Issues**
  - Where did our execution break down?
  - Consider: hiring, staff, operations, political, communications, field, events, etc.
- **Training**
  - What training did we offer for staff? Volunteers?
  - How effective was it?
  - If we were to do this again, what approach would you recommend?
- **Decision-Making**
  - Which decisions do we wish we'd made differently?
  - How did we make decisions when we didn't have all the facts? What approaches worked well and what approaches didn't?
  - Were there any decisions we made that were unpopular with key stakeholders but still ultimately strategic? Popular but unstrategic? If so, what were they and what did we learn from the process?
- **Operations**
  - Where did we see operational gaps?

Inflection Points, Decisions, Other Influences

- What were inflection points of note?
- What were key decisions that helped shape the outcome?
- What pivots did the campaign need to make?
- What outside your sphere of control influenced the outcome?

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- Summarize the systemic and strategic lessons learned
- What are your recommendations for next time? Consider strategy, structure, personnel, vendors, etc.

Landing Team Memo Worksheet

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

Immediately after Election Day, the transition director will activate the Landing Teams. These team(s) will assess agencies, boards, and commissions, then summarize their findings in a memo to the transition director/leadership. This worksheet outlines topics to include in that memo.

1. **Agency/Department Structure and Personnel**
   - Organizational charts, including principal reports
   - Staff list, including civil service classifications
   - Appointee bios
   - List of contract employees
2. **Boards and Commissions**
   - Purpose and history
   - Structure and positions
   - List of members and bios
   - Terms and vacancies
3. **Contracts**
   - Current and pending major contracts
   - Contracts over $X (set based on state size and policies)
4. **Top Opportunities & Challenges**
5. **Critical Issues and Timely Matters**
   - Open litigation
   - Urgent deadlines

Candidate Evaluation Scoresheet

Note: This tool was adapted from The Management Center with permission.

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

Candidate: **Interviewer:** **Date:**

Please rate candidate on scale of 1-4 based on whether they hit our bar in each specific must-have:

4 = Solidly meets the bar

3 = Yes, with some concerns

2 = Evidence points to no

1 = Big Red Flag in this area

NOTE: The numbers are a rough guide—we care more about your impressions, questions, and thoughts on particular strengths and/or flags than we do about the numbers themselves; they're just a helpful shorthand. Ultimately, hiring managers will make final decisions weighing various needs and trade-offs.

One-sentence profile:

Must-have (These describe a 4. This is not the highest ideal; it's a description of the fundamentals.)	**1-4**	**Comments/Examples/Evidence** Please note 1-2 examples of what you observed; if you have questions or concerns, include them.
Must-have #1: ▪ ▪ ▪		
Must-have #2: ▪ ▪ ▪		

Must-have #3: ▪ ▪ ▪		
Must-have #4: ▪ ▪ ▪		
Other comments:		
Overall recommendation:		

Vetting Checklist

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

General Information

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Address
- ☐ Date of Graduation
- ☐ Occupation

Legislative Districts, Political Affiliation (if applicable)

Criminal History

- ☐ State Criminal History Records
- ☐ Sex Offender Registry
- ☐ TransUnion Criminal Search

Work/Business History

- ☐ Professional License Check (if applicable)
- ☐ Business Search
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ State Contracts

Campaign Finance and Lobbying

- ☐ Contributions
- ☐ Individual Lobbyists Search
- ☐ Work or Volunteer Organization Lobbyist Search
- ☐ Spouse Lobbyist Search (if applicable)
- ☐ Campaign Finance Search (if they have run for office)
- ☐ Voter Registration

If Attorney

Attorney Grievances

Social Media

- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ X
- ☐ Instagram

Search Engine Check

Identifying Pathways for Priorities Worksheet

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

Use this worksheet to help you identify pathways to advance your priorities. For more guidance, see the "Advancing Priorities" section of the GovLab Transition Manual.

Consider:

- What can be accomplished through executive order?
- What can be accomplished by agency resource shifts?
- What needs to be enacted in legislation?
- What can be advanced through the budget?
- Are there legal actions that must be taken?
- Is a public education campaign necessary?
- Do you need to shift messaging

Priority	Executive Action	Legislation	Budget	Legal	Messaging	Public Education	Notes
State Exchange		X	X		X	X	

SMARTIE Goals Worksheet

This tool was adapted from The Management Center with permission.

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

Setting SMARTIE goals ensures that your work is anchored in results that reflect your values.

S	**STRATEGIC**	Reflects an important dimension of what you seek to accomplish
M	**MEASURABLE**	Includes standards to clearly determine whether the goal has been met
A	**AMBITIOUS**	Represents significant progress
R	**REALISTIC**	Is possible
T	**TIME-BOUND**	Includes a clear deadline.
I	**INCLUSIVE**	Considers those most impacted
E	**EQUITABLE**	Addresses systemic injustice and/or inequities present

Examples

	SMARTIE
Sample Policy Goal	Institute affordable (no more than 7% of household income spent on childcare), accessible (100% of families with children aged birth to five have access to regulated early care) facilities, and high-quality (diverse field of skilled, well-prepared, and professionally compensated early childhood educators) childcare.
Sample Training Goal	Train all agency appointees, executive office leadership and designated agency employees on emergency response protocols, including simulations, by July 1st.
Sample Management Goal	In the year-end survey, X% of staff agree or strongly agree with the following statement: “Our organization has a culture of feedback.”

Writing SMARTIE Goals

What **Strategic** and **Ambitious** outcomes do you hope to achieve? Our goal is to:

What are the **Measurable** indicators of success? We will know success when we see:

-
-
-

When do you aim to have this achieved by? **Time-Bound:**

Between *(start date)* and *(end date)*.

A **Realistic** plan to achieve this goal includes these tactics/activities (consider time, resources, capacity):

	By *(date)*
	By *(date)*
	By *(date)*

Consider populations most impacted and/or often left behind. How might this goal make their lives better and make **Equity and Inclusion** more explicit?

Our **SMARTIE Goal** is:

Event Request Form Sample

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

Processing and decision information to be completed by [scheduling lead]

Received: _____ *(date)*

Governor's decision:

☐ Will attend	☐ Will delegate to someone else	☐ Decline

Decision communicated to requestor: *by* _____ *on* _____ *(date)*

If the Governor will attend the event, complete the rest of the form and return it to the scheduler. The scheduler will accept the invitation and take it from there.

Event name	Event date
Purpose: *(include background, goals and objectives)*	
Reasons why gov's attendance is requested or needed: *(include description of the Governor's role)*	
Surrogate that could attend if gov can't:	

Event Contact person	Event time	Arrival time

Name and number of on-site contact/staff member:	Location:

Event format/schedule:
Audience/attendees:

Focusing on Your Sphere of Control Worksheet

Note: This tool was adapted from The Management Center with permission.

To get your own editable copy of this template, click here.

Identify what's *outside* your sphere of control.

Consider things in your political and organizational context, decisions and positions, immovable constraints, and other people's attitudes, behaviors, or feelings.

Identify what's *within* your control.

Consider initiatives, timelines, structures, processes and communications.

What do you want to *take action* on?