

Transition Guide for Newly Elected Mayors





Distributed at:

Seminar on Transition and Leadership for Newly Elected Mayors

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Harvard Kennedy School of Government
Institute of Politics

Co-Sponsored by:
The United States Conference of Mayors



SET GOALS

An upfront investment in strategy will insure that you can use your resources to achieve your goals.

Making a Plan

A good mayor has a strong plan. A plan begins with goals. A mayor should lay out broad goals and concrete objectives, and include any campaign promises to the list. Additionally, the mayor should add programs initiated by predecessors. The mayor and staff should then go through this list together, sorting items by priority and detailing specific strategies to achieve each goal. Each goal should have its own timeline that fits into the administration's larger timeline, benchmarks to measure progress and a note of how much of the mayor's time it will require. Identify the resources needed to achieve each goal and recognize what gaps still remain. Lay out a plan for how to acquire and expend the resources you need. Once an agenda is formed, people can be designated to take point on each item to ensure that the plan becomes reality. Although money is just one kind of resource, a quick and early understanding of the budget will have immediate short-term and long-term effects on a

a mayor's ability to accomplish goals.

Do you know: What resources have already been allotted or committed? What commitments have already been made by past mayors or other city service providers? What is within your power to change? How, when and by whom is the budget formulated and approved?

Communicating the Plan

Working through an administration's agenda will allow a mayor to clearly communicate that agenda. An initial investment made in orienting and engaging the city in a mayor's strategy may save the frustration and failures that come with daily directing. From the day after the election to the last day in office, press, staff, business leaders and others will pressure a mayor to reveal more and more of his/her plan. Clearly communicating that agenda both internally and externally is necessary to the success of any agenda. However, announcements should not be made before content is fully formulated and the implications are carefully considered.



Sticking to the Plan - Evaluation

An agenda has been made and communicated but how does a mayor make sure that it is implemented? Each city has its own methods and measures of assessing its progress that a new mayor may keep or improve. In either case, the mayor should know what that system is and how it will work. Accountability empowers when it measures results rather than routines or processes. For example, technological advancements allow mayors to practice accountability driven leadership that incorporates quantitative analysis into progress benchmarks. Other advancements allow for more qualitative analysis. Constituencies may be engaged where they already are using constituent hotlines, social media, open-office hours or a series of Mayor's Nights Out with department heads or other key staff. Cities are busy places, but a plan for hearing the unheard and keeping a grasp on where the city was, is and will be can be an invaluable tool.

BUILD AN ORGANIZATION

Mayors don't govern alone; they govern as the head of an administration. The transition period should be used to assess what vacancies need to be filled, which staff may be carried over from the previous administration, and which people are best qualified to fill new positions. Often a substantial number of the departmental heads and even the personal staff that were appointed by a previous administration are retained. Regardless of whether staff carries over or is newly hired, it is important that all hires are committed to the goals of the new administration and that the mayor is ready to change staff arrangements if the need arises.

Chief of Staff and Scheduler

Two of the most important positions to hire are the chief of staff and scheduler. The chief of staff will likely serve as the closest advisor and the person responsible for the execution of the agenda, and can also serve as the staff director of operations.



The scheduler serves a gate-keeping function and determines who has access to the mayor and under what circumstances. The scheduler manages the mayor's very limited time. A scheduler is also in charge of a significant portion of a mayor's public relations so it is important to find someone with strong interpersonal skills and an understanding of the city. It is the scheduler who says, "The mayor really wants to meet with you, but I am having a hard time fitting you into the schedule".

It is important that the chief of staff and scheduler are aligned in terms of the goals a new administration wants to achieve and how to go about achieving those goals.

Setting up an Administration for Success

Every mayor has a unique style of leading, however; there are certain conditions that can be put in place to increase the chances of forming a successful team. An administration needs compelling direction to energize, orient and engage staff. They also need to know who 'they' are. Forming a real team requires that the team is bounded and clear about its own authority, explicit about its norms, and is stable

over time. A mayor should make sure that members of the administration have access to the educational, coaching, technical and material resources that they need to thrive. Earlier, we discussed the importance of assessing the progress of an administration. That feedback should be provided directly to those responsible.

Just as feedback identifies successes and places for improvement, it also can help identify talented staff. The process of identifying and recruiting talented staff should continue throughout a mayor's tenure. From the beginning, all potential hires should be evaluated – not just those who are previously known to the mayor. Having spent a considerable effort on finding the right people, it is important to retain that talent. Staff will perform at their best with meaningful work that combines skill variety and a sense that they are working on complete tasks that are crucial to the administration's goals. If each staff member experiences direct responsibility for outcomes and receives feedback that provides them with knowledge of actual results of the work, it will create the internal work motivation that can drive an administration forward.



These sorts of jobs will also help attract promising young workers who can be brought in through summer internships, mayor's youth councils, and fellowships for local high school and college students.

MOBILIZE RELATIONSHIPS

A candidate reaches out to supporters and potential supporters. As a mayor, it is crucial to reach out to all the major actors. These actors control resources – money, time, and support – that can either help an administration move toward its goals or prevent it from attaining those goals. These key people may include past or future competition, and although it might not be possible to work together, it is worth the effort to try.

Take a moment to list twenty actors outside of your direct team whom you need to connect with in the next two weeks.

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Here is a list of potential actors:

City Manager & Department Heads: Depending on the form of government, much of the implementation of initiatives will fall to the city manager or department heads. City managers and department heads are in an uncertain position with a new mayor. Bring them in early to establish what is expected from them, what they need from the administration, what their standing obligations are and where they are headed. Controlling their accountability standards and access to the public provides an opportunity to involve them in fulfilling the administration's agenda.

City Councilors: Early in an administration, it is important to establish a good working relationship with the City Council. Mayors should take care to establish lines of communication and working norms early.

Superintendent of Schools: New mayors should meet with leaders of their school system and familiarize themselves with how the system is governed and the immediate challenges surrounding education in their community. Strong schools attract and retain residents. It is worth exploring the role of the mayor's office in education, even if it has no control over the administration of the local school system.

Union Leaders: At some point during a mayor's tenure, it is likely that a union contract will have to be renegotiated, a process that can be both time consuming and politically contentious. Understanding union priorities upfront may help to improve these negotiations. In addition, any changes made in government operations will affect the tasks and responsibilities of union-represented city employees. By interfacing with union leadership early on, one can better anticipate any challenges to on-the-ground implementation of priorities and more quickly build support for (or anticipate pushback against) new initiatives.

Business/Commerce Associations: Business and commerce associations can be valuable partners in achieving the goals of an administration. Major businesses within a community have great interest in the proper functioning of the city and can be influential in building public support for an initiative, sponsoring and funding events, and contributing expertise in business retention and growth. Moreover, these associations serve as important forums where concerns are aired and consensus is built.



Major Non-Profit Institutions: In many cities, the nonprofit community, in particular hospitals and universities, generates a large portion of the economic activity. They are major employers, purchasers, service providers, and property developers with public missions that often overlap with a mayor's priorities. New mayors should connect with the leaders of these institutions early in their terms to assess how these institutional resources may be leveraged to achieve goals. Often these are longstanding relationships that have not been seriously re-imagined in the recent past but that may present significant opportunities for further mutual advancement.

Philanthropic Community: Newly elected mayors should build relationships with major philanthropists and local foundations. In addition to being a potential source of financial resources for future policy initiatives, the philanthropic community is often influential within and knowledgeable about the community

Neighborhood Groups: Neighborhood groups can be very influential within a city and are often the key to success or failure for initiatives. Building relations with neighborhood groups helps a mayor's office be more responsive to the needs of the community and helps build support for policy initiatives among community members. Where neighborhood groups do not exist, it may be a good idea to encourage their creation.

Religious Community: In many areas, the most vibrant sources of community engagement are the congregations of local faith communities. In addition, faith organizations often are important service providers of food and housing assistance. New mayors should consciously build relationships with faith leaders, as they are an important source of information about community needs and can help to build support behind policy initiatives.

Other Elected Officials: Achieving success will require the cooperation, if not additional support, from other levels of government. Newly elected mayors should schedule time to meet with key officials in county, state, and federal government.



Opinion Leaders: Local opinion leaders can either be an asset or impediment to achieving goals. A new mayor should know whether these individuals were supportive during the campaign. Regardless, it is important to build relationships, even with those who opposed the new administration. They can become potential allies on individual policy initiatives.

Community-Based Organizations: Community-based organizations play important service-provision roles within many cities and are increasingly performing many tasks typically thought of as ‘governmental.’ To the extent that a city funds or supports these organizations, it is imperative to create strong relationships with their leaders. As organizations that directly serve and work with community members, they can become influential partners in enacting priorities.



MANAGE PUBLIC IMAGE

To the press and its audience, a new mayor is a largely unknown individual whose actions will have significant effects upon their lives. The intense analysis of the first months in office is an opportunity and a challenge to be properly managed. Publicly, the need to get things right should be emphasized. Information on appointments and initiatives should only be released when a mayor and staff are confident in their decisions; however, some information should be provided in response to press questions so as to not be seen as unresponsive. A system is needed for tracking incoming press calls and responding in a relatively short timeframe.

A staff person should be clearly designated to respond to media inquiries. Clear guidelines should be provided for staff that do not typically interact with the media to ensure they check in before engaging with them.

Everyone in an administration reflects on the mayor, and all staff need to be aware that the press and community members may be combing through ‘personal’ information on social media sites such as Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn and Twitter. They can also demand to see internal emails. A mass of previously private information is no longer private and is playing an increasing role in defining the image of a mayor’s administration. In facing the scrutiny of the press, it is important for a mayor to separate their role as mayor from their personal life.

There is a constant conversation across a city about how and what a mayor is doing. A new mayor needs to be able to monitor this conversation and be aware of how engaging in the conversation can shape it. Right now, new tools are facilitating a broader conversation than was previously possible. Residents of a city are commenting on news stories, posting videos, publishing thoughts on blogs, conversing on social media sites and engaging with each other online. Mayors should establish their presence online so that they can be a part of guiding that conversation. In growing numbers, members



of the press are looking online to find out more about what is going on offline. With the advent of a more social Internet, online and offline communication and action are becoming even more closely intertwined. Social media can be used to amplify the effects of a mayor's actions, generate buy-in, engage citizens in government processes and save a city money by reducing staff time spent responding to repetitive calls. Like city-service hotlines and community meetings, the Internet can be used to improve access to city services. Both online with social media and offline with hotlines and community meetings, a new mayor must start communicating with, not just to, the press and the public.

NEW MAYORS CAN NOT FORGET TO ACTIVELY MANAGE THEIR TIME

Mayors who do not actively manage their time are likely to fill it with an uncoordinated slate of events, speaking invitations, group meetings, and press interviews.

A mayor's most precious resource during the transition, and throughout time in office, is time. New mayors should examine how they will divide their time among different tasks and how each of these tasks will fit into the administration's priorities. In doing so, it may be helpful to consider the following general categories:

Internal Management: New mayors should consider how they will manage their own staff. A number of mayors across the country are becoming more actively engaged in the management of city staff through 'Stat' programs modeled on Baltimore's successful CitiStat program. A new mayor may be active in the management of other city staff through performance measurement indicators, but time must be allocated for this purpose.



External Meetings: Mayors are invited to participate in an overwhelming number of community meetings and to serve on a wide range of committees and task forces. New mayors should carefully consider which external meetings are related to and imperative to achieving specific goals, and participation in those meetings should be prioritized accordingly. Often times sending a representative is appropriate.

Public Appearances: In the early days of an administration, it will be tempting for a mayor to attend every public appearance to which he/she is invited; but it is important to remember that time spent at each public appearance is time not spent actually governing the city. Appearances should be chosen strategically.

Media: As noted earlier, mayors must actively manage their relationships with the media. This should include setting aside some time to work with the media at structured events that emphasize key issues areas or administration priorities.

Intergovernmental Relations: A mayor's administration works within a network of other government entities. Time invested early in intergovernmental relations can pay dividends later, especially for mayors whose priorities fall in policy areas with significant overlap in governing authority.

Personal Time: Being a mayor is often described as 'the best job in the world,' with an opportunity to change the lives of all the residents of a city. It is also a job that can personally consume those who do not set aside time for themselves at the very beginning. In the hectic schedule of the transition, it can be easy to forget to plan details such as who will drive the kids to school, how to personally recharge, or when to take a vacation. Vacations not scheduled in advance will not happen. A mayor has to take care of a city, but with the city relying on the mayor, it is important that they also take care of themselves.

Welcome to the Best Job in the World.



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