

# STATE PUBLIC SERVICE GUIDE TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

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## Introduction

To advance leaders with disabilities in public service to our city, suburbs, county, and state, ADA 25 Advancing Leadership created the Public Service Leadership Project. The first phase of this project is to advance leaders with disabilities in state government positions, with a particular focus on state boards and commissions. To support that project, Advancing Leadership has created this State Public Service Guide to Boards and Commissions to give Advancing Leadership Members a brief introduction to public service leadership on boards and commissions in the state of Illinois.

This guide will give you a brief overview of the executive branch of State of Illinois Government and State of Illinois Boards and Commissions. We will walk you through how to find a board or commission that matches your interests, how to apply for a board or commission position, and how to prepare yourself to serve. We also provide you with information on additional leadership and professional development programs in order to build your skills in public service. Throughout the guide are hyperlinks to additional information if you would like to gain even more information on how to serve the state of Illinois on a board or commission.

To fully participate and serve on Board and Commissions we know that you might require accommodations. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 mandate that people with disabilities have freedom, equality, and opportunity to participate fully in public life. In addition to prohibiting discrimination, the ADA requires covered entities, including Boards and Commissions, to provide the accommodations, within reason, that people with disabilities need in order to have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from goods and services offered to the general public. This may mean making reasonable modifications to policies, practices or procedures when the modifications are necessary to ensure individuals with disabilities are able to access services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations. If you need guidance, accommodations requests are not met, or there are challenges to your requests, [Equip for Equality is an excellent resource.](#)

As a member of Advancing Leadership, we are here to support you on your adventure into public service. If you do apply for or are approached about serving on a state board or commission, please let us know. We can give guidance, mentoring, and other supports. Please contact Risa Rifkind, Program Manager of Advancing Leadership, to let Advancing Leadership know of your public service steps and successes at: [rrifkind@cct.org](mailto:rrifkind@cct.org)

## Overview of the Executive Branch of State of Illinois Government

Illinois state government is made up of three branches: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branch. The Executive Branch includes six statewide constitutional officers: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, and Comptroller.

### Governor

The Governor by far has the largest jurisdiction of all the constitutional officers. It is the responsibility of the Office of the Governor to faithfully execute the laws of Illinois.<sup>1</sup> Under the Governor are 24 state agencies. Below is the list of the agencies under the Governor with hyperlinks to those departments and agencies so you can learn more about them:

- [Department on Aging](#)
- [Department of Agriculture](#)
- [Department of Central Management Services](#)
- [Department of Children & Family Services](#)
- [Department Commerce & Economic Opportunity](#)
- [Department of Corrections](#)
- [Illinois Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Department of Employment Security](#)
- [Illinois Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- [Department of Financial & Professional Regulation](#)
- [Department of Healthcare & Family Services](#)
- [Department of Human Rights](#)
- [Department of Human Services](#)
- [Department of Insurance](#)
- [Department of Juvenile Justice](#)
- [Department of Labor](#)
- [Department of Military Affairs](#)
- [Department of Natural Resources](#)
- [Department of Public Health](#)
- [Department of Revenue](#)
- [State Fire Marshal](#)
- [Illinois State Police](#)
- [Department of Transportation](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Illinois Constitution, Article V, Section 8.

- [Department of Veterans' Affairs](#)

## Lieutenant Governor

The Lieutenant Governor is to become the acting Governor if the Governor is unable to serve because of death, impeachment, failure to qualify, resignation, or other disability.<sup>2</sup> Currently, the Lieutenant Governor also has 19 statutory duties that range from chairing or serving on several boards under the Governor's jurisdiction to directing the surveying of all state of Illinois school districts on the quality of the services provided by the Illinois State Board of Education.<sup>3</sup>

## Attorney General

The Attorney General is the chief legal officer for the State<sup>4</sup> and is primarily responsible for protecting the public interest of the State and its people, including litigation regarding consumer welfare, the environment, criminal prosecutions, public utilities, charitable regulation, and government transparency.

## Secretary of State

The Secretary of State maintains the official records of the General Assembly as well as the Executive Branch.<sup>5</sup> Statutorily, the Office of the Secretary of State has many other official duties, ranging from issuing drivers' licenses, overseeing the Illinois State Library, to registering businesses in Illinois.

## Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the safekeeping and investment of state monies and securities.<sup>6</sup> The Treasurer oversees the State's investment portfolio, including liquidity and earnings. The Treasurer also provides services, programs, and investment opportunities for individuals, businesses, financial institutions, and local governments.

## Comptroller

The Comptroller maintains the state's fiscal accounts and orders payments into and out of the funds held by the Treasurer.<sup>7</sup> The Comptroller serves as

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<sup>2</sup> Illinois Constitution, Article V, Section 6.

<sup>3</sup> List of Illinois Lieutenant Governor's current statutory duties: <http://www.nlga.us/wp-content/uploads/ILLINOIS.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Illinois Constitution, Article V, Section 15.

<sup>5</sup> Illinois Constitution, Article V, Section 16.

<sup>6</sup> Illinois Constitution, Article V, Section 18.

<sup>7</sup> Illinois Constitution, Article V, Section 17.

the state's chief fiscal control officer and oversees the fiscal operations of state government.

## State Government Boards and Commissions

State boards and commissions take many forms. Some provide direct oversight to a state governmental entity, others set policy, and some make advisory recommendations. Regardless of the focus of the board or commission, your service on that board or commission is critical to its success and its ability to fulfill its mission.

## How to Find a Board or Commission

There are over 350 boards and commissions under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Governor. These boards and commissions cover hundreds of issues, everything ranging from healthcare to housing, child welfare to criminal justice, transportation to economic development, and everything in between. Below are the broad issue categories for the boards and commissions:

- Agriculture
- Economic Development
- Education (Pre-K to 12)
- Education (Higher)
- Environment/Conservation
- Health & Human Services
- Housing
- Labor and Employment
- Local Government
- Public Health
- Public Safety & Military
- Regulation of Industry Standards
- Regulation Licensing
- Retirement Security
- State Administrative Bodies
- State Government Operations
- Transportation

The Office of the Governor has created [a transparent website](#) for boards and commission under its jurisdiction.

This website has a search function to search all 350+ boards and commissions. In your search you can find the state agency and contact for that board, the function of the board, the terms for board members, requirements and qualifications for board members, the governance

structure for the board, statutory authority creating the board, names and terms of current boards members, and any vacancies. The boards and commissions website is currently updated every quarter.

For a comprehensive list of every board and commission in state government with detailed descriptions, go to the website for the [Legislative Research Unit of the Illinois General Assembly](#). On that website are the reports on the state boards and commissions for the Executive branch, the Legislative branch, and the Judicial branch.

## How to Apply for a Board or Commission

In order to be considered for any state board or commission, you must complete an initial application on the [appointments.illinois.gov website](#).

In the application, you must provide the following information:

- Name of the board or commission to which you would like to apply
  - While you can only provide one board or commission at a time, this will not limit your opportunities. Once you submit your application, your application is placed in a main database that can be searched for any vacancy for any board or commission.
- Your name and home address
- Business address
- Contact information
- Name of your spouse or domestic partner (if applicable)
- Demographic information, including disability
- Education history
- Employment history for last five years
- Government affiliations and/or experience for yourself and your spouse/domestic partner
- Interest and qualifications
- You may also attach a resume

With the recent election of a new governor, JB Pritzker, the Governor-Elect Pritzker Transition Team has also created a transition website with an online application process for appointments in the new administration. Visit [this website](#) to complete an application, as well as read any updates as the Pritzker Administration plans for its transition on January 14, 2019.

The transition team for the Attorney General-elect, Kwame Raoul, has also created a portal for individuals who are interested in serving on an Attorney General board or commission or are interested in serving as staff in the incoming Attorney General administration. The transition team is collecting resumes of interested individuals. Please email your resume to the following

email if you are interested in serving in the administration as either a board or commission member or a staff member: [transition@kwameraoul.com](mailto:transition@kwameraoul.com).

Section 25 of the Gubernatorial Boards and Commissions Act requires the Office of the Governor to file a report with the General Assembly that includes demographic information of appointments including disability status. It is important to track this report over time to ensure that disability representation is part of Board and Commission appointments. Advancing Leadership Members should lead proudly with their disability identity to be included in this data.

## **The Basics on How State Boards and Commissions Work**

While each board and commission is unique based upon its issue focus, its statutory mandate, and the personalities of its members, there are common structures and behaviors in order to have efficient and effective management.

### **Chair and Vice Chair**

Generally, every board and commission has a Chair and a Vice Chair. Sometimes the Chair is specifically appointed into that position, other times the Chair is elected by the members of the board or commission, depending upon the statutory authority. Sometimes the board or commission also elects additional officers.

The Chair is responsible for working closely with the board liaison for the state agency connected with that board or commission. The Chair is to ensure all board business is handled effectively and efficiently, that meetings are conducted adhering to the public agenda, and ensures that all motions and votes are handled appropriately. The Chair usually acts as the spokesperson for the board or commission, if necessary, and has primary contact with the relevant state agency director.

The Vice Chair is to step into the Chair role at meetings where the Chair is not present.

### **Schedule of Meetings**

For many boards and commissions, the meeting schedule is set by statute (e.g. meet once a quarter). If not, it is the responsibility of the Chair and board members to set a meeting schedule in advance, usually annually. For most state boards and commissions, meetings alternate between Chicago and Springfield in order to create public access both in Chicago and the downstate areas. Most boards and commissions reimburse for travel expenses for board and commission members.

## Meeting Attendance/Quorum

Attendance at all board and commission meetings is expected and required. Some boards and commissions allow virtual participation under specific circumstances.

For a board or commission to be able to conduct business, they must have a quorum of members, which is usually a simple majority of voting members appointed to that board or commission, or as defined in the statutory authority. Conversely, a majority of a quorum of appointed board members cannot meet together outside of an official meeting (e.g. at a social gathering, etc.), or it will be considered an official meeting and falls under the Open Meetings Act, discussed below.

## Basic Rules of Order

Most boards and commissions use the basic principles of Robert's Rules of Order to conduct business – e.g. making motions, etc. It would be helpful to make yourself familiar with the Robert's Rules of Order prior to serving. You can find Robert's Rules of Order [at this site](#).

## How to be an Effective Board or Commission Member

As you prepare to apply for a board or commission, or to begin your service on a board or commission, review this checklist and reflect upon the questions asked. The following practices should help you prepare for success in your board service.

### 1. Do background research on the board or commission

You will want to learn about the mandate of the board or commission, which is outlined in the state law or executive order that created the board or commission. That mandate will define the scope of authority of the board or commission, the procedures governing the board or commission, and the regulations or by-laws the members must follow.

You will want to learn how the board or commission operates as well. Review its current programs and the constituents it serves. Past annual reports, auditor reports, budgets, current organizational chart, and other similar documents should provide that background.

Here are some questions to guide you in your research:

- What is the board or commission's mandate?
- What rules, regulations, or by-laws govern the board or commission?
- How does the board or commission carry out its purpose?
- How is the board and organization structured?

- What is the organization’s annual budget? Who sets the budget and who decides how it is spent?
- Who are the senior officials in the organization the board oversees and what are their roles?
- What are the major projects or actions the board or commission is considering in the next few years?
- What is the board or commission’s strategy and goals?

## **2. Understand the role of the board and the role of the board member**

To be effective, you need to understand the role of your particular board or commission in relation to the state agency with which it works. Is it providing oversight? Advice and counsel? And how does the board or commission operate within that role? Here are some questions to guide your inquiry:

- What is the scope of the board or commission’s authority and the source of that authority?
- What matters typically come before the board or commission?
- Are there other matters that should come before the board or commission?
- How often does the board meet?
- Who sets the agenda for the meetings? Can board members submit topics?
- How does the board make decisions? How does the board vote?
- How are officers selected?
- Does the board or commission have committees? How are members selected for committees?
- Are there term limits on officers, board members, committee members?

## **3. Understand what is in the best interest and fiduciary interest of the public**

For most boards and commissions, members have a fiduciary duty to the board and its mission, i.e. to act with good faith, loyalty and due care, in the best interests of the public.<sup>8</sup> A board or commission is a steward of public interest and in many cases of public funds. Therefore, the board and its members should always act independently and in the best interest of the organization.

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<sup>8</sup> Black’s Law Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (2014).

## 4. Do your homework

For a member to be effective and to make thoughtful decisions, she or he must be informed on the issues before the board or commission. All boards and commissions should be providing you with agendas and materials prior to each meeting for you to review and reflect upon. As you review materials, prepare questions for the meeting. If at the meeting you think you are not receiving the information you need to make a decision, ask for it. Always act in the best interest of the public and the organization. Here are some questions to ask to help you prepare for each meeting and be an active member:

- How far in advance does the board receive materials so members can properly prepare?
- What is the procedure for members to request additional information, either before or during a meeting?
- What is the procedure to request individuals and staff to attend the meeting to provide additional information?
- What is the process for members to ask questions and exchange in debate?
- What statutes, regulations, procedures apply to the action you are being asked to take?
- Does the requested action align with the board's mission, responsibilities, priorities, budget?
- Do you need to hear from others in the organization before you can make your decision?

## 5. Be an active reviewer of finances

Your board or commission may be responsible for approving budgets or specific projects or expenditures. If that is the case, make sure you are an active reviewer of finances. To prepare yourself, learn how to read a financial statement. If you are unclear as to how to read a financial statement, ask the Chair of the board or commission to organize a training or tutorial for board members. Feel free to ask questions when financial materials are presented to make sure you understand what you are reviewing.

## 6. Understand your ethical obligations

Since you are serving on a public body, there are many ethical rules that are different from the private or nonprofit sectors. Be sure that you understand these rules, for they are designed to ensure that public servants act for the benefit of the public and not for their own or other's personal interest. State ethical rules impact your conduct as a board member and outside your board

membership. Here are some examples of how ethics rules may apply to your behavior:

- You will be restricted from discussing or voting on matters in which you or an immediate family member has a financial interest.
- You will be restricted from accepting a gift if it was given, or could be perceived as being given, because of an official act or position, even if the gift would not influence your actions as a board member.
- You will be restricted from representing a business or other interest before your board.

The following section presents a high-level summary of some of the ethical laws that will apply to you as a board or commission member.

## **Ethical Rules for State Board and Commission Members**

State boards and commissions must follow a series of various ethics laws when they engage in board business and when members act in both their official and unofficial capacities. A high-level overview of these ethics rules, and where you can learn more, is outlined below:

### **1. Open Meetings Act<sup>9</sup>**

The Open Meetings Act is a state law that requires meetings of public bodies, such as state boards and commissions, be open to the public except in certain specific situations. The public must be given advance notice of the time, place, and subject matters of all meetings of public bodies. A meeting of the board or commission is a public meeting under the Open Meetings Act when a majority of a quorum of the board or commission gathers for the purpose of discussing public business.

The Public Access Bureau of the Office of the Attorney General has created a Frequently Asked Questions on the Open Meetings Act for members of boards and commission. [This FAQ](#) provides easy-to-understand information on the Open Meetings Act for public members.

Once you are appointed to a state board or commission, you will be required to take an online training on the Open Meetings Act provided by the Public Access Bureau of the Office of the Attorney General, and retake the training on an annual basis. You can review and take the general public version of the online training in order to learn about the Open Meetings Act by going to the [Public Access Counselor's website](#).

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<sup>9</sup> 5 ILCS 120/1 et seq.

## **2. Illinois Government Ethics Act<sup>10</sup>**

The Illinois Government Ethics Act requires that state board and commission members complete an annual Economic Disclosure Statement. The purpose of filing these statements is to demonstrate to the public that the decisions of boards and commissions are free from any appearance of conflict of interest. On an Economic Disclosure Statement you are asked about any business interests you own as well as any lobbying interests you may represent. A sample Economic Disclosure Statement form is [linked here](#).

## **3. Illinois State Officials and Employees Ethics Act<sup>11</sup>**

Under the Illinois State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, any appointee to a state board or commission must complete an annual ethics training. This annual training is conducted online by the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Offices of the Illinois Governor.

## **4. Ethics Resources for Board and Commission Members**

There are many resources for board and commission members if you have questions about ethics obligations or actions. Take advantage of these resources to answer questions and receive guidance.

### **a. Ethics Officers**

Every state agency has an Ethics Officer. Each Ethics Officer is available to employees and appointees to provide guidance as to actions and to answer questions. To find the Ethics Officer for the agency of your board or commission, [click here](#).

### **b. Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor**

The Illinois State Officials and Employees Ethics Act created the Office of Executive Inspector General, which has as a part of its mission to educate public employees and appointees on issues of ethics and integrity. This office is a resource for state board and commission members on any questions on ethics and actions. The role of the Office of Executive Inspector General ("OEIG") is to investigate allegations of misconduct and to educate public employees and appointees as to their ethical obligations. To get general information about OEIG and how it can help you as a state appointee, [click here](#).

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<sup>10</sup> 5 ILCS 420/4A et seq.

<sup>11</sup> 5 ILCS 430/1 et seq.

The OEIG has great information for public employees and appointees on conflicts of interest, in particular how to address receiving gifts, as well as engaging in political activities:

- [Gift Guide](#)
- [Guide to Political Activity](#)

### **c. Public Access Counselor of the Office of the Attorney General**

The Public Access Counselor of the Office of the Attorney General provides training to public appointees on the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act. The Public Access Counselor works to make sure state government is transparent in its actions and documentation. Visit the [Public Access Bureau website](#) for Frequently Asked Questions, trainings, and information.

## **Leadership Programs and Professional Development**

As you prepare to serve on a board or commission, or even once you are appointed, you may want to take advantage of leadership programs that help you build your skills in public service and prepare you for your next step in service. Below is a list of both national and Illinois programs that may be of interest to you as you plan your public service future (we have not vetted these programs for accessibility):

- [Alliance for Innovation, Innovation Academy](#): Online leadership program for state and local government leaders. Program creates cohorts of up to 12 people to gain leadership skills by tackling shared scenarios and needs. Participants are assigned a team mentor and attend nine interactive virtual sessions delivered monthly.
- [Edgar Fellows Program](#): Focused on developing leadership and governing capacity in Illinois, Edgar Fellows participate in an intense five-day executive leadership training program on the campus of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- [GovLoop, NextGen Leadership Program](#): Virtual training program to develop and empower the next generation of government leaders. Participants matched with a mentor based on qualifications and interests. Six-month program with online training focused on leadership, development, and career advancement.
- [Harvard Kennedy School of Government - Emerging Leaders](#): One-week program for rising public service professional from across the country focused on gaining skills and the strategic framework to capitalize on professional opportunities and overcome obstacles.
- [Harvard Kennedy School of Government - Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#): One-week program with classroom, small group, and

individual reflection. Participants explore a wide range of leadership strategies and tools to exercise leadership either in a position of authority or as one member of a group.

- [Illinois Women’s Institute for Leadership Training Academy \(IWIL\)](#): The IWIL Training Academy prepares and propels Illinois women to pursue elected and appointed positions to advance progressive Democratic ideals. Their mission is to train Democratic women to run for office at all levels in Illinois.
- [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\) Early Career Leadership Programs – Emerging Leaders Development Program](#): Two-year program to build knowledge, skills and abilities in the basic management and technical areas for government managers. A coach is provided for each participant, and activities include monthly teleseminars with credentialed senior managers or public administration professors.
- [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\) Early Career Leadership Programs – Local Government 101 Online Certificate Program](#): Focused on leadership, management, service delivery, budgeting, and human resources. Taught by experienced managers and experts, it teaches real-life experiences, best practices, and advice to government managers.
- [ICMA Coaching Program Webinars](#): Live coaching webinars with experts on matters affecting local governments.
- [Rebecca Ryan Futurist Camp](#): Leadership development experts guide participants through an intensive camp experience and six months of virtual collaboration. Participants apply learned futurist techniques and scenario-planning to a project in their own work environment.
- [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, Executive Education](#): Two-day to two-week executive education sessions for public service leaders in areas of applied data-analytics, leading evidence-based decisions, municipal finance, and strategic leadership.
- [Young Government Leaders \(YGL\) and Senior Executives Association \(SEA\) – Mentorship Program](#): Participants are paired with SEA members, providing a confidential advisory relationship and broader exposure to leadership and management in public service.
- [Young Government Leaders and GovLoop – Next General of Government Training Summit](#): Two-day annual summit in Washington, D.C. that brings together emerging leaders and seasoned managers in federal, state, and local government to inspire innovation and provide training and leadership opportunities.

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### **Supporters**

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BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois  
Microsoft