



What role does the Bureau of Economic Development play, and what drew you to the Bureau?

Under President Toni Preckwinkle's administration, the Bureau of Economic Development was formed in 2011, and today, its mission is to lead and promote equitable economic growth and community development. The Bureau coordinates investments, federal grants, and regional planning for suburban Cook County. I was excited by the opportunity to lead such an impactful agency, and to work together with businesses, community organizations, developers, elected leadership, and constituents to ensure our communities are strong and vibrant.

Why did you undertake this project?

I joined the Bureau in July 2019, soon after the County (with Civic Consulting Alliance pro bono support) completed a Policy Roadmap that identified five-year economic vitality priorities. President Preckwinkle and I wanted to jumpstart progress by taking a comprehensive look at the Bureau's mission and strategies, to identify critical projects in suburban Cook County that would help us achieve the County's policy goals. We knew we needed to gather and synthesize input from many stakeholders within and outside the Bureau, so we turned to Civic Consulting Alliance to provide external perspective and the capacity needed to get this done.

What has the project process entailed?

Civic Consulting Alliance helped us develop the Bureau's strategic plan through interviews with our staff and outside experts, an extensive review of best practices, and analysis of federal grant and loan data. The team then identified

key initiatives and resources needed to achieve this strategy, and helped create a plan to guide implementation.

What are some of the most significant accomplishments of this project?

A mission and vision are critical to any agency's success. This project developed a strategic framework to guide and communicate about the Bureau's work going forward. It also helped us rekindle relationships with key partner agencies. We developed a meeting structure to guide how we collaborate with other agencies, and identified where these partners can plug in to particular initiatives. Finally, the project strengthened our approach to data analysis. Pulling from the wealth of data the Bureau already collects, the team helped us identify specific metrics to track progress towards our policy goals.

Why do you think this project is important?

For Cook County to thrive, our entire region needs to be vital. With a population of nearly 2.5 million people, the potential impact of improving the economic wellbeing of suburban Cook County is immense—particularly with suburban poverty on the rise in our region and nationwide. This project helped to raise up the needs of suburban towns, ensuring that they are addressed by our strategic initiatives.

How was your experience working with Civic Consulting Alliance?

We truly enjoyed working with the Civic Consulting Alliance team. Given the size of our staff (about 85 people) relative to the size of Cook County and to the complexity of the issues we are trying to solve, it's not every day that we have the chance to step back as a team and look at the big picture. Civic Consulting Alliance provided the structure and the extra capacity my team needed to gather diverse input, to think through decisions, and to develop an actionable strategic plan.

For more information on the Civic Consulting Alliance, please go to their website:

<https://www.ccachicago.org/>

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