

DRAFT SUMMARIES

Memos for a Tech Transition Building State Digital Capacity in the First 100 Days

TECH TALENT | PROCUREMENT | DATA | CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE | ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE | BENEFITS | PERMITTING | EMERGENCY RESPONSE & RECOVERY |
CHILD WELFARE

DRAFT

Introduction

In 2026, 36 states will hold gubernatorial elections, with at least 18 new governors taking office in 2027. During transition and in the first 100 days, these new administrations will set the people, priorities, and systems that determine what governors can deliver for state residents.

Tech already underpins nearly every interaction constituents have with their governments. The beginning of a new governor's term presents unique opportunities to leverage all tech has to offer and shape it to best serve constituents.

Governors will take office as budgets continue to tighten, federal funding shifts, and AI creates both opportunities and risks administrations must manage, all at a pace faster than most can absorb. Getting the state's operations, tech strategies and capacity right can drive what's possible, avoid costly mistakes, expand what already works, and ensure it endures.

Tech Talent Project has partnered with the American Enterprise Institute, the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University, and New America to create a rich set of best practices and expertise that administrations can use as a roadmap for achieving success and avoiding unnecessary failures. This project brought together nearly 150 government, industry, and nonprofit leaders around the tech opportunities ahead of states in 2027. Together, we've written nine memos capturing best practices and concrete first 100 day actions for transition and administration teams.

Four memos cover the foundational tools that make everything else possible: Tech Talent, Data, Procurement, and Customer Experience (CX). These are strategies that cut across nearly all government programs and priorities. The fifth memo covers AI, discussing best practices in how to lead, govern, and procure AI as well as how to use it to responsibly and effectively supercharge the governor's priorities. The final four memos cover critical program areas where these best practices can be implemented: Benefits, Permitting, Emergency Response and Recovery, and Child Welfare.

The Playbooks for Getting Results in Tight Budgets			
Topical Memos — Program-Specific Application			
Benefits	Permitting	Emergency Response & Recovery	Child Welfare
AI			
Foundational Memos — Making it all possible			
Tech Talent	Data	Procurement	Customer Experience

Three early decisions drive everything else. The most effective administrations first set a small number of clear priorities. Second, they put the right tech-savvy executives in place to help deliver on them, and finally, they build in accountability from Day 1.

Hiring tech talent and tech-fluent leadership is one of the most critical actions. The right tech leaders, given authority, largely determine what the rest of an administration's agenda can achieve. Tech capacity includes tech experts in key roles and tech-fluent leaders across roles. Capacity plus practical experience in change management across systems and operations, drives successful service improvements for residents. Without both, even strong programs have stalled quietly and become public failures. AI follows the same logic on a faster clock. A strong leader who understands AI, paired with a governance structure put in place early, helps teams move quickly and safely; waiting means moving without the capacity to take into account tradeoffs and implications of tech decisions.

Accountability, set early, tends to stick. Administrations that set clear metrics in the first months, tied directly to budget and campaign priorities, are far better positioned to show results quickly. Strong data provide the numbers; technology investments accelerate the change.

And funding underlies it all. Every administration inherits a budget it didn't write, often organized around spending categories rather than outcomes, with exposure to shifts in federal funding for programs like Medicaid, SNAP, and emergency response. Finding flexibility in that budget early can help pay for the tech and service delivery to achieve the governor's agenda. Hiring experienced tech leaders can help find ways to fund internal tech capacity and drive priorities.

These memos focus on critical hires and key questions for the transition period and on actions for the first 100 days that establish tech strategies and practices that directly impact residents across the states. This critical window of time is when administrations build the scaffolding they need to improve service delivery. But, of course, the work doesn't end at the 100 day mark.

After 100 days, administrations turn this early work into durable capacity and initiate deeper transformations, harnessing tech to provide quick wins and long-term improvements for constituents and avoid costly mistakes.



Tech Talent

Getting the right technology leaders in place — with real authority — before critical decisions are made

The first 100 days decide whether the governor's agenda delivers or stalls. Tech isn't a back-office line item anymore. It underpins every promise administrations make and every service they deliver to residents, from permitting to benefits to emergency response. Placing the right tech leaders with real authority in the first 100 days is the single highest-leverage action an incoming administration can take.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

☐ Assess the state's tech readiness to deliver on Day 1 executive priorities

☐ Assess the state's tech readiness using three critical questions:

- Who's accountable for tech delivery, and do they have a real seat at the table?
- Who's responsible for the state's five largest active tech or tech-enabled contracts?
- What does the state's tech hiring process actually look like?

☐ Appoint and empower leaders with modern tech expertise who can deliver

- ☐ Assess and hire key C-Suite roles
- ☐ Start planning for additional critical roles

☐ Leverage best practices for successful surge hiring within weeks

- ☐ Determine talent approach and options
- ☐ Utilize subject matter expertise in the hiring process
- ☐ Empower the Chief People Officer to evaluate and amend hiring processes

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“Tech leaders set the tone for their agencies. Quickly placing the right people — and trusting their advice — puts an administration in position to deliver on its agenda. Without them, tech failures land on the Governor's desk.”

— 2026 State Memos for a Tech Transition, Tech Talent Memo

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 Who's accountable for tech delivery, and what decisions are they tasked with?
- 2 Who's responsible for overseeing the state's largest active tech contracts?
- 3 What is the typical process for hiring tech roles and who owns which portion of that process?
- 4 Are there flexibilities that can be taken advantage of to aid the process for highly competitive talent?
- 5 How are subject matter experts being integrated into the hiring process, if at all?
- 6 What roles have been difficult to fill in the past and why? How long does it normally take to fill a vacancy?

Key Roles to Fill

- **Chief Information Officer (CIO)** — Reports to the governor with authority to set technology direction, participate in policy decisions, and coordinate across agencies; a buried CIO is a red flag
- **Chief Data Officer** — Empowered to unlock data, benefits, licensing, workforce, and education, so agency leaders can make real-time decisions and actually track whether programs are working.

State Spotlight

Colorado — Product Delivery Model

Colorado restructured its central IT office to pair technology teams directly with agencies, using a product delivery model that put engineers alongside program staff.

- Energy Savings Navigator delivered one million dollars under budget and six months ahead of schedule
- Restructured IT model became the basis for ongoing delivery improvements across agencies

What to Read

→ [Tech Talent for 21st Century Government — Tech Talent Project and Partnership for Public Service](#)

→ [Hiring, Retaining, and Upskilling Digital Service Talent in Government — Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University](#)

→ [The Tech Talent Toolkit: How to Attract and Nurture a Digital Team in Government — U.S. Digital Response and Verge Talent Partners](#)

→ [Digital Service Toolkit — U.S. Digital Response](#)



Procurement

Keeping procurement in the conversation — reviewing what's at risk and building disciplines that prevent future failures

Almost everything a modern state does for its residents relies on software, and almost all of that software is purchased rather than built in-house. Hundreds of millions of dollars in projects may already be underway when a new governor takes office, and the administration will be accountable for the results. The good news is that most of what's needed to improve technology procurement is available on day one.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Require real-time, mission-driven outcomes and reports**
 - ☐ Prioritize real-time, outcomes-focused requirements and metrics
 - ☐ Use the DORA framework to assess all software systems
 - ☐ Insist on early demonstrations of working software
- ☐ **Review ongoing and upcoming software procurements**
 - ☐ Start with the high-dollar, high-priority, and most-at-risk procurements
 - ☐ Take a hard look at contracts up for extension or renewal
- ☐ **Improve the processes for procuring software now**
 - ☐ Understand what a good procurement looks like
 - ☐ Assign a product owner to every system
 - ☐ Map the existing tech procurement process to find improvements
 - ☐ Ensure procurements have sufficient support and shared accountability with the agency owner
 - ☐ Provide budget flexibility where possible
 - ☐ Coordinate common procurements
 - ☐ Leverage and protect against AI in procurement processes
 - ☐ Avoid common traps
- ☐ **Focus on three to five top missions**

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 Can we use modular, gated milestones for our IT procurements?
- 2 How can our procurement processes support strong collaboration between agencies, tech teams, procurement, legal, and policy stakeholders?
- 3 How do we guard against vendor lock-in and ensure that contracts include clear exit strategies and data portability?
- 4 What AI protections do we need in place to clarify data rights, intellectual property ownership, and the handling of sensitive information?
- 5 What five largest procurements are due in the next six months? Which of these have vendor lock-in? Where do procurement terms or budget constraints limit state access to state data, metadata, documentation, reporting logic, APIs, or system outputs?

Key Roles to Fill

- **Chief Procurement Officer** — Senior leader with authority over technology procurement processes, contract standards, and vendor accountability; a CPO who understands modern software delivery is essential
- **Product Owner (per major system)** — Named state employee assigned to every significant technology system; accountable for outcomes, empowered to make decisions, and present throughout the vendor relationship

State Spotlight

Minnesota — Medicaid Eligibility System Modernization Bake-Off

Minnesota split its Medicaid Enrollment System modernization into two: software vendors made products available at near-zero cost for experimentation, and delivery vendors competed to build end-to-end slices.

- Contracts awarded were short, reversible, and tied to outcome metrics — avoiding vendor lock-in
- Demonstrated a replicable model for modular, competitive procurement on large benefit-system modernizations

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“You don't win an election because of procurement, but you might lose one because of it.”

— Kathrin Frauscher, Deputy Executive Director, Open Contracting Partnership

What to Read

- [Buying AI — Open Contracting Partnership](#)
- [De-Risking Guide — 18F](#)
- [Vendor Capture and the Limits of Fast Government Reform — Niskanen Center](#)
- [Reconceptualizing Public Procurement to Strengthen State Benefits Delivery — New America](#)
- [From Principles to Pavement: How to Inscribe Responsible AI Into Your Organization — Untangled](#)
- [Stafford Beer's “Resource Bargain” — Back of Mind](#)



Data

Building the data infrastructure that makes every other priority possible

Data is the lifeblood of government delivery and accountability — and one of the most powerful management tools a governor has to improve services, manage costs, respond to crises, prevent fraud, and build AI. Yet most states inherit old systems, siloed in separate agencies that inhibit rather than support their goals. The first 100 days are the window to name the right data leadership, establish governance, and connect data strategy directly to the governor's top priorities.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Build a team of data experts and give them a seat at the policy table**
 - ☐ Appoint a Chief Data Officer (CDO) and a Chief Privacy Officer (CPO)
 - ☐ Appoint a Geographic Information Officer (GIO), or explicitly give the CDO this role
 - ☐ Use partners wisely and make sure data is owned by the state
- ☐ **Define and strengthen statewide data governance**
 - ☐ Get the CDO, CIO, and legal counsel in a room before Day 30 on governance and legal framework
 - ☐ Conduct a data and systems audit for administration priorities
 - ☐ Standardize policy for collecting and sharing data, including requirements for demographic and other detailed data
 - ☐ Create clear accountability for data stewardship that enables cross-agency outcomes
- ☐ **Leverage data to supercharge the governor's priorities and inform decision-making**
 - ☐ Use key indicators to identify priority actions
 - ☐ Focus on early wins while committing to long-term data projects required for transformational tech efforts (including AI)
 - ☐ Implement responsible data sharing among agencies to deliver priorities
- ☐ **Prioritize data quality and protection**
 - ☐ Build cybersecurity into data management practices

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“Governance before everything else.”

— Josh Martin, former Chief Data Officer, State of Indiana

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 Does the CDO have the explicit authority to convene agencies, resolve barriers, and support the governor's priorities via data
- 2 Where do procurement terms or budget constraints limit state access to state data, metadata, documentation, reporting logic, APIs, or system outputs? In the five largest state contracts, does the state own the data?
- 3 How can data expertise be embedded or uplifted across agencies, in addition to centrally, so the work reaches beyond a central office?
- 4 How is the state coordinating with local governments, neighboring states, and federal partners on shared data work?
- 5 What data drills or emergency exercises has the state run, and what gaps did they expose?

Key Roles to Fill

- **Chief Data Officer (CDO)** — Statewide mandate with direct access to senior leadership; sets and enforces data policy across agencies, leads the audit, and connects data strategy to the governor's priorities
- **Chief Privacy Officer (CPO)** — Legal and policy authority over how the state collects, uses, shares, and retains personal data; ensures data work earns and maintains public trust

State Spotlight

Arkansas — Data Hub

Arkansas built a statewide data fabric enabling real-time cross-agency data sharing while enforcing strong privacy and security standards, reducing the reporting burden for Medicaid recipients.

- Created CDO and CPO roles via Act 912 (2017), with a Data and Transparency Panel chaired by the CDO and given cross-agency authority
- Enabled real-time cross-agency data sharing while reducing reporting burden and strengthening privacy protections

What to Read

- [The Path to Creating a Chief Data Officer Role in States — Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University](#)
- [Blueprint for Delivering Results in State Government: Leveraging Data — Results for America](#)
- [Finding a Way Forward: How to Create a Strong Legal Framework for Data Integration — Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy](#)
- [Introduction to Data Sharing and Integration — Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy](#)
- [Using Data & Evidence in the States — National Association of State Budget Officers](#)
- [Data Labs Playbook — Beeck Center + National Governors Association](#)



Customer Experience

Designing government services around the people who use them — not the bureaucracies that created them

People interact with government at the most important and stressful moments of their lives: enrolling a child in school, applying for benefits after a job loss, recovering from a disaster. Too often, they encounter systems designed around internal processes rather than the people they serve, resulting in unnecessary errors, abandoned applications, and eroded public trust. The first 100 days are the moment to define a resident-centered approach to service delivery: name a small experience delivery team with authority, choose a limited set of high-value services, publish honest baselines, and make resident feedback a regular input to senior decisions

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Build a small interdisciplinary team at the center of government**
 - ☐ Establish an interdisciplinary Customer Experience (CX) team of four to six people including a CX lead, focused on impact
- ☐ **Select three to five priority services to improve**
 - ☐ Conduct resident-facing outreach to surface priorities
 - ☐ Listen to residents
- ☐ **Create a public baseline before improvement work begins**
 - ☐ Define CX measures across experience, operations, and outcomes
- ☐ **Establish a High Impact Service Provider (HISP) accountability system**
 - ☐ Designate HISPs at the program level, not the department level
 - ☐ Issue lightweight Year 1 HISP requirements
 - ☐ Begin building HISP practice
- ☐ **Establish a formal Voice of Customer (VoC) program**
 - ☐ Build the VoC program in stages
 - ☐ Share usable feedback with the cabinet to close the feedback loop

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 What are the state's highest-volume services, the services that reach the largest percentage of the state's population, and the most critical services where the stakes are high for residents? What specific entities are responsible for delivering them?
- 2 What services are most salient to the people of our state? Where are there problems? How is this different from or similar to where state employees think there are problems?
- 3 Which service interactions generate the most complaints, repeat calls, abandoned applications, staff rework, procedural denials, or avoidable escalations?
- 4 What customer experience data does the governor's office have access to right now? What customer experience data are state agencies collecting? Who is accountable for these measures?
- 5 What north star measure (e.g., trust, confidence in the state's ability to deliver) is most important for the governor's priorities? What measure will the governor hold the senior cabinet to and make clear is a priority to all public servants and people of the state?

Key Roles to Fill

- **CX Team Lead** — Senior practitioner with cross-agency authority; leads the 4-6 person interdisciplinary team, owns priority service selection, and drives the baseline measurement process
- **Agency CX Lead (per HISP)** — Named owner of the resident experience for each high-impact service; accountable for metric reporting, improvement targets, and frontline feedback loops

State Spotlight

New York — Statewide Customer Experience Strategy

New York embedded customer experience and human-centered design across more than 100 state agencies, making public services more accessible and responsive to residents' needs.

- CX practices embedded across 100+ state agencies through a coordinated statewide strategy
- Published a public-facing CX strategy that set measurable standards for agency service delivery

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“A resident who can't understand a notice may give up on a benefit they need. Technology can accelerate improved delivery — but only if it's designed around the people using it.”

— 2026 State Memos for a Tech Transition, Customer Experience Memo

What to Read

- [Governments Can Deliver Exceptional Customer Experiences. Here's How. — McKinsey & Company](#)
- [New York State Customer Experience Strategy — Digital Government Hub](#)
- [The Utah Model: Workforce Programs and Services Integration Toolkit — American Enterprise Institute](#)
- [High Impact Service Provider Customer Feedback Data — Performance.gov](#)
- [The Origins and Practice of Delivery — Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)
- [National Park Service 2023 HISP Customer Experience Action Plan — National Park Service](#)



Artificial Intelligence

Moving from AI activity to AI impact — building the strategy, leadership, and foundations to deliver measurable public value

Artificial intelligence will reshape, and potentially transform, how we live and work as it moves from novelty to infrastructure. State AI activity is already widespread — 90% of states have started generative AI pilots — but progress on operational scaling and measured public value has been far slower. The first 100 days are the window to name the right leader, launch a structured discovery sprint, and commit to pilots before the pace of AI change outstrips the state's capacity to respond.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Select and empower a senior AI and emerging tech leader**
 - ☐ Align goals to administration priorities and give the AI leader broad authority
 - ☐ Ensure the AI leader has hiring authority and budget commensurate to the goals
- ☐ **Build a bold and responsible AI strategy and prioritize high-impact use cases**
 - ☐ Stand up a tiger team
 - ☐ Launch a 60-day discovery sprint across agencies
 - ☐ Create a one-year AI enablement strategy with specific goals for the first 100 days
 - ☐ Target three high-impact constituent journeys and launch small, fast-moving pilots
- ☐ **Strengthen tech and organizational foundations**
 - ☐ Develop AI fluency with training for all workers
 - ☐ Audit or build an AI inventory
 - ☐ Streamline AI governance and cybersecurity across tech silos
- ☐ **Update state procurement processes for AI**
 - ☐ Adapt to a changing environment
 - ☐ Optimize for interoperability and avoid vendor lock-in
 - ☐ Know when to build, when to buy, and when to consider open source

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“The largest gap in state AI maturity is not governance — it is measurement. Most states can describe where AI is deployed but few have insights into what the pilots are actually achieving.”

— Code for America, 2026 Government AI Landscape Assessment

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 Who owns statewide AI implementation strategy, and do they have the necessary resources and authority to coordinate across agencies?
- 2 Which agencies have the data quality, tech staff, cybersecurity controls, and procurement capacity needed to launch pilots or move from pilot to production?
- 3 Which three constituent journeys could improve service or reduce staff burden within the first year?
- 4 How will the state measure whether each AI pilot improves outcomes, saves time, reduces burden, or increases risk?
- 5 Which procurement rules need updating so AI contracts enable AI procurement and protect data, portability, performance, and public accountability?

Key Roles to Fill

- **Chief AI Officer / Senior AI and Emerging Technology Leader** — Cross-agency authority with a direct line to the governor; owns the AI strategy, governance, risk-tiering, workforce fluency, and the state's public posture on AI
- **AI Tiger Team** — Small, technical, cross-functional group authorized to work across agencies; completes the 60-day discovery sprint, builds the inventory, identifies pilots, and develops the one-year strategy

State Spotlight

Texas — Department of Transportation AI Governance

Texas moved AI from pilots into operations using a human-led, AI-supported governance model that scaled tools across the agency while maintaining human decision authority.

- Redirects 22,000 staff hours annually to higher-value work
- Reduces invoice processing time by 75%

What to Read

- [The 2026 AI Index Report — Stanford University Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence](#)
- [Best Practices in Public-Sector AI Governance: A Practitioner's Playbook — UC Berkeley School of Information](#)
- [Beyond Generation: The Rise of Agentic AI in State Government — NASCIO](#)
- [Government AI Landscape Assessment — Code for America](#)
- [The Agentic State: Rethinking Government for the Era of Agentic AI — The Agentic State](#)
- [A Three Horizons Vision for Congress — Popvox Foundation and Recoding America Fund](#)



Benefits

Protecting eligible residents and state budgets through accurate, data-driven benefits delivery

Benefits systems in most states are operating at or beyond their designed capacity, and H.R. 1 is creating new verification and compliance requirements for Medicaid, SNAP, and other programs before most states are fully ready. The stakes of accurate benefit delivery, both for state finances and vulnerable populations, have never been higher. H.R. 1 implementation will already be underway when new governors take office in January 2027. Actions taken in the first 100 days can set states up to navigate compliance while laying the foundations for a modern, data-driven safety net.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Set data-driven goals and strategy**
 - ☐ Capture and automate key metrics
 - ☐ Identify and validate improvements with weekly reporting
 - ☐ Know and manage fiscal exposure around error rates
- ☐ **Evaluate and use data for eligibility decisions and smarter benefits delivery**
 - ☐ Strengthen data integration to reduce manual verification and improve accuracy
- ☐ **Improve communications**
 - ☐ Launch tested and timely messaging
 - ☐ Deploy text messaging for renewal and requirement updates
 - ☐ Proactively communicate about and automate enrollment in Summer EBT
- ☐ **Build in-house tech capacity**
 - ☐ Hire tech leadership for health and human services and require tech training for all program leaders
 - ☐ Appoint, uplift, and hire empowered, accountable tech leaders to the H.R. 1 mission
 - ☐ Fund tech staff to manage tech vendors effectively

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“You can bring in thousands of people, and you'll still be behind if you're approaching it in an archaic way.”

— Expert contributor, 2026 Benefits Delivery Memo

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 What are our top H.R. 1 risks today, and what is the plan to address them with a clear timeline?
- 2 Which verification workflows, such as income, can be reused across Medicaid, SNAP, Child Nutrition, and workforce programs?
- 3 Which peer states have solved similar problems in data sharing, vendor management, renewal outreach, Summer EBT, or WIC modernization?
- 4 What is the status of SNAP EBT chip card adoption, given that skimming of SNAP benefits is the biggest source of fraud in SNAP?

Key Roles to Fill

- **HHS Technical Lead** — Statewide authority over benefits program technology; understands eligibility systems, data exchange, procurement, and user experience; builds the team that can evaluate vendors and enforce contract standards
- **H.R. 1 Technical Rollout Lead** — Owns implementation monitoring and escalation to the governor's office; maintains a weekly risk list covering systems, call centers, exemption processing, notice comprehension, and caseworker workload

State Spotlight

Maryland — SUN Bucks Enrollment

Maryland modernized summer nutrition benefits through interagency data sharing and automatic eligibility systems, dramatically expanding access without adding application burden.

- Expanded summer nutrition benefits access from 90,000 to over 630,000 children
- Achieved through automatic enrollment using data already held by partner agencies — no new applications required

What to Read

- [The Benefits Enrollment Field Guide — Code for America](#)
- [How Regional Health Hubs Can Improve Care for Medicaid Beneficiaries: Lessons from the Garden State — Milbank Memorial Fund](#)
- [Using OBBBA Requirements to Advance an Integrated, Data-Driven Safety Net — Yale Tobin Center for Economic Policy](#)
- [How Will We Know if States are Ready to Implement H.R. 1? — Georgetown University McCourt School](#)
- [Stranded by the Safety Net: How to Fix the Benefit Cliff Problem — American Enterprise Institute](#)
- [Data Source Integration for Work Requirements: A Prioritization Guide — 17A](#)



Permitting

Faster, clearer decisions for housing, energy, infrastructure, and small business

Permitting is where a governor's economic growth agenda either moves or stalls. Housing developments, hospital expansions, energy projects, data centers, and small businesses depend on permitting approvals that can sit in separate agency queues for months or years — with no single owner accountable for the full applicant experience. The first 100 days are the window to build the leadership structure and human-centered approach that set up the administration for success before old workflows get cemented into tech purchases and staff return to business as usual.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Establish leadership, cross-agency coordination and transparency**
 - ☐ Create formal governance structures across departments and jurisdictions
 - ☐ Implement a dashboard to create transparency (FAST-41 style)
- ☐ **Apply human-centered design to permitting workflows**
 - ☐ Redesign processes from the applicant perspective using journey mapping and usability testing
 - ☐ Aim toward a common service design across cities and counties
 - ☐ Measure the effect on the public, not just internal processes
- ☐ **Prioritize policy and process reform – include support for modernizing tech**
 - ☐ Include timing targets with consequences to speed up the process
- ☐ **Leverage AI and data responsibly for targeted improvements**
 - ☐ Build cross-agency, searchable data infrastructure
 - ☐ Look for opportunities to automate priority processes
 - ☐ Use AI to analyze regulations, historic decisions, and speed up decision making

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“Construction permits ran 81% longer than statutory timelines on average in 2024 — costing applicants an average of \$157,300 per permit in unexpected expenses.”

— Washington State Department of Commerce, 2024 permitting baseline analysis

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 How do timelines for the 10 highest-volume or highest-impact permits compare with neighboring or benchmark states?
- 2 What tech and software are currently being used to manage high volume permits?
- 3 Who owns the full applicant experience when a project crosses agencies, local governments, utilities, or federal review?
- 4 What share of applications arrive incomplete, require resubmission, or wait on applicant action?
- 5 How many staffing vacancies are there on review teams for high-volume permits?

Key Roles to Fill

- **Senior Permitting Lead** — Named in the first 30 days with authority to convene agencies, elevate disputes, and a direct reporting line to the governor or chief of staff
- **Permitting Coordinator** — Serves as the lead contact for each major project type from submission through decision; manages the dashboard and local government help desk

State Spotlight

Pennsylvania — PAYback Program

Pennsylvania set public processing targets tied to fee refunds when deadlines are missed — creating direct accountability for every permit type across state agencies.

- Cut the initial corporate license wait from eight weeks to two days
- Reduced a Department of Environmental Protection permit backlog by more than 90%

What to Read

- [Is It a Permitting Problem or Your Application Form? — Environmental Policy Innovation Center](#)
- [Delivery-Driven Government — Code for America](#)
- [2026 Permitting Technology Landscape Report — Environmental Policy Innovation Center](#)
- [Recoding America — Metropolitan Books](#)
- [Permitting Policy Recommendations — Federation of American Scientists and Environmental Policy Innovation Center](#)
- [Efficient, Effective Federal Permitting Workforce — Federation of American Scientists](#)



Emergency Response & Recovery

Building the readiness, data infrastructure, and resilience that protect residents before a disaster strikes

Major emergencies arrive on every governor's watch. The first 100 days set the operating posture and determine how the state will hold together when a fire, hurricane, grid failure, or another cascading shock tests it. The state-level emergency portfolio keeps expanding while federal support has become less predictable: storms, floods, fires, cyberattacks, power failures, and public health crises all require the governor's direct authority and a tested command structure. States that invest in readiness before a disaster strikes protect residents, maintain public trust, and recover faster.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Expand readiness in technology and data for a changing operating environment**
 - ☐ Ensure the head of emergency management has experience in the field
 - ☐ Get briefed on the full range of risks and vulnerabilities
 - ☐ Attend exercises to learn what happens before an emergency declaration request
 - ☐ Find out the communication plans for scenarios where primary tech or communications systems fail
 - ☐ Get briefed on the current statewide risk assessment for both response and recovery
- ☐ **Establish a unified readiness framework**
- ☐ **Invest in resilience and mitigation that pays off before a disaster strikes**
 - ☐ Invest in data infrastructure and capacity
 - ☐ Prioritize interoperable, authoritative datasets for emergency use
 - ☐ Enable data sharing through written agreements and shared platforms or data warehouses
- ☐ **Improve resilience through systems and processes that focus on the experience of survivors**

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“Resilience depends on relationships and infrastructure built before the emergency hits. Nearly every event crosses jurisdictions, sectors, and levels of government — and those connections have to exist before the storm arrives.”

— 2026 State Memos for a Tech Transition, Emergency Response & Recovery Memo

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 When was the last time they convened cross-functional state agencies and the nonprofits that will carry the recovery workload? When is the next convening scheduled?
- 2 What maps or visualizations exist of the owners of systems, dependencies on vendors, and communication channels and pathways?
- 3 What did approval chains look like in the most recent emergency or disaster? What worked? What didn't? What is being done to mitigate issues in the next emergency?
- 4 Which data-sharing agreements exist with local governments, utilities, nonprofits, and federal partners, and which need to be signed before the next disaster?
- 5 How does a survivor actually experience the state's disaster assistance process in the field? Who falls through the gaps in federal programs?

Key Roles to Fill

- **Head of Emergency Management** — Experienced practitioner with field credibility; directly briefed by the governor and empowered to convene cross-agency and cross-sector partners before the next event
- **Chief Data Officer (for emergency readiness)** — Owns the data-sharing agreements, interoperable datasets, and real-time situational awareness infrastructure that make coordinated response possible

State Spotlight

North Carolina — Next Generation 911 Network

North Carolina's Next Generation 911 network kept emergency calls answered through one of the state's worst disasters, automatically rerouting calls when local infrastructure was destroyed.

- Automatically routed tens of thousands of calls when local communications infrastructure was destroyed
- Maintained continuity of emergency response during a catastrophic regional event with no service interruption

What to Read

- [National Emergency Management Association \(NEMA\) — nemaweb.org](https://nemaweb.org)
- [Emergency Management Assistance Compact \(EMAC\) — emacweb.org](https://emacweb.org)
- [Tabletop Exercise Packages — CISA](https://www.cisa.gov)
- [Stafford Act — FEMA](https://www.fema.gov)
- [National Risk Study — Deloitte and National Emergency Management Association](https://www.deloitte.com)
- [Leveraging the PACE Plan for an Emergency Communications Ecosystem — CISA](https://www.cisa.gov)



Child Welfare

Placing more children with kin, strengthening foster home capacity, and preventing unnecessary system involvement

Child welfare is where the housing, behavioral health, education, and healthcare systems failures intersect. For a governor taking office in 2027, a meaningful capacity review of child welfare will look beyond the number of licensed placements to the match between children’s needs and available homes, including kin caregivers and local foster families, as well as the timely supports that help children stay connected to family, school, culture, and community. The first 100 days are the window to establish that vision and begin the operational work of moving toward it.

Key Opportunities · First 100 Days

- ☐ **Understand the state’s commitment to the A Home for Every Child initiative**
 - ☐ Track and improve Adverse Placement Scores
 - ☐ Prepare a Child and Family Services Review Pilot Program Improvement Plan
- ☐ **Improve supports for kin caregivers**
 - ☐ Adopt or affirm kin-specific licensing
 - ☐ Expand and align the definitions of “relative”
 - ☐ Confirm all foster children in the state can access Medicaid
 - ☐ Understand and enhance kin data
- ☐ **Improve the array of foster home placements**
 - ☐ Measure and improve the foster parent experience
 - ☐ Participate in ongoing efforts to improve non-kin foster home licensing
 - ☐ Confirm high-priority potential foster homes are fast-tracked
- ☐ **Streamline state background checks**
- ☐ **Avoid Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) failure**
- ☐ **Safely prevent unnecessary child welfare involvement**
 - ☐ Complete the Family Strengthening Maturity Model assessment
 - ☐ Expand use of FFPSA

“

What families need to stay together safely is concrete support — delivered before a crisis, not a removal after one.”

— 2026 State Memos for a Tech Transition, Child Welfare Memo

Top Questions to Ask Your Leaders

- 1 What is the state’s “third horizon” (the future system the state is working towards) for child welfare? How is progress being measured?
- 2 What are we doing to reimagine ourselves as a child and family well-being system, not a child welfare system?
- 3 What is the community’s role in supporting our families?
- 4 What is the role of other state agencies in supporting our families?
- 5 How can we stabilize and grow our workforce?

Key Roles to Fill

- **Child Welfare Director** — Experienced leader with clear authority over the agency’s operating agenda; accountable for the Adverse Placement Score, kin licensing rate, and family strengthening strategy
- **HHS Technology Lead** — Owns the CCWIS implementation and data infrastructure; ensures case management systems support the agency’s equity and placement goals

State Spotlight

Maryland — Kin-Specific Licensing Reform

Maryland adopted kin-specific licensing standards in December 2025, creating a clear and accessible pathway for relative caregivers that dramatically increased the share of children placed with licensed kin.

- Kin placements increased by more than 33% following adoption of kin-specific licensing
- Licensed kin caregivers increased from 23% to 86% of all kin placements

What to Read

→ [Reimagining Your PIP with the Adverse Placement Score — Foster Insights](#)

→ [Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Recommended Standards — Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network](#)