

CASE STUDY: LORI E. LIGHTFOOT, MAYOR OF CHICAGO



How does a newcomer to elected office go from being one in a field of 14 candidates, to one of two women in a historic race, to the mayor of the United States third-largest city, all in a matter of weeks?

In April 2019, Lori Lightfoot was new to running for office when she emerged as the top vote-getter in a field of 14 candidates for mayor of Chicago, securing a spot in the runoff. Her success, unanticipated by most outside of her lean campaign team, meant she had to quickly add capacity with trusted advisors who could take her to victory with an approach that was both authentic and disciplined. When Mayor-elect Lightfoot woke up victorious on the day after the general election, she faced Chicago's shortest mayoral transition since 1989. Her commitment to inclusion and transparency meant that she valued participation from all Chicagoans as she built a diverse administration. Mayor-elect Lightfoot had just six weeks to set a new tone and new direction for Chicago.

Our Solution

The Runoff: After coming in first in the general election, Lori Lightfoot realized that for the runoff she needed more – more resources, communications expertise, experience and knowledge of Chicago campaigns. She needed a firm hand on the tiller to navigate the tricky political waters and the tight time frame. She turned to Grisko, trusted partners who had managed communications for her when she led Chicago's Police Accountability Task Force. We provided instant resources, including strategic counsel, communications, and messaging. We also planned an election night celebration commensurate with the historic nature of her election.

The Transition: As a key member of her transition team, Carolyn Grisko helped Mayor-elect Lightfoot communicate with and elevate the ideas of a network of people with deep experience as well as fresh voices who would bring new ideas to the table. She recruited, vetted and recommended new communications staff for the Mayor's Office and critical departments. Carolyn also provided strategic counsel and helped communicate the Mayor-elect's values to drive the transition and set the foundation for the administration going forward.

The Impact

On May 20, 2019, Lori E. Lightfoot was inaugurated Mayor of Chicago. Her call for an ethical and responsive government and opportunities for all Chicagoans resonated in every ward of the city. She made history as the first black woman to become Mayor of Chicago, and Chicago became the largest American city to ever elect a black woman as mayor. Mayor Lightfoot is also the city's first openly gay mayor. Lori E. Lightfoot's election as Mayor of Chicago garnered immediate national & international attention; she has taken advantage of that heightened interest while focusing on the needs of the people of Chicago.



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