



CCPSA

**COMMUNITY COMMISSION FOR
PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

COPA Chief Administrator Search Process Report 2026



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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to document the steps taken by the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability to conduct the search for the Chief Administrator of the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA).

At a public meeting on January 29, 2026, the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability voted to nominate COPA Interim Chief Administrator LaKenya White to be the next Chief Administrator of COPA. The Commission made this decision after an extensive search process that included collecting extensive input from community members and subject matter experts.

By ordinance, when there is a vacancy in the position of COPA Chief Administrator, the Commission is charged with leading a national search and selecting a replacement, subject to Mayoral input and City Council approval (MCC 2-80-080(b)). The ordinance lays out a basic selection process. Additional details were added to the process under the Consent Decree.

The Search Process

The Commission launched a nationwide search for the next COPA Chief Administrator in February of 2025 following the resignation of COPA's Chief Administrator.

By ordinance, the Commission is required to engage a nationally recognized organization with expertise in government oversight to perform a nationwide search and identify at least ten candidates and then select a Chief Administrator from among the candidates identified in this process. After issuing an RFP, the Commission selected the Byers Group based on its experience in conducting searches relevant to the work of COPA, familiarity with Chicago and Chicago's culture, and the quality of responses to the interview questions.

The Commission engaged in a robust community engagement process to help inform its efforts.

Outreach Efforts and Selection Criteria

Minimum qualifications for COPA Chief Administrator are established by ordinance (MCC [2-78-115](#)). Building on the minimum qualifications, Commissioners worked extensively to understand what kind of leadership COPA needs to succeed and what community members, COPA staff, CPD members, and subject matter experts felt the top qualities of the next Chief Administrator should be. Input was received from hundreds of people in the community. The following is a brief overview of the Commission's outreach efforts.

- Four listening sessions were held across the city, including one on the North Side, one on the South Side, and one on the West Side. All were streamed virtually to increase access (see page 17).
- Commissioners held two listening sessions that were open to all COPA staff (see [page 17](#)).
- Commissioners reached out to all the police unions and met with those that were interested (see [page 17](#)).
- Several targeted online feedback forms were created for community members, COPA employees, and CPD members (see [page 17](#)). The Commission worked with CPD so that the feedback form was circulated to all sworn members.
- Commissioners got input from more than 20 local and national subject matter experts (see [page 18](#)).

- Targeted focus groups were held, including meetings with young people, and justice impacted individuals see page 19.

After conducting outreach, the Commission identified key themes about what qualities people were looking for in the COPA Chief Administrator ([see page 20](#)). The Commission consistently heard that COPA's next leader must demonstrate integrity, investigative excellence, commitment to timely and impartial investigations, the ability to strengthen internal culture, and the capacity to work collaboratively within Chicago's broader police accountability system.

The Commission used the input it received throughout the process. The application ([see page 4](#)), scoring rubrics ([see page 11](#)), and interview questions for all stages of the evaluation process ([see page 21](#)), were consistent with the qualifications established by ordinance and informed by this feedback. The Commission's goal was to select a COPA Chief who embodies the skills, qualifications, and values highlighted by a broad swath of the community and subject matter experts.

The Commission created a detailed application brochure, identifying key challenges and opportunities for the next COPA Chief Administrator and establishing qualifications for applicants ([see page 4](#)). On August 20, the Commission posted the application on its website, and the Byers Group helped to circulate the brochure across the country.

Selection of Nominee

The Commission received 27 applications from candidates across the country. After reviewing each application utilizing a scoring rubric created by the Commission based on the ordinance requirements and additional input noted above, the Commission chose to interview five candidates in the first round. Four of those candidates were asked to interview a second time.

As permitted by the Illinois Open Meetings Act, Commissioners met in closed sessions to discuss the candidates, and at the Commission's public meeting on January 29, the Commission voted to select Interim Chief LaKenya White to serve as the next Chief Administrator of COPA.

Interim Chief White had the experience needed and possessed the key qualities that the Commission identified as being the most important in the next Chief Administrator.



CIVILIAN OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR



CCPSA

COMMUNITY COMMISSION FOR
PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY



THE CITY OF CHICAGO

As the nation's third-largest city, Chicago is a major cultural, financial, and transportation hub located along the southwestern shores of Lake Michigan. Home to 2.7 million residents, the city is celebrated for its deep-rooted history, rich architectural legacy, and diverse communities. Chicago offers world-class arts and culture, premier universities and medical centers, vibrant neighborhoods, and expansive lakefront parks and trails. Its identity is deeply tied to civic pride, innovation, and resilience—characteristics that shape the city's efforts toward equity and public service.

Chicago operates under a Mayor-Council form of government. The Mayor, elected citywide, oversees city departments and services with 50 alderpersons representing individual wards, serving as the legislative branch and providing checks and balances. As part of its reform-minded governance, the City prioritizes police accountability and transparency through agencies like the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA).

THE COMMUNITY COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CCPSA)

The Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA), made up of civilian leaders, has the authority to select the Chief Administrator and hold them accountable for carrying out COPA's core mission. It was established by way of Municipal Code 2-80 to strengthen civilian oversight of law enforcement in Chicago. As an independent body, the Commission plays a central role in ensuring that the city's public safety systems reflect the values of transparency, equity, and responsiveness. CCPSA has the authority to select and evaluate the leaders of police oversight agencies, including COPA, set police department policy, and conduct community engagement to address public safety concerns. Through its work, the Commission seeks to foster trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

BACKGROUND: COPA's HISTORY AND PURPOSE

COPA is an independent agency but is part of a broader system of public accountability shaped by community voice. COPA was established by the City Council on October 5, 2016, to replace the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) amid increasing public demand for stronger oversight of police, including more effective and transparent investigations of police misconduct. COPA was designed to be an independent civilian agency tasked primarily with investigating allegations of misconduct involving members of the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Its formation marked a shift in how the City approached civilian oversight, moving toward greater accountability, public trust, and systemic reform.

COPA's mission is fourfold:

- Provide a just and efficient means to conduct fair, timely, thorough investigations of matters within its jurisdiction, including many allegations of police misconduct;
- Determine whether allegations are well-founded;
- Identify and address patterns of police misconduct;
- Make policy recommendations to improve CPD and reduce incidents of police misconduct.

COPA investigates and makes disciplinary recommendations regarding all incidents in which an officer discharges a weapon, or someone dies or is seriously injured while detained or in custody, and the most serious allegations involving CPD members, including use of excessive force, sexual misconduct, improper searches, bias-based verbal abuse and unlawful denial of counsel.

THE OPPORTUNITY

COPA is seeking a transformational and principled leader to serve as its next Chief Administrator. The Chief Administrator oversees a staff of approximately 140 professionals and leads a complex investigative operation central to maintaining public trust and constitutional policing in Chicago. This is a four-year appointment, with the possibility of renewal pending City Council approval.

This moment demands a leader who combines unwavering integrity, investigative expertise, and a proven ability to manage organizational change. The next Chief Administrator must demonstrate a commitment to accountability, fairness, and community engagement, while leading internal organizational reforms, enhancing collaboration with CPD and other stakeholders, and navigating Chicago's unique political complexities.



Key Responsibilities:

- Lead COPA in fulfilling its mandate to investigate police misconduct fairly, thoroughly, and independently;
- Oversee COPA's day-to-day operations;
- Conduct investigations into complaints against members of the Police Department alleging excessive force, domestic violence, sexual misconduct, coercion, improper search or seizure of either individuals or property, unlawful denial of access to counsel, or verbal abuse;
- Conduct investigations into all incidents, including those in which no allegation of misconduct is made, in which a Police Department member discharges: (a) a firearm in a manner that could potentially strike another individual, (b) a stun gun or TASER in a manner that results in death or serious bodily injury, or (c) in the Chief Administrator's discretion, other weapons discharges and other use of Police Department-issued equipment as a weapon that results in death or serious bodily injury;
- Conduct investigations into incidents, including those in which no allegation of misconduct is made, where a person dies or sustains a serious bodily injury while detained or in Police Department custody, or as a result of police actions, such as during attempts to apprehend a suspect;
- Conduct investigations into all incidents of an "officer-involved death," as the term is defined in 50 ILCS 727/1-5;
- Recommend to the Police Superintendent, with respect to incidents within the jurisdiction of COPA, appropriate disciplinary or other remedial action against members of the Police Department found to be in violation of any applicable Police Department rules, including rules related to the duty to provide truthful information regarding the officer's own conduct and the conduct of others, and the duty to report the misconduct of others;
- Conduct investigations to determine whether members of the Police Department are engaging in patterns or practices of misconduct, and where such a finding is made, recommend revisions to the Police Department's policies, practices, programs, and training to address and eliminate such patterns or practices;
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with key stakeholders, including the State's Attorney's Office, CPD leadership, DOJ, FBI, and the public;
- Build internal cohesion by promoting a transparent, collaborative, and mission-driven culture;
- Strengthen infrastructure for pattern-and-practice investigations and policy recommendations;
- Serve as the public face of COPA, representing the agency in community forums, media engagements, and City Council hearings;
- Ensure compliance with the federal consent decree and support implementation of trauma-informed, equity-centered practices;
- Based on information obtained through COPA investigations and review of law suits and criminal proceedings involving allegations of police misconduct, recommend to the Police Superintendent, the Chair of the City Council Committee on Police and Fire, the Police Board, and the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability, revisions to the Police Department's policies, practices, collective bargaining agreements, programs, and training in order to improve accountability, effectiveness, integrity and transparency of the Police Department.

Additional details about duties and responsibilities are outlined in the COPA ordinance, MCC 2-78-120, Office and Chief Administrator - Powers and duties.



PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Based on extensive stakeholder input, the following priorities have been identified for the next Chief Administrator to accomplish:

- **Enhance Investigative Excellence:** Maintain a focus on impartial, thorough, and timely investigations.
- **Build Public Trust and Community Engagement:** Chicago residents must understand COPA's role and believe in its independence. The Chief Administrator should be committed to earning the trust of those who bring allegations to COPA and those who are the subject of COPA investigations. The Chief Administrator should also expand outreach efforts, and deepen partnerships with community organizations.
- **Strengthen Internal Culture and Operations:** The agency has faced instability and morale challenges. The Chief Administrator must unify staff around a shared mission, implement systems to ensure fair, thorough, and timely investigations, enhance communication, mitigate internal conflict, and uphold equitable management practices.
- **Advance Pattern and Practice Analysis:** Develop a robust approach to identify systemic misconduct trends and provide policy recommendations that improve CPD practices.
- **Navigate Political and Institutional Complexity:** Ensure productive relationships with CPD, CCPSA, Office of Inspector General, labor unions, and City Council, while maintaining COPA's independence and credibility.
- **Lead with Integrity and Vision:** COPA's leader must embody transparency, ethical rigor, and a commitment to justice that transcends public pressure or political winds.

IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE

The next Chief Administrator of COPA will be a courageous, principled, and collaborative leader—someone whose moral compass is unwavering and who has the professional reputation and skills to command trust across constituencies. They will remain steady despite political headwinds, confident in their vision, and deeply committed to the dual imperatives of police accountability and public safety.

This individual will embody the highest levels of integrity, fairness, and impartiality, with proven ability to oversee complex, high-pressure investigations with objectivity and rigor. In making disciplinary recommendations, they will be guided by facts and a resolute sense of justice rather than by headlines or public opinion. As a sophisticated communicator, the Chief Administrator must clearly explain complex processes, and maintain respectful and productive relationships with the Superintendent of Police, the State’s Attorney’s Office, the FBI, community leaders, and oversight bodies such as the CCPSA and City Council. The candidate will have excellent judgment and discernment in balancing competing needs for transparency and confidentiality.



The ideal candidate will have a staff leadership style that is equitable, transparent, and inclusive—able to unify and motivate a diverse team of investigators, analysts, and attorneys. They will know how to boost morale, address concerns about workplace inequalities, and foster a culture of excellence, care, and accountability. They will have a proven ability to assemble a senior leadership team with hands-on experience in all key aspects of COPA's work.

The next Chief Administrator will also be a strategic systems thinker who embraces innovation and enhances COPA’s capacity by maintaining internal systems to ensure that investigations are fair, thorough, and timely, consistent with the organization’s mission, and allow for the identification of patterns and practices of misconduct, using data to inform future-focused policy recommendations. They will be comfortable with complexity and open to alternative approaches—including restorative practices in appropriate contexts.

The ideal leader will have an exemplary record of working effectively with diverse communities. They will be known for their trauma-informed, culturally competent approach and deeply dedicated to building trust across the city. As one community member said, the next Chief should be “mission-driven, people-focused, and able to see those harmed not just as cases, but as humans.”

Above all, the successful candidate will possess the personal courage to lead COPA with independence and vision—anchoring their leadership in justice, transparency, and unwavering service to the public good.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

- An attorney with substantial experience in criminal, civil rights, and/or labor law, or corporate and/or governmental investigations; or an individual with substantial experience in law enforcement oversight or investigating employee or other wrongdoing;
- Knowledge of law enforcement, particularly of internal investigations of wrongdoing and use of force;
- A commitment to and knowledge of the need for and responsibilities of law enforcement, as well as the need to protect basic constitutional rights of all affected parties;
- Demonstrated integrity, professionalism, sound judgment, and leadership; and
- The ability to work with diverse groups and individuals.

In accordance with the COPA Ordinance MCC 2-78-115, the Chief Administrator shall not be a current or former sworn employee of the Police Department, a non-sworn employee of the Police Department within the last five years, or an employee of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office within the last five years.

COMPENSATION

The Chief Administrator is appointed to a four-year term with a competitive salary of **\$203,532** and a benefits package.

HOW TO APPLY

The Chief Administrator search is being conducted on a nationwide basis by The Byers Group. First consideration will be given to applications received by **October 3, 2025**. To apply for this exciting opportunity, please electronically submit your resume and letter of interest to The Byers Group at: copa.chief@byersgroupca.com. The letter of interest should outline why you are interested in the role, your relevant accomplishments, and your vision for the position. The position will remain open until filled.

The Chief Administrator is selected by the CCPSA and confirmed by the City Council.



THE BYERS GROUP

EXECUTIVE SEARCH AND C-SUITE CONSULTING

CONFIDENTIAL INQUIRIES ARE ENCOURAGED AND CAN BE DIRECTED TO:

MS. BRETT BYERS
BRETT@BYERSGROUPCA.COM
323-403-8279

MS. CHRISTINE BOULWARE
CHRISTINE@BYERSGROUPCA.COM
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The Commission rigorously reviewed each application and conducted multiple rounds of interviews to evaluate candidates. A comprehensive scoring rubric was developed based on feedback received from community, COPA employees and members of CPD.

Standards used for assessing written applications to select candidates for interviews included the following.

Initial Screening Tools for Applicants

The following rubric was used by each Commissioner to score candidate applications.

Category I: Investigative, Oversight, and Legal Knowledge and Experience

I.A. Investigative Knowledge and Experience

5: Candidate describes extensive experience conducting and managing complex investigations involving law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee or other wrongdoing.

4: Candidate describes above average experience conducting and managing complex investigations involving law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee or other wrongdoing.

3: Candidate describes at least some experience conducting and managing complex investigations involving law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee or other wrongdoing.
2: Candidate describes at least some experience conducting and managing complex investigations in a field not related to law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee or other wrongdoing.
1: Candidate describes no experience conducting and managing complex investigations.

2: Candidate has limited investigative experience.

1: Candidate has no investigative experience.

I.B.1 (For Attorney Only) Legal Knowledge and Experience

5: Candidate is an attorney with substantial legal experience in criminal, civil rights, and/or labor, or corporate and/or government investigations, including experience directly related to law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee wrongdoing.

4: Candidate is an attorney with moderate legal experience in criminal, civil rights, and/or labor, or corporate and/or government investigations, including experience directly related to law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee wrongdoing.

3: Candidate is an attorney with at least some limited legal experience in criminal, civil rights, and/or labor, or corporate and/or government investigations but not directly related to law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee wrongdoing.

2: Candidate is an attorney with at least some limited legal experience that is not in criminal, civil rights, and/or labor, or corporate and/or government investigations, or other work unrelated to law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee wrongdoing.

1: Candidate has no legal experience.

I.B.2 (Non-Attorneys Only) Non-Legal Oversight Knowledge and Experience

5: Candidate is a non-attorney with substantial experience in law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or investigating employee or other wrongdoing.

4: Candidate is a non- attorney with moderate experience in law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or investigating employee or other wrongdoing.

3: Candidate is a non-attorney with limited experience in law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or investigating employee or other wrongdoing.

2: Candidate is a non-attorney with very limited experience in law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or investigating employee or other wrongdoing.

1: Candidate is a non-attorney with no experience in law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or investigating employee or other wrongdoing.

I.C. Pattern and Practice Experience

5: Candidate describes extensive experience identifying patterns and practices of law enforcement or public sector misconduct and translating these patterns or practices into actionable policy or training recommendations.

4: Candidate describes moderate experience identifying patterns and practices of law enforcement or public sector misconduct and translating these patterns or practices into actionable policy or training recommendations.

3: Candidate describes limited experience identifying patterns and practices of law enforcement or public sector misconduct but has significant experience identifying patterns and practices of misconduct in another field and translating these patterns or practices into actionable policy or training recommendations.

2: Candidate describes limited experience identifying patterns and practices of misconduct outside of law enforcement or public sector misconduct or translating these patterns or practices into actionable policy or training recommendations.

1: Candidate describes no relevant experience identifying patterns or practices of misconduct or translating these patterns or practices into actionable policy or training recommendations.

I.D. Law Enforcement Knowledge

5: Candidate describes substantial knowledge of law enforcement, particularly of internal investigations of wrongdoing and use of force.

4: Candidate describes moderate knowledge of law enforcement, particularly of internal investigations of wrongdoing and use of force.

3: Candidate describes limited knowledge of law enforcement, particularly of internal investigations of wrongdoing and use of force.

2: Candidate describes very limited knowledge of law enforcement, particularly of internal investigations of wrongdoing and use of force.

1: Candidate describes no knowledge of law enforcement, particularly of internal investigations of wrongdoing and use of force.

Category II: Leadership Experience

II.A. Investigative Leadership

5: Candidate describes extensive leadership qualities and experience. This leadership includes experience developing systems to ensure impartial, thorough, and timely investigations.

4: Candidate describes moderate leadership qualities and experience. This leadership includes limited experience developing systems to ensure impartial, thorough, and timely investigations.

3: Candidate describes at least some limited leadership qualities and experience, but this experience is unrelated to investigations or includes only limited experience with developing systems to ensure impartial, thorough, and timely investigations.

2: Candidate describes little leadership qualities or experience and this leadership experience is unrelated to investigative work.

1: Candidate describes no leadership qualities or experience.

II.B. Experience Managing Staff

Note: COPA has a staff of 130-150, with dozens of job titles and disciplines (both represented and non-represented), who are representative of the diversity of the City of Chicago across ideology, race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, orientation, and background.

5: Candidate has led an agency or organizational unit of equivalent or greater size, diversity, and complexity as COPA. The candidate's statement reflects success in unifying and motivating staff, addressing staff concerns, and building a culture of excellence, care, and accountability.

4: Candidate has been a member of the senior leadership team of an agency or organizational unit of equivalent or greater size, diversity, and complexity as COPA **OR** the leader of a smaller or less complex and diverse agency than COPA. The candidate's statement reflects success in unifying and motivating staff, addressing staff concerns, and building a culture of excellence, care, and accountability.

3: Candidate has been a member of the senior leadership team of an agency or organizational unit of equivalent or greater size, diversity, and complexity as COPA **OR** the leader of a smaller or less complex and diverse agency than COPA. The candidate's statement reflects limited success in unifying and motivating staff, addressing staff concerns, and building a culture of excellence, care, and accountability.

2: Candidate has been a member of the mid-level or lower management of a smaller or less complex and diverse agency or organizational unit than COPA. The candidate's statement reflects limited success in unifying and motivating staff, addressing staff concerns, and building a culture of excellence, care, and accountability.

1: Candidate has little or no relevant experience managing staff.

II.C. Experience Engaging and Collaborating with Stakeholders

5: Candidate has held a leadership role with a mid-sized or large government body or non-governmental organization (NGO) and had substantial experience working collaboratively and effectively and building trust with governmental bodies, diverse community-based organizations and community members, and oversight bodies.

4: Candidate has held a leadership role with a mid-sized or large government body or non-governmental organization (NGO), and had some experience working collaboratively and effectively

and building trust with governmental bodies, diverse community-based organizations and community members, and oversight bodies.

3: Candidate has held a leadership role with a smaller or less complex and diverse government body or non-governmental organization (NGO) and had significant experience working collaboratively and effectively and building trust with governmental bodies, diverse community-based organizations and community members, and oversight bodies.

2: Candidate has held a leadership role with a government body or non-governmental organization (NGO) and had limited experience working collaboratively and effectively and building trust with governmental bodies, diverse community-based organizations and community members, and oversight bodies.

1: Candidate has little or no relevant experience working collaboratively and effectively and building trust with governmental bodies, diverse community-based organizations and community members, and oversight bodies.

II.D. Communications Experience

5: Candidate has substantial communications experience, clearly and effectively describing complex and sensitive work, and demonstrating superior judgment for a mid-sized or large organization.

4: Candidate has substantial communications experience, clearly and effectively describing complex and sensitive work, and demonstrating superior judgment for a smaller organization.

3: Candidate has moderate communications experience, clearly and effectively describing complex and sensitive work, and demonstrating good judgment for a mid-sized or large organization.

2: Candidate has moderate communications experience, clearly and effectively describing complex and sensitive work, but demonstrating poor judgment for an organization of any size.

1: Candidate has little or no communications experience clearly and effectively describing complex and sensitive work, and demonstrating good judgment.

II.E. Vision and Strategy for Effective Oversight and Management

5: Candidate articulates an exceptionally clear vision and strategy for the future of COPA that is responsive to organizational challenges and includes specific plans to strengthen internal systems and improve operations.

4: Candidate articulates a clear vision and strategy for the future of COPA that is responsive to organizational challenges and includes specific plans to strengthen internal systems and improve operations.

3: Candidate articulates a moderately clear vision and strategy for the future of COPA that is somewhat responsive to organizational challenges and includes limited specific plans to strengthen internal systems and improve operations.

2: Candidate articulates a vague vision and strategy for the future of COPA that is less responsive to organizational challenges and includes little or no specific plans to strengthen internal systems and improve operations.

1: Candidate does not articulate a vision and strategy for the future of COPA.

Category III: Personal Qualities

III.A. Commitment to Law Enforcement, Police Accountability, Justice, Equity, and Public Service.

5: Candidate demonstrates a long-standing, sincere, and deep commitment to and knowledge of law enforcement and law enforcement oversight. The candidate also

clearly demonstrates understanding of the need to protect basic constitutional rights, and a commitment to justice, equity, and public service. This commitment should be reflected in both the candidate's professional work as well as their volunteer activity and other service outside of work.

4: Candidate demonstrates a commitment to and knowledge of law enforcement and law enforcement oversight. The candidate also demonstrates understanding of the need to protect basic constitutional rights, and a commitment to justice, equity, and public service, but they have come upon this passion or commitment more recently. This commitment should be reflected in both the candidate's professional work as well as their volunteer activity and other service outside of work.

3: Candidate demonstrates a lesser commitment to and knowledge of law enforcement and law enforcement oversight. The candidate also demonstrates understanding of the need to protect basic constitutional rights, and a commitment to justice, equity, and public service, but it is reflected in only their professional work OR volunteer activity and other service outside of work (not both).

2: Candidate has only recently demonstrated a limited commitment to and knowledge of law enforcement and law enforcement oversight. The candidate has also recently demonstrated a limited understanding of the need to protect basic constitutional rights, and a commitment to justice, equity, and public service.

1: Candidate has not demonstrated a commitment to or knowledge of law enforcement and law enforcement oversight, or a commitment to justice, equity, and public service.

Round One & Two Interviews

Commissioners used the following to guide their scoring of candidates during interviews.

Background

(Investigative)

- How experienced is the candidate in conducting and managing complex investigations involving law enforcement or government oversight, civil rights enforcement, police misconduct, use of force, or employee or other wrongdoing?

AND/OR

(Legal)

- How experienced is the candidate as an attorney in criminal, civil rights, and/or labor, or corporate and/or government investigations, including experience directly related to law enforcement oversight, government oversight, civil rights enforcement, or employee wrongdoing?
- How experienced is the candidate in identifying patterns and practices of law enforcement or public sector misconduct and translating these patterns or practices into actionable policy or training recommendations?
- How extensive is the candidate's knowledge of law enforcement policies and practices, particularly of internal investigations into wrongdoing and use of force?
- How extensive is the candidate's knowledge of the responsibilities of law enforcement and the basic constitutional rights of those being policed?
- To what extent has the candidate demonstrated integrity, fairness, and impartiality?
- What is their leadership experience with developing systems to ensure impartial, thorough, and timely investigations?

Leadership

- How extensive is the candidate's experience as a leader?

- Does the candidate's leadership experience suggest that they have the skills to successfully lead an agency as big, diverse, and complex as COPA?
- To what extent has the candidate created work environments where all staff feel valued and are treated fairly and equitably?
- To what extent has the candidate created work environments where staff can comfortably raise concerns about internal operations and make recommendations?

Communication and Experience Engaging and Collaborating with Stakeholders

- Has the candidate been successful in collaboratively and effectively building trust with governmental bodies, diverse community-based organizations, community members, and oversight bodies?
- How extensive is the candidate's communications experience?
- Have they demonstrated effective communication strategies for complex or controversial issues?
- How would you rate their judgement, based upon their prior experience?
- Is the candidate a clear and effective communicator who can effectively distill complex ideas and issues?

Vision and Strategy for Effective Oversight and Management

- Has the candidate articulated a clear and specific vision and strategy for the future of COPA, and are they responsive to current organizational challenges?
- Does the candidate have a long-standing, sincere, and deep commitment to public safety, justice, equity, public service, and law enforcement oversight?
- Do you find the candidate to be truthful, transparent, and to possess superior judgement in complex situations?

Outreach

Community Listening Sessions

Four listening sessions were held across the city, including one on the North Side, one on the South Side, and one on the West Side. All were streamed virtually to increase access. Over one hundred people attended online or in-person.

At the meetings, attendees could sign up for public comment, and each speaker was given three minutes to provide their thoughts and feedback to Commissioners about the COPA Chief Administrator search.

Community listening sessions were held on the following dates at the following locations:

- March 25, 2025: North Park University, 3225 W Foster Avenue
- April 30, 2025 (All Virtual Session)
- May 14, 2025: Kenwood Academy, 5015 S. Blackstone Avenue
- June 12, 2025: Lawndale Christian Leadership, 3750 W. Ogden Avenue

Employee Listening Sessions

Commissioners held two targeted listening sessions with COPA employees at COPA headquarters. The meetings were also online. The first meeting held on April 23, 2025, provided staff with an opportunity to ask questions about the search process and timeline.

On July 1, a second listening session was held to get employees' feedback on what they believe are the most important qualifications the next COPA Chief.

Over a hundred employees attended both listening sessions in-person or online.

Law Enforcement Listening Sessions

Commissioners reached out to all the police unions and met with those that were interested. The Commission met with Chicago Police Sergeants union and held a focus group with the Chicago Police Department's Bureau of Internal Affairs Investigators. Additionally, the Commission worked with CPD to reach out to all sworn members to provide them with an opportunity to give feedback.

Surveys

To create more opportunities for people to provide input, the Commission circulated surveys to COPA employees, CPD sworn members and community members. The Commission received several hundred responses. Following are the questions from those surveys.

What are the most important qualities the Chief Administrator of COPA should have in order for COPA to achieve its mission?

COPA's mission based on MCC 2-78-110 is:

- to provide a just and efficient means to fairly and timely conduct investigations within its jurisdiction, including investigations of alleged police misconduct;
- to determine whether allegations of police misconduct are well-founded, applying a preponderance of the evidence standard;
- to identify and address patterns of police misconduct; and
- to make policy recommendations based on information obtained through investigations to improve CPD and reduce incidents of police misconduct.

What should be the top priorities of the Chief Administrator of COPA in order for COPA to achieve its mission?

COPA's mission based on MCC 2-78-110 is:

- to provide a just and efficient means to fairly and timely conduct investigations within its jurisdiction, including investigations of alleged police misconduct;
- to determine whether allegations of police misconduct are well-founded, applying a preponderance of the evidence standard;
- to identify and address patterns of police misconduct; and
- to make policy recommendations based on information obtained through investigations to improve CPD and reduce incidents of police misconduct.

Please share anything else you wish to convey to CCPSA about the COPA Chief Administrator.

Subject Matter Experts

Commissioners and Commission staff identified people with expertise and experience in public safety, law enforcement, and police accountability. Commissioners and staff met with and gathered input from subject matter experts.

Name	Title	Organization
Eci Ameh	Executive Director	Seattle Community Police Commission
Robert Boik	Senior Vice President of Public Safety (Former Executive Director for CPD's Office of Constitutional Policing and Reform)	Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago
Max Caproni	Executive Director	Chicago Police Board
Kyle Cooper	President	Chicago Police Board
Michael Dirden	Associate Monitor for Accountability and Transparency	Chicago Consent Decree
Sharon Fairley	Professor from Practice (Former Chief Administrator of COPA)	University of Chicago Law School
Maggie Hickey	Independent Monitor	Chicago Consent Decree
Joe Ferguson	Executive Director (Former Chicago Inspector General)	Civic Federation
Walter Katz	Director of Policy (Former Deputy Mayor for Public Safety)	The Innocence Project

Susan Lee	Chief of Strategy and Policy (Former Deputy Mayor for Public Safety)	Chicago CRED
Yvette Loizon	Chief Assistant State's Attorney of Policy and External Affairs (Former CCPSA Commissioner & COPA Work Group Member)	Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Rodney Monroe	Deputy Monitor	Chicago Consent Decree
Tim Moore	Chief of the Bureau of Internal Affairs	Chicago Police Department
Dana O'Malley	Chief of Staff	Chicago Police Department
Tobara Richardson	Chicago Public Safety Inspector General	Chicago Office of the Inspector General
Commander Donna Rowling	Chief of Management and Labor Affairs	Chicago Police Department
Larry Snelling	Superintendent	Chicago Police Department
Dr. Robert Sobo	Director of the Professional Counseling Division	Chicago Police Department
Deborah Witzburg	Inspector General	Chicago Office of the Inspector General

Targeted Focus Groups

Commissioners along with staff identified several groups to meet with to talk about the search and police accountability. These were facilitated discussions and included young people and social justice groups. The following groups participated:

- Youth District Advisory Council, Chicago Police Department
- Chicago Torture Justice Center
- Build, Inc, (Youth Centered Focus Group)
- Englewood Restorative Justice Court (Justice Impacted Focus Group)

Key Themes

After meeting with members of the community, employees and law enforcement, the following themes emerged as to what people were looking for in the next Chief administrator of COPA.

1. A leader with integrity
2. Understands investigative excellence
3. Understands the importance of timely, impartial and thorough investigations
4. Can build public trust in COPA
5. Will strengthen internal culture and operations
6. Can navigate a difficult political climate
7. Will work collaboratively with other accountability agencies
8. Understands law enforcement

Interview Materials

Interview Questions – Round 1

All candidates who were selected for round one interviews by Commissioners were asked the same set of interview questions. These questions were based on the key themes that Commissioners heard from the community.

Question: Introductory Question

1. Please tell us why you want to be the next Chief Administrator of COPA and why you're suited for the job?

Question: Investigative Leadership & Oversight

2. COPA's statutory purpose requires that it conduct "fair, timely, thorough investigations". What in your previous experience has prepared you to fulfill that statutory purpose? As Chief Administrator, how would you ensure that COPA conducts fair, timely, and thorough investigations?

Question: Vision and Priorities

3. If you were selected as the next Chief Administrator, what would your top priorities be during your first month, your first year, and over a four-year period? How would you measure progress and success at each stage?

Question: Strategic Vision & Reform

4. COPA's statutory purpose requires that it identify and address patterns of police misconduct. What in your previous experience has prepared you to fulfill that statutory purpose? As Chief Administrator, how would you ensure that COPA effectively detects, analyzes, and responds to these patterns?

Question: Fairness

5. What specific steps have you taken to build trust with police officers, departments, and unions? What would you use from those experiences to build trust in COPA among the police department and unions, including those officers who may be the subject of COPA investigations?

Question: Organizational Culture & Leadership

6. How have you fostered a collaborative and inclusive organizational culture that supports staff, builds trust, and strengthens internal communication? What specific actions or practices did you put in place to sustain that culture over time?

Question: Political Acumen & Independence

7. COPA frequently handles high-profile cases that can be very divisive. Describe a time you navigated a politically charged environment and how you approached communication and relationship management.

Question: Trauma-Informed & Culturally Competent Engagement

8. The position requires outreach to and collaboration with communities that have been negatively impacted by past police actions. In your experience, what have been the most effective ways to engage and build trust with such communities?

Question: Closing Question

9. Before we finish, is there anything else that you would like to share about yourself and your qualifications to lead COPA?

Interview Questions – Round 2

Following is a list of questions the Commission asked all candidates in round two. Additional questions were asked of each candidate based on their responses to questions in round one and each candidate's individual experience. Those questions are not listed to protect the identity of each candidate.

1. How would you ensure that COPA consistently delivers fair, timely, and thorough investigations, and what specific structural elements or systems would you prioritize to support those standards?
2. What would be your top priorities during your first year as Chief Administrator, and how would you evaluate your progress?
3. Looking ahead three to five years under your leadership, what would your top priorities be for COPA, and how would you evaluate progress?
4. As part of their work, COPA staff regularly review traumatic or emotionally challenging material. What approaches would you take to support staff well-being?
5. COPA's ordinance authorizes it to investigate patterns of police misconduct and based on its findings, to recommend changes to policy, practice, programs, or training. How would you build and organize a unit to carry out this work?

Case Study

All candidates were asked to complete the following case study.

This is part one of the second-round interview process. On the day of your interview, you will be asked to make a 10–15-minute presentation. Commissioners and staff will then have an opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

Background

The City of Springfield has a long history of police misconduct. Every year, the city spends a significant amount of money to settle cases of alleged police misconduct. Public trust in law enforcement has declined, the city council is demanding change, and community groups are demanding greater transparency and accountability.

The City's Police Accountability Agency (PAA) is an independent oversight body tasked with investigating complaints against police officers, recommending disciplinary actions, and advising on systemic reforms. The PAA is led by a Chief Administrator.

The Chief Administrator role is critical in restoring public confidence, ensuring fair investigations, and leading the agency through a period of transformation.

Case Study Scenario

You have just been appointed as the Chief Administrator of the PAA. Within your first 60 days, the following occurs:

Incident: A video surfaces showing an officer-involved shooting that resulted in the death of a suspect. The video goes viral, sparking protests and media scrutiny. The officer has a history of prior

complaints, one of which resulted in a short suspension. Through news reports on the shooting, a police department spokesperson said that the suspect had a gun, but the video shows no clear evidence of a gun. It was also reported that the alleged suspect has a history of mental illness.

Internal Challenges: Several PAA investigators express concerns about inconsistent investigative protocols and lack of training within the agency, which they believe have led to cases being overturned or closed with no findings. Recent changes at the agency have also led to a drop in morale, and staff turnover is increasing.

Political Pressure: The mayor's office urges you to issue a public statement supporting the police department to "calm tensions," while some prominent community leaders demand that the officer involved be fired immediately.

Candidate Tasks

Given the presented scenario, please answer the questions below, (parts 1-3). After completing parts 1-3, proceed to part four and draft a brief public statement addressing the incident.

Part 1: Strategic Response Plan

- Within the first 24 hours(?) after the video surfaces, how would you address the immediate crisis?
- In the first month(?) after the video surfaces, how would you lay the groundwork for long-term reform?
- What stakeholders would you engage, and how?

Part 2: Decision-Making

- How would you respond to the mayor's request?
- How would you respond to the community leaders' requests?
- What principles guide your decision-making in these situations?

Part 3: Organizational Leadership

- What steps would you take to rebuild internal morale?
- What steps would you take to improve investigative standards?

Part 4: Communication Strategy

- Draft a brief public statement addressing the incident and outlining your agency's next steps.

Commission President, Remel Terry
Commission Vice President Angel Rubi Narijo
Commissioner Anthony Driver
Commissioner Aaron Gottlieb
Commissioner Abierre Minor
Commissioner Gina Piemonte
Commissioner Sandra Wortham



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