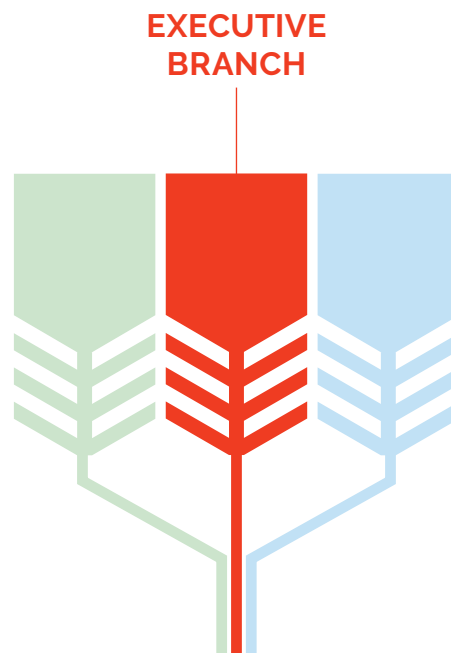


APPENDIX A: THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

In the executive branch, the governor's office has major responsibility for setting a vision and statewide priorities for child welfare. State agencies implement that vision through the operation of the child protection and child welfare legal framework in the state.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- ❑ **Lead and staff the three-branch initiative.** This duty typically falls to the executive branch because of the policy or practice changes that must occur within state agencies. States have found success hiring new staff or identifying staff from the governor's office or the state child welfare agency to serve as the project coordinator.
- ❑ **Plan and facilitate meetings.** The executive branch takes a leading role in scheduling cross-branch and cross-agency meetings, setting agendas, facilitating meetings and following up on action items identified during meetings.
- ❑ **Coordinate cross-branch communication.** Between meetings, staff from the executive branch facilitate cross-branch communication.
- ❑ **Align the initiative with other agency work and gubernatorial priorities.** State agencies are typically under the direction of a cabinet-level official who reports directly to the governor. Therefore, the executive branch plays a unique role in ensuring that the work of the three-branch initiative is aligned with gubernatorial priorities and relevant work across agencies.
- ❑ **Monitor progress toward achieving goals.** Executive branch staff are responsible for monitoring the state's progress toward achieving stated goals. This monitoring can occur through regularly established meetings, where staff tasked with action items report on their progress, and through regular check-ins between meetings.
- ❑ **Embed strategies from the three-branch approach into the executive branch's day-to-day work.** The governor, governor's office and executive branch leaders can work with other branches to develop a shared vision for child welfare, commitment to transparency and information and data sharing agreements with the other branches.



BEST PRACTICES

Engage colleagues within your branch.

- ❑ Invite staff from the governor's, first spouse's or lieutenant governor's office to meetings.
- ❑ Host cross-agency convenings to build rapport among staff and a shared sense of the problem.
- ❑ Develop a formal agreement (e.g., memorandum of understanding [MOU] or charter) establishing collaboration between branches and agencies.
- ❑ Set regularly scheduled, in-person meetings with core team members (more frequent) and implementation team and extended team members (less frequent).
- ❑ Establish clear and ongoing channels of communication over email, through project management software or through regularly scheduled phone calls.
- ❑ Add the work of the three-branch initiative to the agenda for cabinet meetings.



Engage the legislative branch.

- ❑ Provide opportunities for legislators to engage with caseworkers, intake workers or other agency staff for a clearer understanding of how legislation could affect frontline work.
- ❑ Schedule meetings when legislators are not in session or when they are not required to be in hearings or on the floor.
- ❑ When inviting legislators to meetings, ensure a concrete role or request for them.
- ❑ Host topic-specific convenings or training events for legislators from relevant committees and state agency staff.



Engage the judicial branch.

- ❑ Schedule meetings far in advance to give judges with active dockets an opportunity to participate.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for judges to interact with caseworkers, intake workers or other frontline staff.
- ❑ Host cross-branch training sessions.
- ❑ Involve Court Improvement Program directors and regional or statewide judicial leadership to foster sustainability when judges rotate to different assignment.



Ensure that team members understand their role.

- ❑ At the beginning of the project, discuss the role of each branch and each team member.
- ❑ Develop an MOU or other formal agreement that clearly delineates roles and responsibilities.
- ❑ Establish a plan to communicate these roles and responsibilities as turnover occurs.



Ensure continued participation of the other two branches throughout the entire project.

- ❑ Establish clear, measurable goals at the outset of the initiative.
- ❑ Create a sense of co-ownership of the initiative by co-creating a clear vision, mission and goals.
- ❑ Ensure that action plans and core team meetings have a clear role for the legislative and judicial branches.
- ❑ Celebrate milestones and achievements as a team, and consider sharing major achievements with the press.
- ❑ Many aspects of the three-branch approach can be embedded into the way branches function daily, but keep in mind that the ongoing work of the three-branch initiative may be time limited and conclude when established goals have been achieved.



31 Prepare for transition.

- ❑ Embed day-to-day work in career state agency staff members' responsibilities so that turnover does not impede progress.
- ❑ Create a clear, concise document that conveys the purpose and goals of the initiative, achievements to date, ongoing work and a description of who is involved. Share it with new team members as they join the initiative.
- ❑ Reconvene the core team and revisit the vision, mission and goals when transitions among key team members occur.



Identify and address conflict as it arises.

- ❑ Identify areas of conflict, and prioritize items that must be addressed to maintain progress toward identified goals.
- ❑ Identify points of agreement and disagreement.
- ❑ Develop a prioritized list of discussion items related to identified conflict to address as a group before moving forward.