



After Ascertainment: What's Next for the Biden-Harris Transition Team

President-elect Biden and his team have already started their transition work, demonstrating skill, experience and purpose. Now that ascertainment has occurred, they can continue with the full support of the United States government.

RESOURCES NOW AVAILABLE

1. The Biden-Harris agency review teams may begin coordination with the 17 agencies with intelligence responsibilities.
2. The General Services Administration (GSA) can release \$6.3 million in congressionally appropriated funds to the transition team, along with 175,000 square feet of federal office space, including secure facilities for sensitive intelligence briefings.
3. Career agency transition directors can coordinate with the Biden-Harris transition team and deliver the briefing materials they have been preparing for the past [six months](#).
4. The Biden-Harris team will be granted access to agency succession plans naming acting officials who will hold key positions until Senate-confirmed appointees are in place.
5. The Department of Justice (DOJ) may begin the final step in adjudicating final, non-interim security clearances for transition team members and political appointees entering the administration on Day One.
6. The Office of Government Ethics (OGE) can begin coordinating agency ethics officials to support nominees who must disclose, and if necessary, divest assets in accordance with federal ethics laws.
7. The Office of Performance Management (OPM) can release guidance on personnel actions to take in preparation for the incoming administration, including a [moratorium](#) on agencies' SES Qualifications Review Board process and the authorization for agencies to move forward with Temporary Schedule C and Temporary Non-Career SES hires.
8. The White House Transition Coordinating Council will facilitate homeland security and emergency preparedness exercises as required by law.
9. The National Archives and Records Administration will provide guidance to the outgoing administration and transition team on managing and preserving presidential records.
10. The Biden-Harris transition team will be granted access to an official .gov website, email domains and government software applications for the intake of applicants for political appointments.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How much time was lost due to the delay?

A: Recent transitions have had about 77 days between the election and inauguration. The Biden team will have 57 days.

Q: How does this delay compare with other recent transitions?

A: For all recent transitions, the GSA identified the winner immediately following the election. The only exception was in 2000 during the tight election between George W. Bush and Al Gore. That year, the GSA identified the winner on Dec. 13 immediately following Gore's concession speech.

This year's election outcome was [substantially different](#) than that of 2000.

Q: What adjustments have been made due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

When Biden's transition team was given federal office space after the political conventions, the GSA informed the team of guidelines produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The transition team was responsible for determining how the guidelines would be implemented.

Additionally, the GSA and federal agencies have increased the use of videoconference platforms and made documents available in digital formats. When in-person meetings are necessary, agencies and agency review teams will follow COVID-19 safety protocols to allow for safe in-person interactions.

Q: Does a shortened transition impact a president's first year?

A: It can. The bipartisan [9/11 Commission](#), which studied the tragic terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, found the Bush administration did not have its [full national security team](#) in place for at least six months after it took office.

Additional [research](#) by the Center for Presidential Transition showed that that the shortened transition in 2000 resulted in President Bush having half as many top appointees in place at the 100-day mark of his term as President Barack Obama did eight years later with a full transition period.

Q: What are other available resources to learn more?

A: For more information on the transition process, please refer to the following resources produced by the Center for Presidential Transition.

- Transition Lab podcast: [State of the Transition: An Update With Ken Burns, Josh Bolten and Eric Rauchway](#)
- Transition Lab podcast: [How Does the GSA "Ascertain" the Outcome of an Election: An Inside Look at the GSA, Ascertainment and the 2000 Election with David Barram](#)
- Transition Lab podcast: [The Art of Agency Review During a Presidential Transition with Lisa Brown](#)
- Transition Lab podcast: [Preparing the Government for a Presidential Transition with GSA's Mary Gibert](#)
- Virtual event: Talking Transitions: [Perspectives for First-term and Second-term Administrations](#)