



CHICAGO LIGHTS INSTITUTE FOUNDATIONAL PROGRESS REPORT 2025–2026

Establishing the Foundations for Civic Formation

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INTRODUCTION

The 2025–2026 fiscal year represents the inaugural year of organizational development for the Chicago Lights Institute.

As a newly established public charity, the Institute has devoted its initial efforts to establishing the governance, organizational, intellectual, and public-facing foundations necessary to fulfill its long-term civic and educational mission.

Rather than emphasizing program expansion during this formative year, priority has been given to building the institutional systems, governance framework, strategic capacity, and organizational infrastructure required to ensure responsible leadership, accountability, transparency, and long-term sustainability.

This report summarizes the principal milestones achieved during the Institute's inaugural year and reflects our commitment to building a credible

institution capable of advancing civic formation initiatives that strengthen communities through shared identity, belonging, cooperation, dignity, and responsible civic participation.

FOUNDATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During its inaugural year, organizational efforts have centered on three strategic priorities.

1. Governance Development

One of the Institute's highest priorities has been the establishment of a comprehensive governance framework to support responsible organizational leadership.

During this period, the Chicago Lights Institute Bylaws and Governance Policies Manual was completed and distributed to each member of the Founding Board of Directors for careful review and consideration.

The manual establishes the Institute's governance structure, fiduciary responsibilities, accountability standards, ethical policies, financial stewardship practices, and operational framework necessary for responsible nonprofit management.

Following Board review, no recommendations for revisions, corrections, or amendments were submitted. Accordingly, the Board proceeded with the formal adoption of the Bylaws and Governance Policies Manual as the official governing document of the Chicago Lights Institute.

The Institute also completed its Founding Board Resolution Book, documenting the official corporate actions that established the Institute's foundational governance and administrative authority.

Collectively, these actions represent significant milestones in establishing the governance, accountability, stewardship, and institutional systems necessary to support the Institute's long-term mission and sustainability.

2. Institutional Development

Significant progress has also been made in establishing the Institute's public identity and organizational presence.

Development has continued on the Chicago Lights Institute website together with supporting public-facing organizational assets, including LinkedIn and YouTube platforms.

These resources are being developed to communicate clearly:

- Who we are
- What we do
- Why we exist
- How we are governed
- How we responsibly steward the resources entrusted to the Institute

Additional work has included the development of organizational branding, Board biographies, governance documentation, transparency resources, and foundational institutional publications that collectively strengthen the Institute's public credibility and readiness for future growth.

3. Intellectual Framework Development

A defining accomplishment during the Institute's inaugural year has been the completion of the Civic Formation Engineering framework.

Developed as the Institute's guiding interdisciplinary philosophy, Civic Formation Engineering provides the intellectual foundation for understanding how communities are intentionally strengthened through human formation, civic identity, relationships, education, culture, and shared responsibility.

The framework integrates perspectives from sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, political science, philosophy, theology, leadership studies, and community development to advance a comprehensive approach to community formation.

This framework will continue to guide the Institute's educational initiatives, research, publications, community engagement, and future civic formation projects.

LOOKING AHEAD

With its foundational governance systems now established, organizational identity taking shape, and Civic Formation Engineering serving as its guiding intellectual framework, the Chicago Lights Institute is well positioned to begin expanding its educational initiatives, civic partnerships, research, and community engagement efforts.

Future priorities include:

- Expanding civic education initiatives
- Building strategic community partnerships
- Developing leadership formation programs
- Advancing Civic Formation Engineering research
- Strengthening public engagement through education, creative expression, and community collaboration

As the Institute grows, these initiatives will continue to support our mission of strengthening communities through shared identity, belonging, cooperation, dignity, and responsible civic participation.

CLOSING REFLECTION

The inaugural year of the Chicago Lights Institute has been devoted to building an institution rather than merely launching programs. The governance systems, organizational infrastructure, intellectual framework, and public-facing resources established during this foundational period provide the framework upon which future initiatives and lasting community impact will be built.

On behalf of the leadership of the Chicago Lights Institute, I extend sincere appreciation to our Founding Board of Directors for their wisdom, stewardship, and commitment during this formative stage of the Institute's development.

Together, we have established a strong institutional foundation from which the Chicago Lights Institute will continue to serve communities with integrity, accountability, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to civic formation.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Kirk Mills
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Chicago Lights Institute