

Better Government Association and McCormick Foundation Form the Illinois Solutions Partnership

November 22, 2021



The Better Government Association and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation today announced the formation of the Illinois Solutions Partnership. The ambitious new collaboration builds on their complementary missions in an effort to address the state's urgent challenges through investigative and enterprise reporting and solutions-focused journalism.

The Illinois Solutions Partnership will be launched with \$10 million in McCormick Foundation grants over the next five years. BGA will devote reporters and other resources to substantially match McCormick's commitment over the life of the partnership, which is intended to extend beyond the initial five-year period. Over time, the partners will need to earn or raise additional revenue in order to fully implement their plans.

The new venture will combine in-depth investigative journalism with reporting

focused on potential solutions to provide Illinois residents the information they need to hold their government accountable and engage public officials and civic leaders in efforts to improve Illinois and Chicago.

The Illinois Solutions Partnership will leverage the BGA's award-winning reporting staff and add a range of diverse journalistic talent to the team. An enhanced presence in Springfield will contribute toward increased accountability coverage of state government. The work will have an emphasis on equity and accountability in Chicago and across Illinois.

David Greising, the BGA's president and CEO, will manage the partnership, leading an expanded team of top editors and reporters. "We're launching the Illinois Solutions Partnership at a crucial time for both the state and for journalism," said Greising, a former Chicago Tribune business columnist who also managed a digital news start-up, the Chicago News Cooperative. "Disinvestment in news coverage is a threat to a healthy democracy, and the McCormick Foundation's significant investment will help to combat this dangerous trend."

Solutions reporting applies the rigor of investigative journalism to identifying solutions to problems in government and elsewhere but stops short of advocating for specific policy options. The BGA recently published its [first solutions story](#), which showed effective fire-safety reforms in cities nationwide. This followed a [BGA-Chicago Tribune investigation](#) that revealed fires killed 61 people over six years in buildings where the City of Chicago was made aware of fire hazards.

The partnership intends to build a sustainable business model. A key objective is to reach a growing audience in Chicago and across Illinois through a new website and mobile platform, newsletters, and social media channels, as well as through content and distribution collaborations with other broadcast, print, and digital news media across the state. The Illinois Solutions Partnership intends to leverage the BGA's expertise in partnering with news organizations statewide.

The partnership will be a nonpartisan, nonprofit enterprise. All of the reporting published by the partnership will adhere to the BGA's strict policies ensuring the independence and objectivity of its journalism.

The BGA and McCormick will be equal partners in the venture, which will be overseen by a board with equal representation from the BGA and McCormick. Board members will apply their journalism, business, and civic expertise in

guiding strategy, as well as development of a sustainable business model for the initiative.

“We’re confident the Illinois Solutions Partnership will make an important impact in helping our city and state identify and pursue solutions to key challenges we are facing,” said Timothy P. Knight, the McCormick Foundation’s President and CEO. “We are excited to partner with the Better Government Association, which knows how to bring journalism firepower to investigate the problems we face. We must figure out what’s wrong and help fix it.”

Paulette Dodson, chair of the BGA, said the multi-year commitment will provide resources needed to make a significant commitment to solutions reporting.

“Solutions journalism presents a new way to provide ideas for reform to the public and policymakers,” Dodson said. “With the resources provided by the McCormick Foundation and the BGA, the Illinois Solutions Partnership will reach readers in new ways, focus on communities that have been overlooked, and enhance the reach and impact of our journalism.”

Dennis FitzSimons, chair of the McCormick Foundation, said, “Changes in technology and news consumption have damaged media business models and caused deep cuts in newsroom staffing statewide. This venture will help provide what Illinoisans need: an increase in investigative and enterprise journalism with an eye toward positive change. While McCormick is the lead investor in the start-up phase, we hope to see many more co-investors join this effort.”

The Illinois Solutions Partnership expects to launch coverage in the first half of 2022 after typical start-up activities, and further information will be provided upon official launch.

For comment, contact:

David Greising of the BGA at 312-404-8678 or dgreising@bettergov.org. David’s headshot can be [downloaded here](#).

About the Better Government Association

A 98-year-old nonprofit based in Chicago, the BGA is Illinois’ only nonpartisan, full-service watchdog organization. It uncovers waste and wrongdoing in government, holds elected officials accountable, litigates for open records and

meetings, advocates for good government, and empowers residents to engage and act.

About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation

For more than 65 years, the McCormick Foundation has invested in people and organizations across Chicago and Illinois to develop educated, informed, and engaged communities. The foundation, with more than \$2 billion in assets, focuses its grant investments supporting Chicago's South and West Side communities in the areas of economic opportunity, early education, public safety, veterans and journalism.