

Cory Thames Biography



For more than a decade, native Chicagoan Cory L. Thames has worked tirelessly to bring about positive change to the city he has called home for his entire life - Chicago. With a career heavily rooted in the government and nonprofit spheres, Cory remains focused on empowering and bridging marginalized communities by using his experiences to create opportunities for those in need.

Cory currently serves as President & CEO of Thames Strategies, a full-service public affairs firm committed to delivering individualized strategies, tactics and solutions to a diverse clientele spanning the private, public, nonprofit, and political arenas. Our firm specializes in crisis management, government affairs, grassroots community engagement, communications, political strategy, and DEI initiatives. Most recently, Cory served as Chief Engagement Officer for the Business Leadership Council (BLC) – Chicago’s premier association of African American entrepreneurs and senior executives. The goal of the BLC is to help cultivate opportunities to create generational wealth and grassroots economic development within the African American community.

Prior to BLC, Cory served as Deputy Commissioner for the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) where he led the Intergovernmental Affairs and Community Engagement divisions for one of the City of Chicago’s largest departments overseeing O’Hare and Midway International Airports. Prior to CDA, Cory served as Deputy Director of Community Engagement for the Obama Foundation where he led community engagement and government affairs efforts to bring the Obama Presidential Center to the south side of Chicago. In addition, he has held multiple roles across the government and nonprofit sectors including Deputy Chief Operating Officer for the City Clerk of Chicago, Assistant to the Mayor for Government Affairs under Mayor Rahm Emanuel and as Associate Director with Mentor Illinois.

Cory has long been an active advocate in his community. As Chairman of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors, he is passionate about ensuring South Shore's business community not only has the tools and resources necessary to operate, but the ongoing support and network required to thrive. Cory also serves on the Board of Trustees for Chicago State University and as a board member for Youth Guidance and Emerald South. Formerly, he served as the City of Chicago appointed board member for Metra. In addition, Cory hosts the CAN TV produced podcast, In My Own Words, airing on Channel 19. Cory is a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

Cory earned a bachelor’s degree in Political Science from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and a Master of Public Affairs (MPA) degree from Indiana University. Thames, 35, is a lifelong Chicagoan and proud resident of the South Shore community.

Awards & Recognitions:

- WGCI Great 28 Honoree, 2023
- Chicago Defender Men of Excellence, 2022
- WVON [VON Talks](#) Leadership Spotlight, 2021
- WVON & Ariel Investments 40 Game Changers Under 40, 2020
- WDB Legacy Award, 2019

Articles:

<https://thesouthlandjournal.com/cory-thames-working-tirelessly-to-bring-about-positive-change-for-students-at-chicago-state-university/>

<https://www.iun.edu/news/2022/alumnus-cory-thames-improving-the-region.htm>

<https://www.myradiolink.com/2021/09/09/gov-pritzker-announces-five-appointments-to-illinois-authorities-boards-councils-and-commissions/#>

<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/equity/chicagos-black-owned-businesses-look-scale>

<https://mytaylormedia.com/2020/01/a-year-with-cory-l-thames/>