

Cory Thames Biography



For the last 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.

Currently, Cory serves 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. Through strategic partnerships, convenings, advocacy and support for innovative initiatives, Thames is responsible for implementing programming strategies that carry out the BLC's mission and vision.

Most recently, 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. Prior to CDA, Cory served as Deputy Director of Community Engagement for the Obama Foundation helping to lead efforts to bring the Obama Presidential Center to the south side of Chicago. Before that, he 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 Emerald South.

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, 34, is a lifelong Chicagoan and proud resident of the South Shore community.