



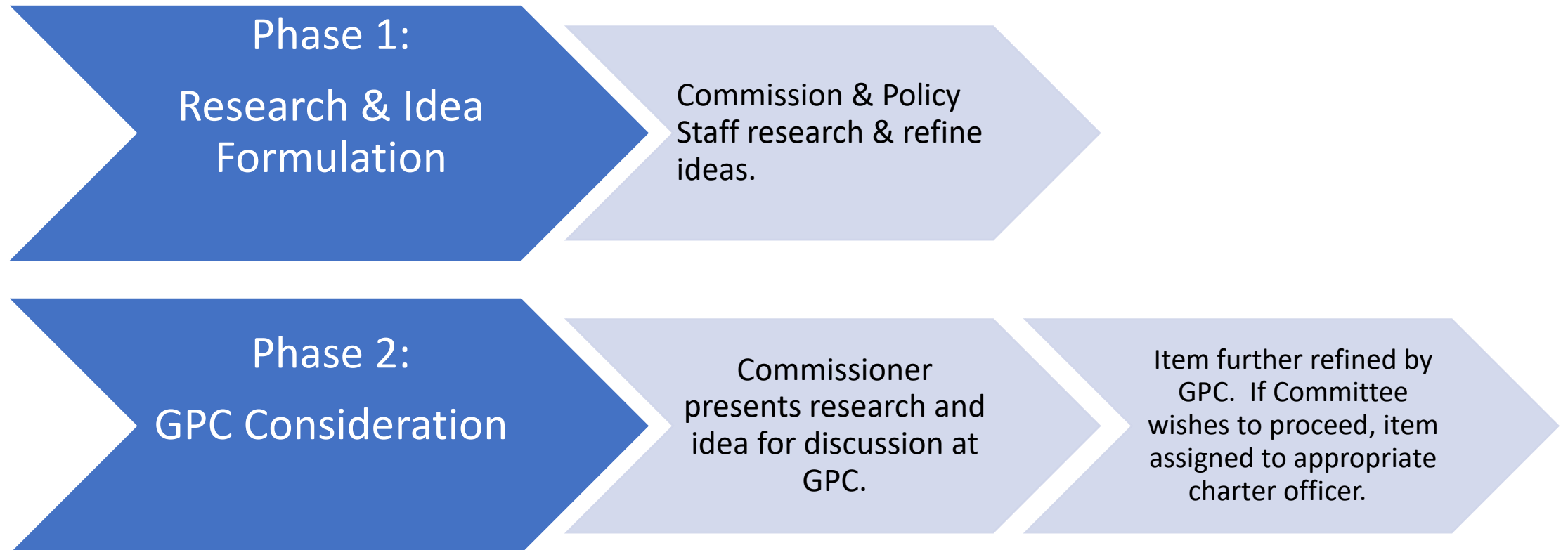
Strong Mayor

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Policy Research Process



Strong Mayor

- Descriptions of Strong and Weak Mayor Systems
- Current Gainesville System
- Cities that have switched from weak to strong mayor
 - Pensacola, Florida
 - Pueblo, Colorado
 - San Diego, California
- Unsuccessful efforts to switch systems
 - Clearwater, Florida
 - Miami, Florida

Weak Mayor/Council-Manager System

- City Manager, appointed by the city commission, serves as the chief executive of the city.
- Mayor is largely ceremonial, serving as a representative for the city and the presiding officer of city commission meetings
 - May be directly elected, or may be elected as a commissioner and then appointed mayor by the commission.
- Mayor generally has no additional authority outside of acting as the presiding officer of the city commission.

Strong Mayor/Mayor-Council System

- The mayor serves as the city's chief executive, however the extent of the mayor's executive authority varies significantly.
- The mayor generally has hiring and firing capacities of charter officers and department heads, and may have additional authorities such as veto authority over the commission and the authority to prepare an annual budget.
- The mayor may or may not serve as a member of the city commission, and also may or may not appoint a city administrator to handle day to day operations of the city.

City of Gainesville

- City of Gainesville has a hybrid weak mayor system, as the Mayor of Gainesville is directly elected but has a largely ceremonial role.
- The Charter Officers are appointed by the City Commission as a body, and can only be removed from their positions by the City Commission as a body.
- The Gainesville City Charter creates the current city structure, and any change would required a charter amendment.

State of Florida

- Approximately two-thirds of cities within Florida have a weak mayor form of government.
- However, both large (Tampa, Jacksonville, St. Petersburg, and Orlando) and smaller (Plantation, Pensacola, West Palm, and Palmetto) cities operate under the strong mayor structure.

Case Studies

- Cities that have switched from weak to strong mayor
 - Pensacola, Florida
 - Pueblo, Colorado
 - San Diego, California
- Cities that have attempted to switch from weak to strong mayor but failed
 - Clearwater, Florida
 - Miami, Florida

Pensacola, Florida

- Ballot initiative switching the city charter from a council-manager to council-mayor system passed in 2009 with 55.17%, with the official change occurring in 2010.
- Under the revised charter, the mayor was removed as a voting member of the council and was given executive powers over the city, including the ability to appoint a City Administrator, City Attorney, City Clerk, and the heads of all departments, all of which subject to approval from the council with the exception of the city administrator. Additionally, the mayor prepares the annual budget, and has veto authority over council decisions.
- The shift was primarily due to an economic downturn, and residents felt that a strong mayor would be able to bring economic development industries to the city.

Pueblo, Colorado

- In 2017, voters approved a switch to a strong mayor form of government, due to frustration over a lack of policy resolution under the council-manager form of government, with the official change occurring in 2019.
- Under the new form of government, the mayor had the power to appoint department heads, but all appointments must be confirmed by the city council. The mayor also controls and directs the executive branch, and is not a sitting member of the city council.
- The mayor also appoints a deputy mayor, who shares administrative duties.
- Pueblo had voted against a similar policy in 2009.

San Diego, California

- San Diego switched to a strong mayor system in January 2006, after a six year pilot program was approved by voters in November 2004. The initiative was ultimately extended permanently.
- Voter discontent surrounding a pension and securities scandal triggered the switch, which passed with 51% approval.
- The mayor was removed from the city council and established a separate executive branch, which was responsible for day to day administration of the city, including proposing a budget, appointing department heads, and having veto authority over council measures. An additional at-large council seat was created to replace the mayor.
- The city also created independent budget analyst and legislative analyst positions, independent from the mayor.

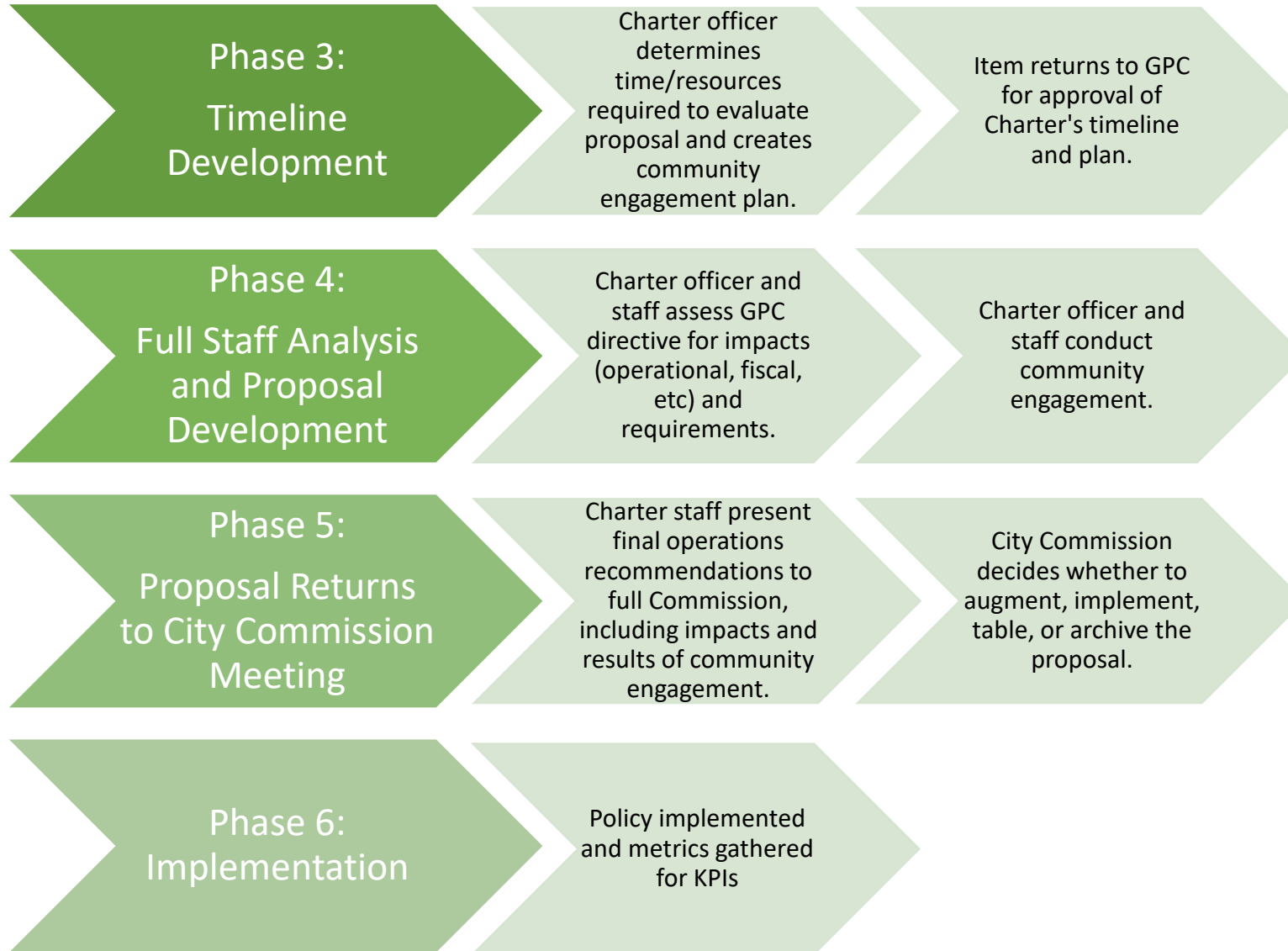
Clearwater, Florida – Unsuccessful Switch

- A ballot initiative which would have eliminated the city manager position and given daily authority to the mayor went before Clearwater voters in November of 2018. The measure would have also removed the mayor from the city council.
- The initiative was supported by the Clearwater Downtown Partnership, which argued a strong mayor would strengthen the city's vitality.
- Critics argued that the council-manager form is more stable and common, and that it keeps politics out of city operations.
- The initiative failed to pass, with 40% of voters in favor of the strong mayor switch.

Miami, Florida – Unsuccessful Switch

- In August 2018, the Miami City Commission approved a strong mayor initiative to appear on the November ballot after 20,000 petitions were collected in favor of the switch.
- Under the initiative, the city manager would be replaced with the mayor, the mayor would serve as a non-voting commission chair, and would be granted the authority to appoint and remove charter officers, department directors, and employees.
- The referendum failed to pass, receiving 36% of the vote.
- Miami is not currently considered a “weak mayor” system, because the mayor is considered an executive who appoints a city manager to run the city. However, the city manager officially serves as the city’s chief executive and the mayor still serves as a sitting member of the commission, and thus it is not a true “strong mayor” system.

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Discussion?