THE BEYOND SERIES | ABSTRACT | SEPTEMBER 2026

Beyond Recruitment

Governing the Transformational Opportunity

Winning the project is no longer the same as winning for the community.

The recruiter's traditional mandate—find the prospect, assemble the site, negotiate the package and announce the win—was built for a simpler transaction. Transformational investment can reorganize a community's infrastructure, finances, workforce and politics. Economic development must now help govern the opportunity, not merely capture it.

FROM DEAL TEAM TO GOVERNANCE TEAM

Transformational economic development requires an executive governance model that embeds recruitment within a coordinated structure integrating economic development, infrastructure, finance, planning, legal, workforce, utilities and community interests.

THE GOVERNANCE SHIFT

MOVE UPSTREAM	ONE DECISION MANY SYSTEMS	EXECUTIVE TEAM
Define the public decision, standards and evidence before a prospect controls the calendar.	Use a common project definition and full-build case across every professional review.	Assign a decision owner, integrate distributed expertise and preserve clear authority.

DECISION GATES

QUALIFY	COMMIT	IMPLEMENT
Distinguish an announcement or prospect from a credible, serviceable and financeable opportunity.	Test infrastructure, public finance, workforce, land use, community effects and the public-private bargain.	Convert the decision into owned agreements, funding, milestones, verification and review.

EXECUTIVE IMPLICATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROLE	GOVERNING ROLE
Bring market knowledge and opportunity discipline into executive governance without becoming the sole project owner.	Choose the opportunity the community can responsibly support—not merely the project it can recruit.

BOUNDARY AND USE

Comparative practices from semiconductors, large electric loads and prepared sites illustrate governance choices; they do not establish one model for every project or jurisdiction.

THE GOVERNING IDEA

The next great economic-development leader will not be the best recruiter. It will be the leader who can govern the opportunity.

OFFICIAL MANUSCRIPT

David M. Smitherman, Beyond Recruitment: Governing the Transformational Opportunity. The Beyond Series, Bear Strategies, 2026.

CONTINUE THE WORK

Request the full manuscript or discuss commissioned white papers, opinion pieces, research and publishing collaborations, executive education, or speaking engagements: david@bearstratusa.com.