

October 17, 2025

Rio Metro Board

**Update on the Rio Metro / ABQ
RIDE Transit Consolidation Study**

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Agenda

- **Background**
 - **Goals and Scenarios overview**
- **Overall Recommendations**
- **Implementation Steps**
- **Next Steps**
 - **Rio Metro Board**
 - **Overall Project**
- ***Discussion***

Background

Previously, we've discussed...

- Council Resolution
- Scope of Study
- Case Studies
- Challenges solved by changes in governance
- What we've learned about each agency
 - Challenges impacting riders and staff
 - Successes
- Goal Areas
- Scenario Strategy



City of Albuquerque
 City of Albuquerque
 Government Center
 One Civic Plaza
 Albuquerque, NM 87102

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: R-23-163
Type: Resolution
File created: 9/6/2023
Status: Enacted
In control: City Council
Final action: 10/2/2023
Enactment date: 10/23/2023
Title: Directing The City Of Albuquerque Transit Department And Rio Metro Regional Transit District To Conduct A Study For Consolidating ABQ Ride And Rio Metro And Develop A Consolidation Plan; Appropriating Funding To Fund The Study And Plan (Benton)
Enactment #: R-2023-080
Sponsors: Isaac Benton
Indexes:
Code sections:
Attachments: 1. R-163, 2. R-163Enacted

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
10/23/2023	2	City Clerk	Published	
10/15/2023	2	Mayor	Signed by the Mayor	
10/10/2023	1	City Council	Sent to Mayor for Signature	
10/2/2023	1	City Council	Amended	
10/2/2023	1	City Council	Passed as Amended	Pass
9/18/2023	1	City Council	Postponed	Pass
9/6/2023	1	President	To be heard at the Council Meeting	Pass
9/6/2023	1	City Council	Introduced	

CITY of ALBUQUERQUE
TWENTY-FIFTH COUNCIL

COUNCIL BILL NO. R-23-163
 SPONSORED BY: Isaac Benton
 ENACTMENT NO. _____

RESOLUTION

Directing The City Of Albuquerque Transit Department And Rio Metro Regional Transit District To
 Conduct A Study For Consolidating ABQ Ride And Rio Metro And Develop A Consolidation Plan;
 Appropriating Funding To Fund The Study And Plan (Benton)
DIRECTING THE CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE TRANSIT DEPARTMENT AND RIO METRO

City of Albuquerque

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Scenario Overview

Status Quo

- No Changes

1) Significant Coordination

- Additional shared passenger info, grant writing, call center

2) Regional Demand Response

- Status Quo + Demand Response becomes a shared function

3) Independent Agencies

- ABQ RIDE with own board, Rio Metro moves outside MRCOG

4) Regional Board

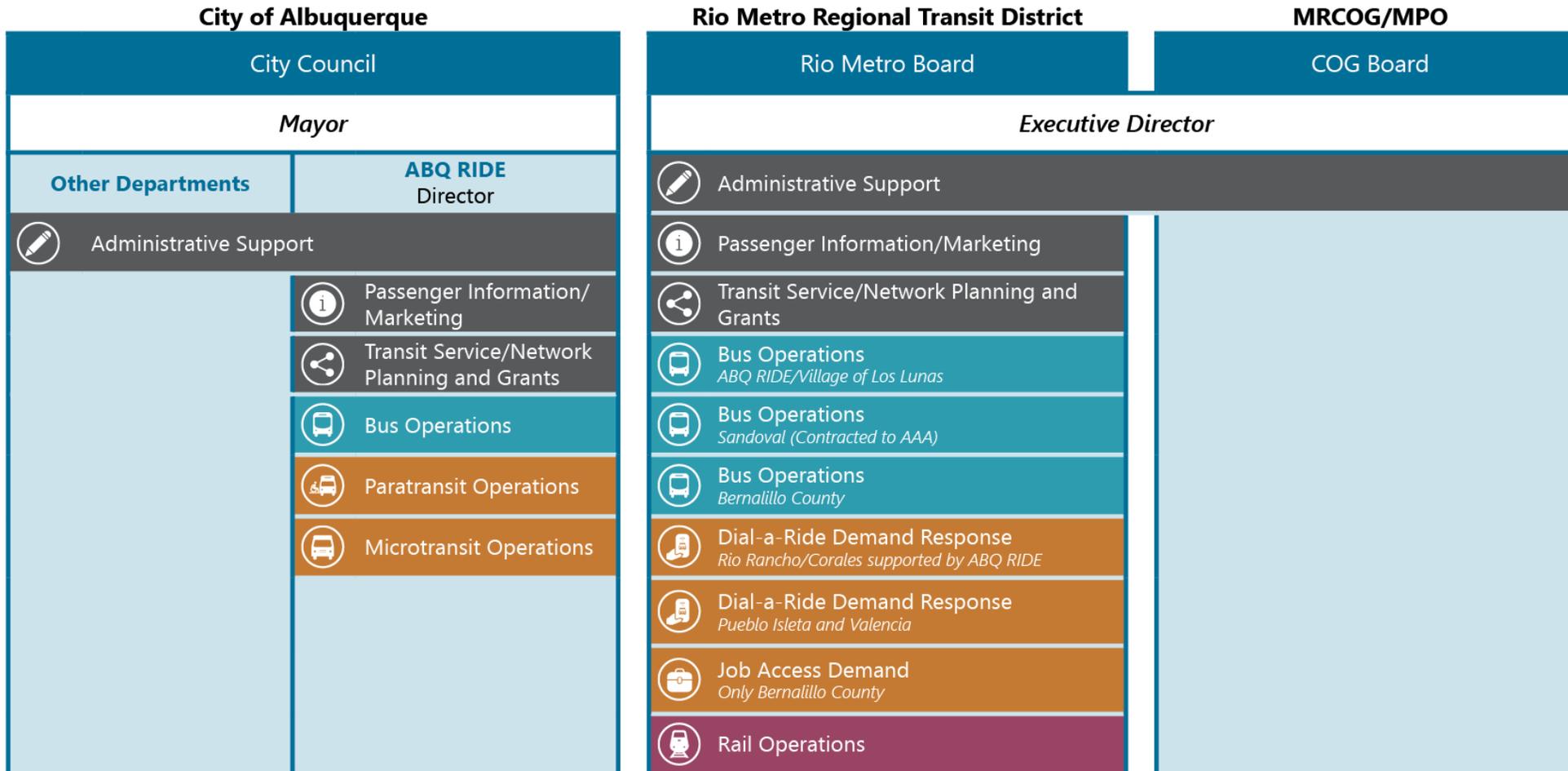
- Regional Transit Board oversees both independent agencies

5) Full Consolidation

- Agencies merge into one

Current Governance Model - "Status Quo"

The Status Quo includes no formal integration between the agencies.



Potential Governance Model - "Full Consolidation"



Scenario Overview

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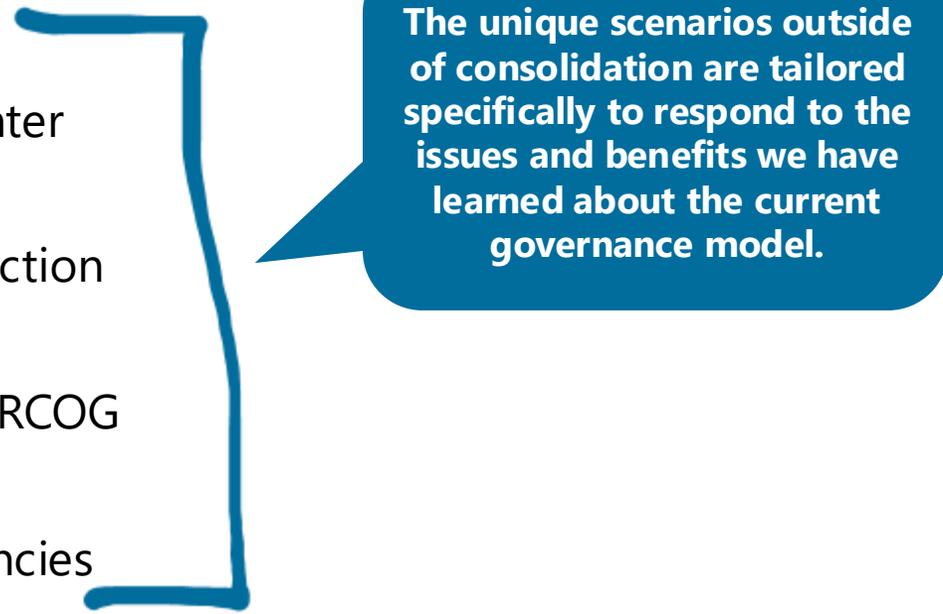
- ABQ RIDE with own board, Rio Metro moves outside MRCOG

4) Regional Board

- Regional Transit Board oversees both independent agencies

5) Full Consolidation

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The unique scenarios outside of consolidation are tailored specifically to respond to the issues and benefits we have learned about the current governance model.

Status Quo + Five Scenarios

Status Quo

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Scenario evaluation based on goals

Status Quo
Significant Coordination
Regional Demand Response
Independent Agencies
Regional Board
Full Consolidation



SERVICE

Evaluation Criteria	
SERVICE	Implement the ABQ RIDE Full Recovery Network
	Realize items from the 2015 Vision Plan
	Serve Rio Rancho with bus service
	Make the regional network more uniform and organized
	Provide seamless paratransit services
	Provide seamless non-fixed route service
	Provide clarity for riders
	Implement ABQ RIDE Safety and Security Plan
	Implement zero emissions plans – ABQ RIDE and Rio Metro
	STAFFING
Have dedicated planning staff	
Have dedicated support/admin staff	
FUNDING	Build political will
	Have dedicated steady funding – ABQ RIDE
	Have dedicated steady funding – Rio Metro
	Approach regional grants
ACCOUNTABILITY	Build transit-focused internal leadership – ABQ RIDE
	Build transit-focused internal leadership – Rio Metro
	Prioritize transit-focused board members – ABQ RIDE
	Prioritize transit-focused board members –Rio Metro/Regional
EFFICIENCY	Avoid duplicative FTEs, facilities, and service
	Avoid duplicative software
	Avoid duplicative staff specializations
LEVEL OF EFFORT	Avoid disruption
	Minimize level of effort to implement
	Build political capital and public support
	Implement without a change in state law
	Implement without a public vote (increase GRT)

Service and Staffing were the highest prioritized goal areas at the August board meeting

Please rank the following goals by the highest priority (1 is highest priority, 5 is lowest priority)



Recommendations

Recommendations Overview

- The recommendations respond directly to the pressing challenges in each agency and the region.

AGENCY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS



JOINT AND REGIONAL
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations Overview

ABQ RIDE PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION



Restructure ABQ RIDE's relationship to the City.

- Gain autonomy within the City OR
- Become an independent agency with close City coordination

Recommendations Overview

RIO METRO PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS



Hire a General Manager for Rio Metro.

- Focus on operational needs of agency
- Build internal capacity for Rio Metro
- Strategic vision and regional support

Form a standing committee within the Rio Metro board and add transit-reliant board members.

- Standing Committee that meets regularly and reports out to full board each meeting
- New board members with rider focus

Recommendations Overview

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a modern, integrated regional network of demand response services.

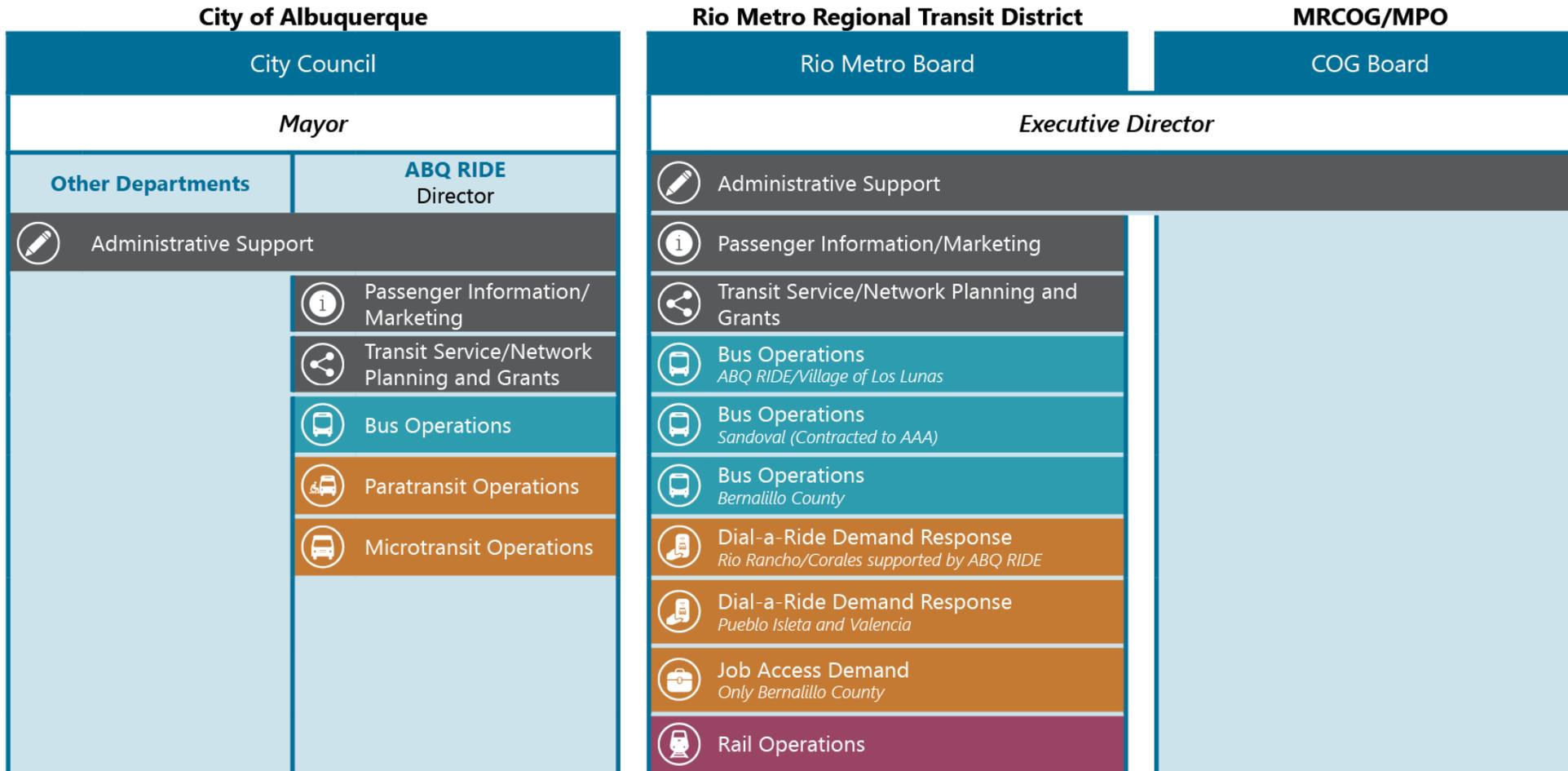
- Evaluate existing Rio Metro demand response services and make changes to simplify and address demand.
- Build toward one shared agency to passengers, where each agency reimburses the other based on service area, with shared demand-response dispatching, call center, and software.
- Create clear passenger information.

Simplify and strengthen regional transit services with dedicated transit planners directed to coordinate regional transit services and create simple, easy to understand passenger information.

- Hire additional planners at Rio Metro and ABQ RIDE and hire transit planner at the MPO.
- Provide comprehensive passenger information.
- Evaluate regional transit demand

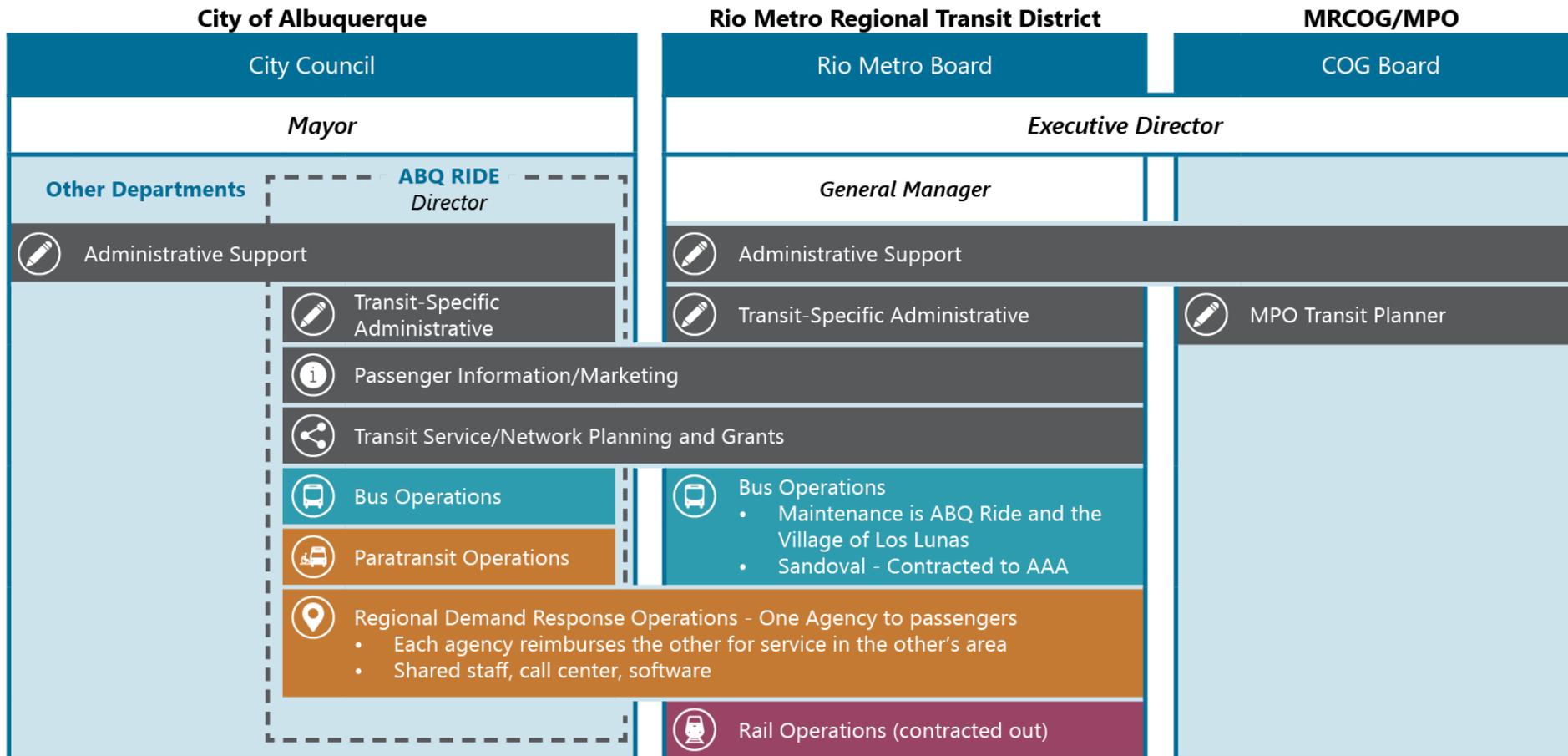
Current Governance Model

The Status Quo includes no formal integration between the agencies.



Recommended Governance Model

Many challenges can be addressed by the City of Albuquerque providing ABQ RIDE more autonomy within the City and by Rio Metro hiring a General Manager.



Recommendations Overview



Restructure ABQ RIDE's relationship to the City.



Hire a General Manager for Rio Metro.

Form a standing committee within the Rio Metro board.

Add transit-reliant board members.



Create a modern, integrated regional network of demand response services.

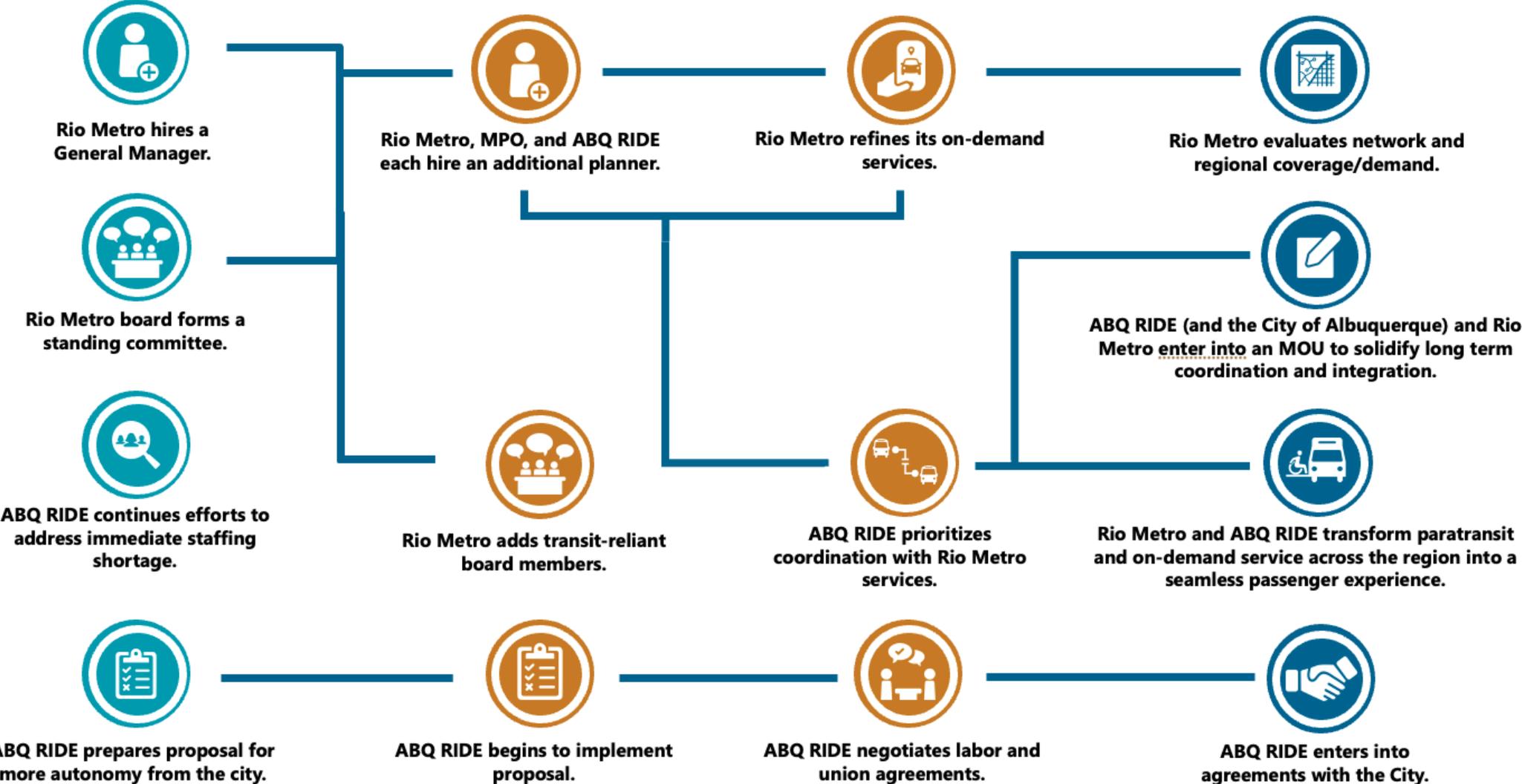
Simplify and strengthen regional transit services.

Implementation Steps

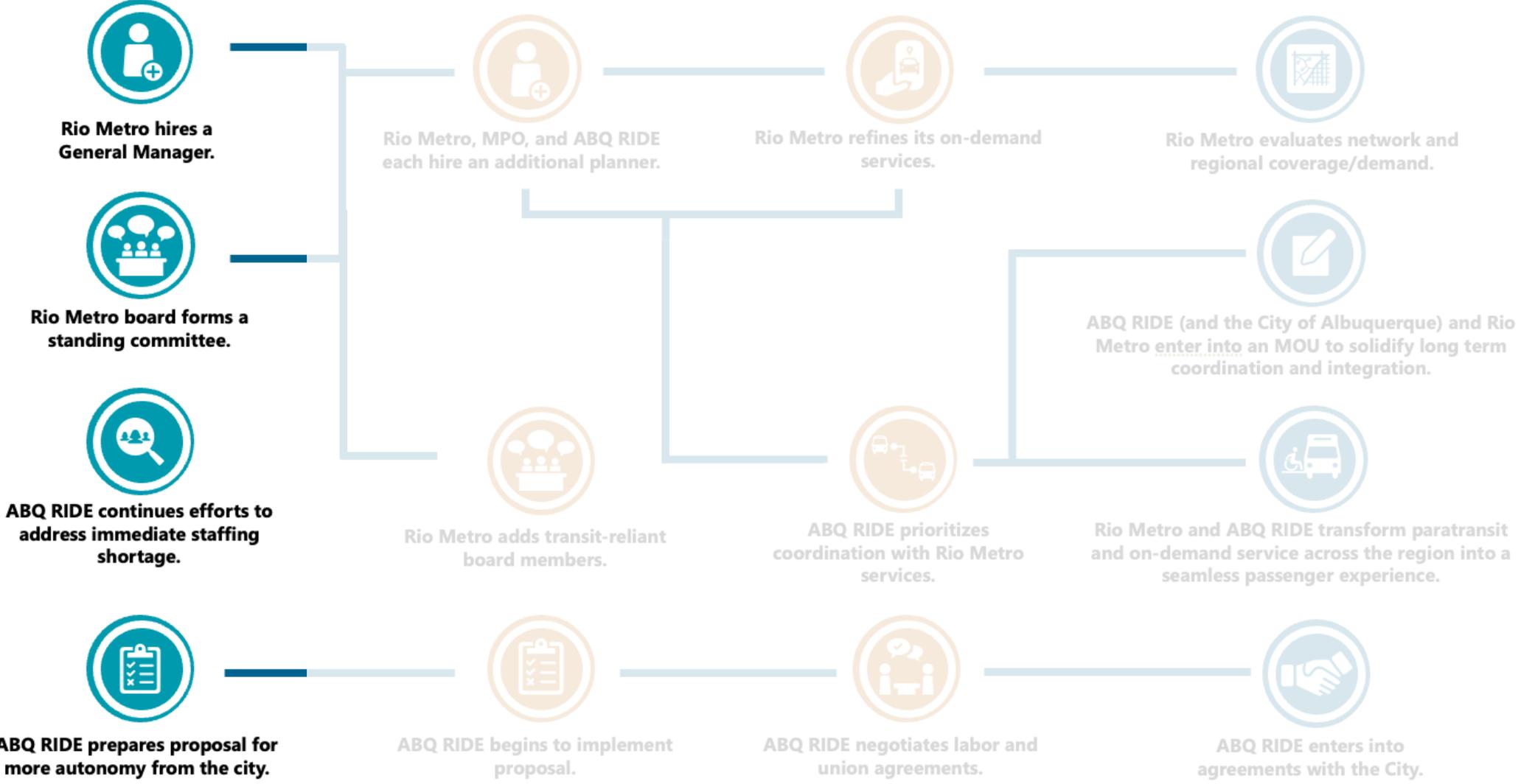
Three Phases of Implementation

- 1** Phase 1:
Establish organizational infrastructure
- 2** Phase 2:
Build pathways to growth and improvements
- 3** Phase 3:
Execute the vision

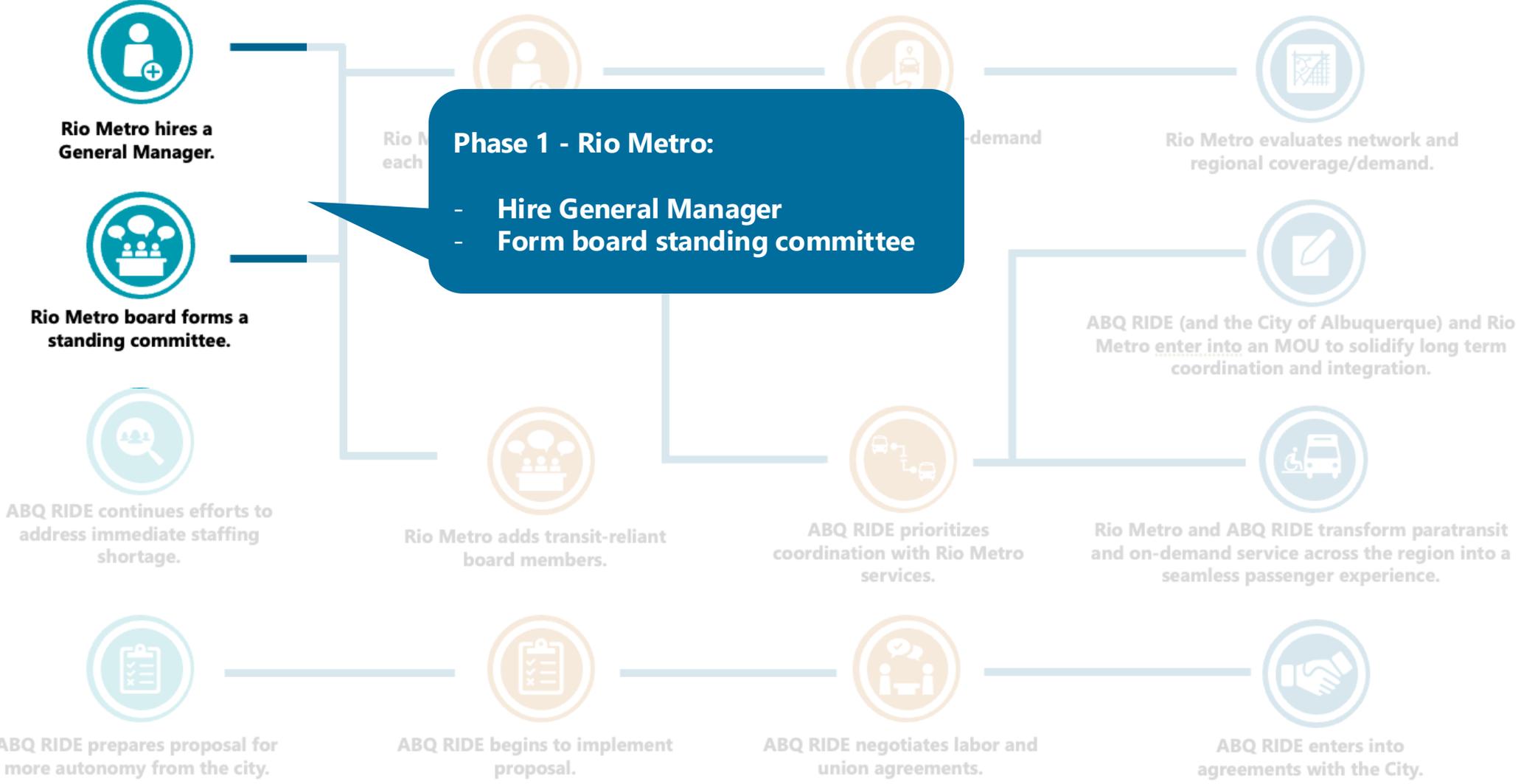
Phased Approach with Initial Steps



Phase 1: Establish organizational infrastructure



Phase 1: Establish organizational infrastructure



Phase 1



Hire a General Manager for Rio Metro.

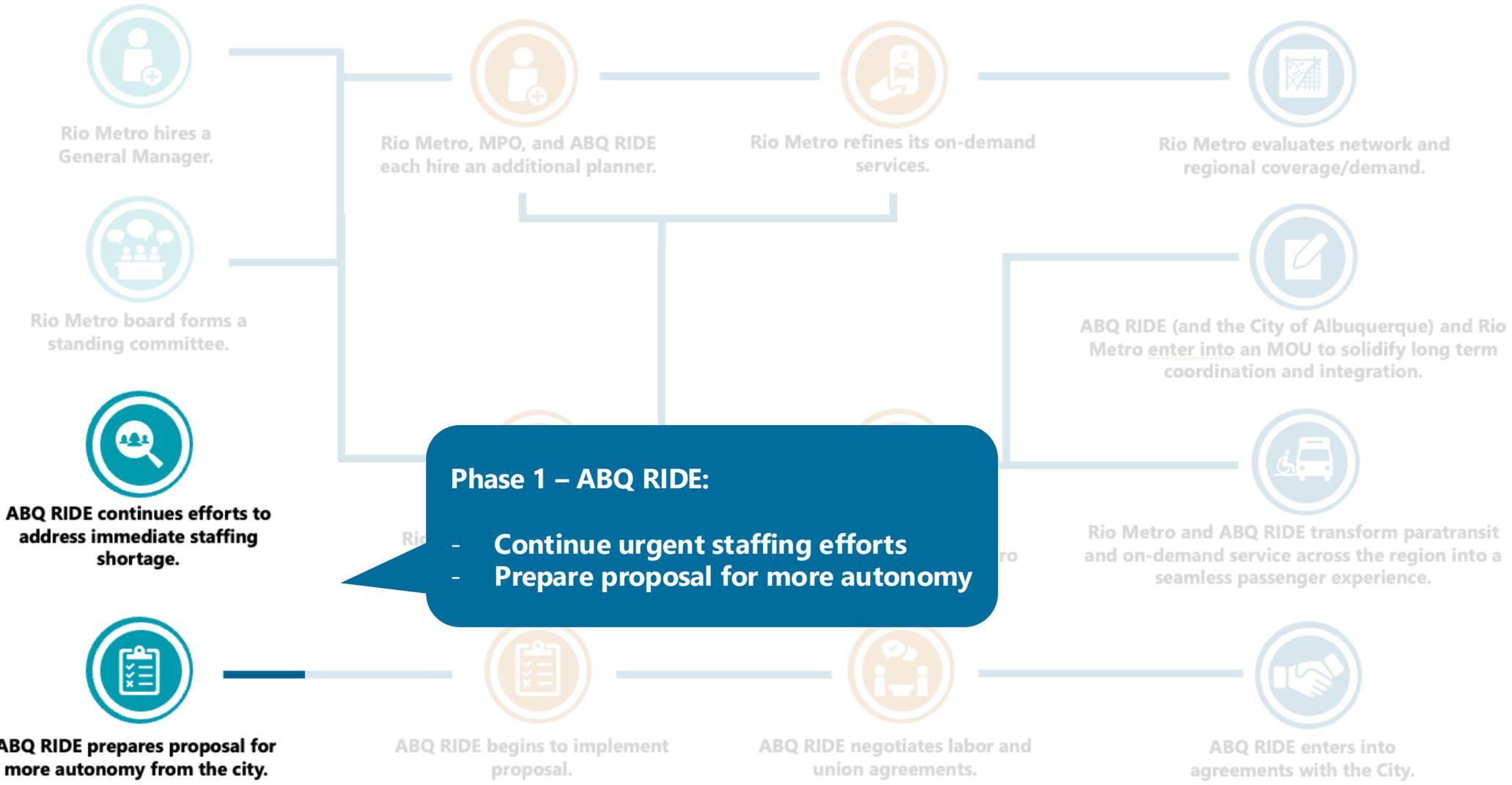
A General Manager for rail and bus will guide network planning and inter-agency coordination. Guides agency staff in producing passenger resources for current system.



Form a standing committee within the Rio Metro board.

The standing committee within the Rio Metro board will work closely with the General Manager to provide input on regional vision.

Phase 1: Establish organizational infrastructure



Phase 1



ABQ RIDE prepares proposal for more autonomy from the city.

One option for ABQ RIDE to make it easier to solve its challenges is to increase its autonomy within the City of Albuquerque's administrative structure.

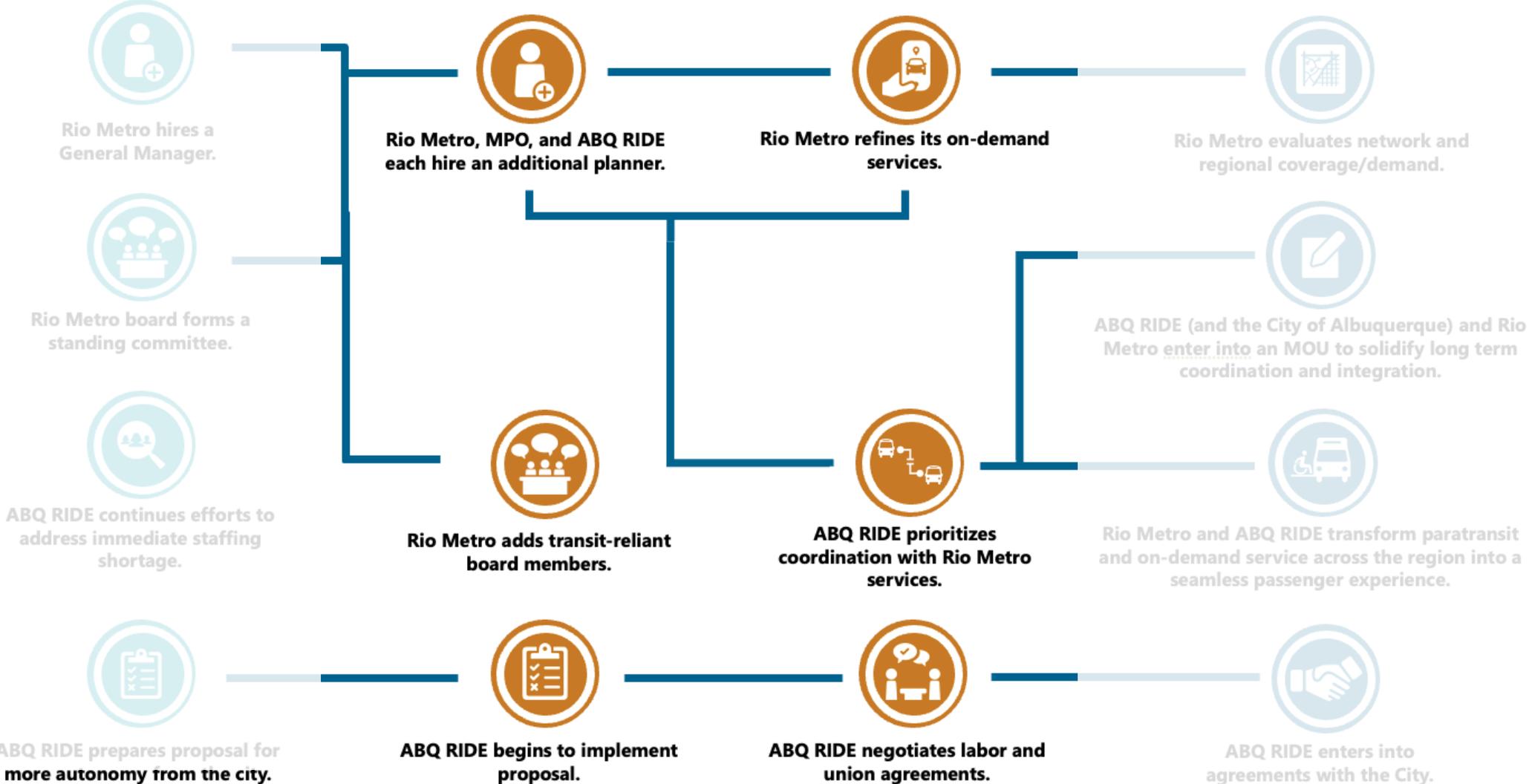
The second option for ABQ RIDE to make it easier to solve its challenges is to become an independent organization with close City coordination and long-term funding.



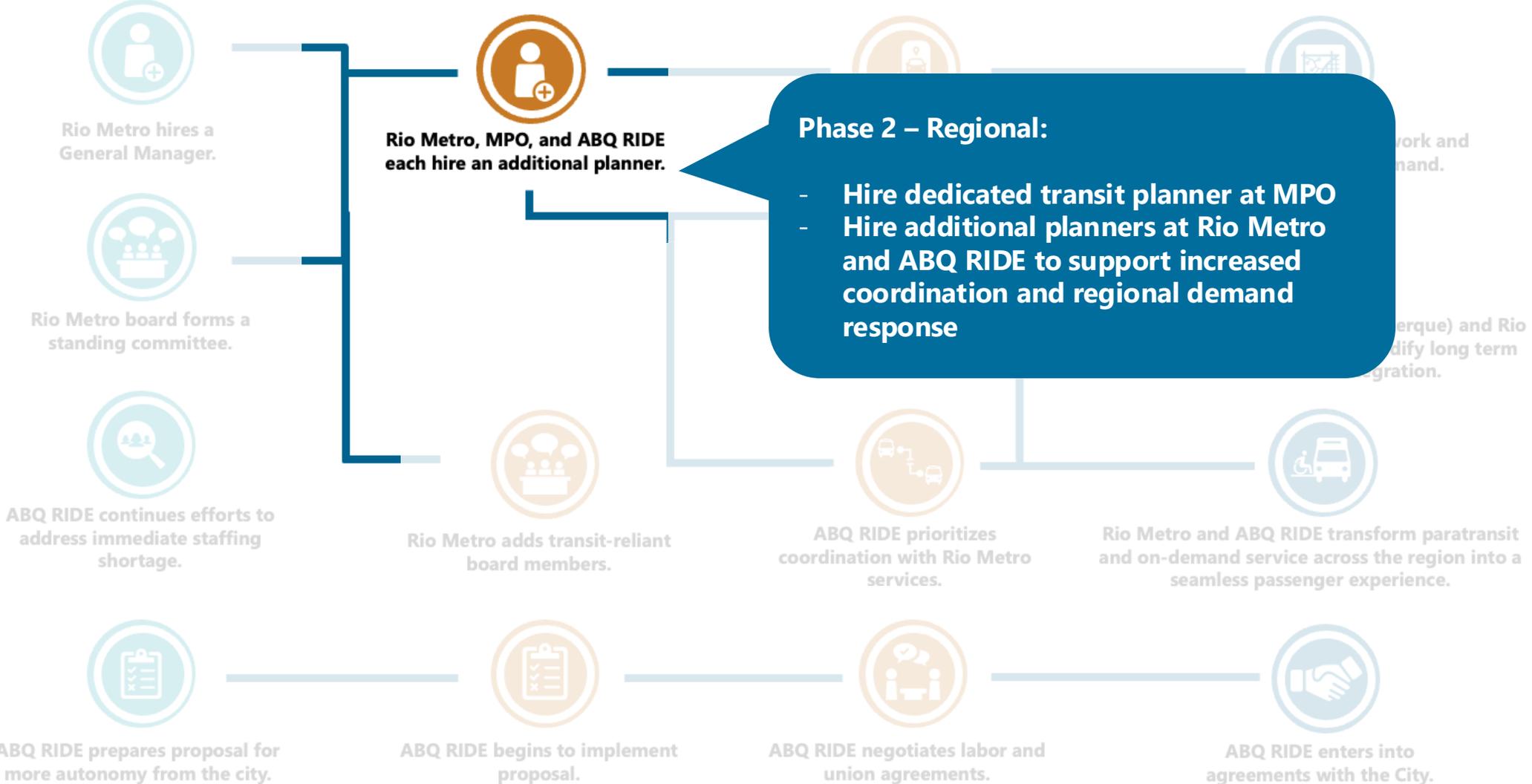
ABQ RIDE continues efforts to address immediate staffing shortage.

The department continues the process of recruitment, training, and building hiring capacity within the department to progress towards implementing the ABQ RIDE Forward Network.

Phase 2: Build pathways to growth & improvements



Phase 2: Build pathways to growth & improvements



Phase 2

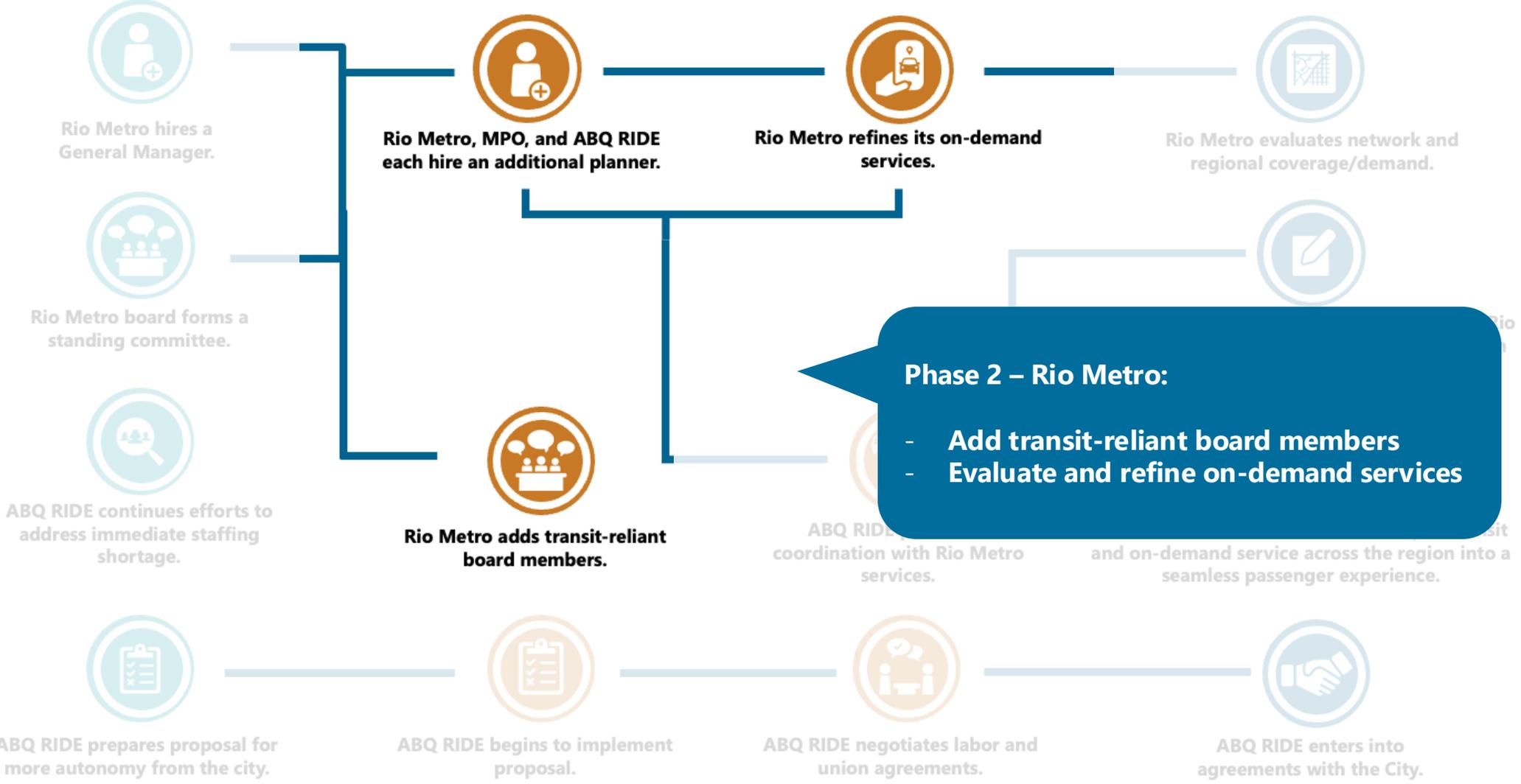


Hire additional planners at Rio Metro and ABQ RIDE and hire a transit planner at the MPO.

Simplify and strengthen regional transit services with dedicated transit planners directed to coordinate regional transit service.

Additional support for implementing and coordinating each organization's respective visions will facilitate better delivery of existing service while being able to prepare for service improvements.

Phase 2: Build pathways to growth & improvements



Phase 2



Rio Metro refines its on-demand services.

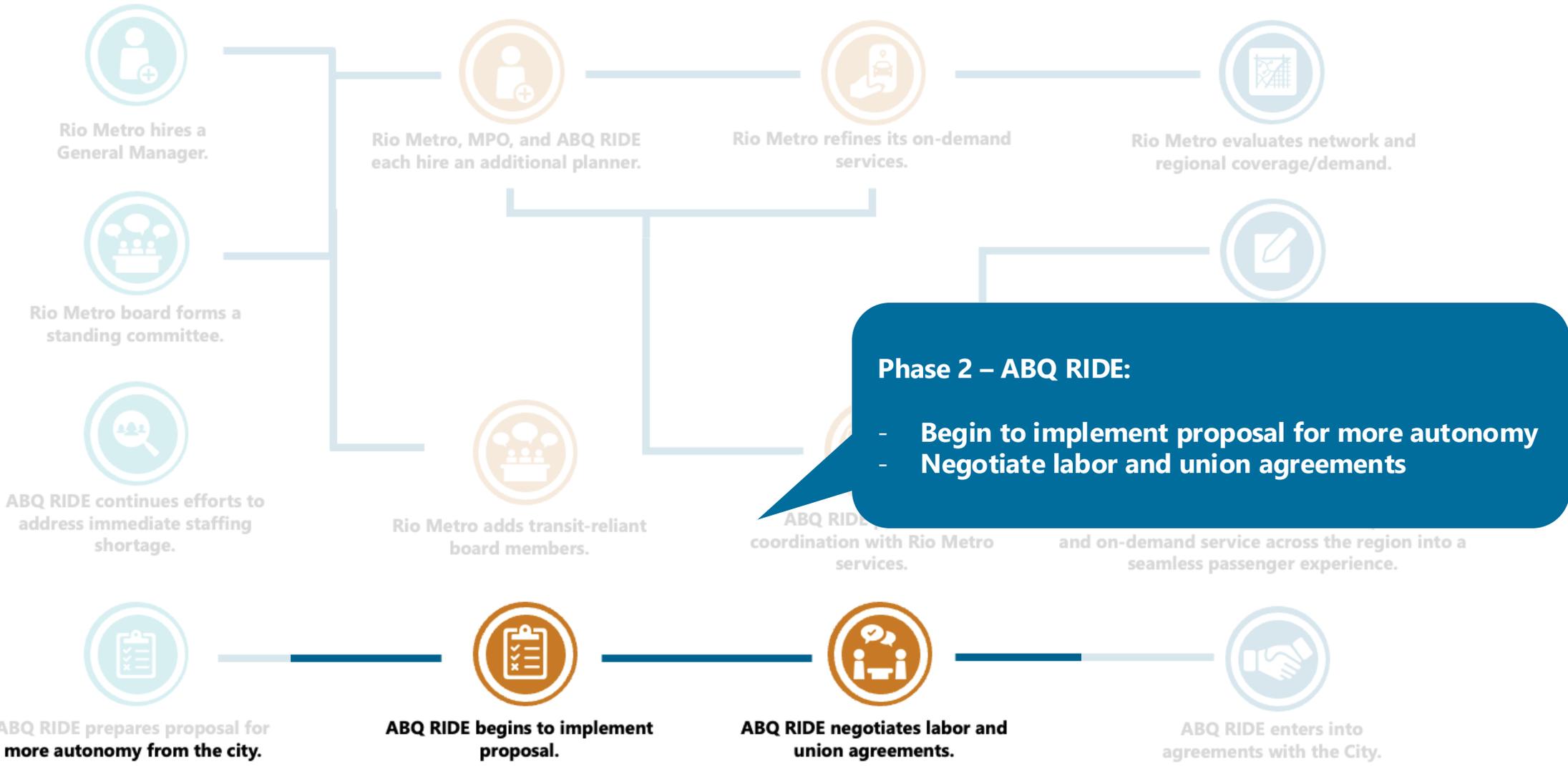
Evaluation of and changes to the demand response services in the region are a key part of the recommendation from this study. This will require a comprehensive, regionwide, multi-agency assessment.



Add transit-reliant Rio Metro board members.

Many transit agency boards are made up solely of elected officials, like the Rio Metro board, and this often results in a governing body that has little to no frequent transit riders.

Phase 2: Build pathways to growth & improvements



Phase 2



ABQ RIDE begins to implement proposal.

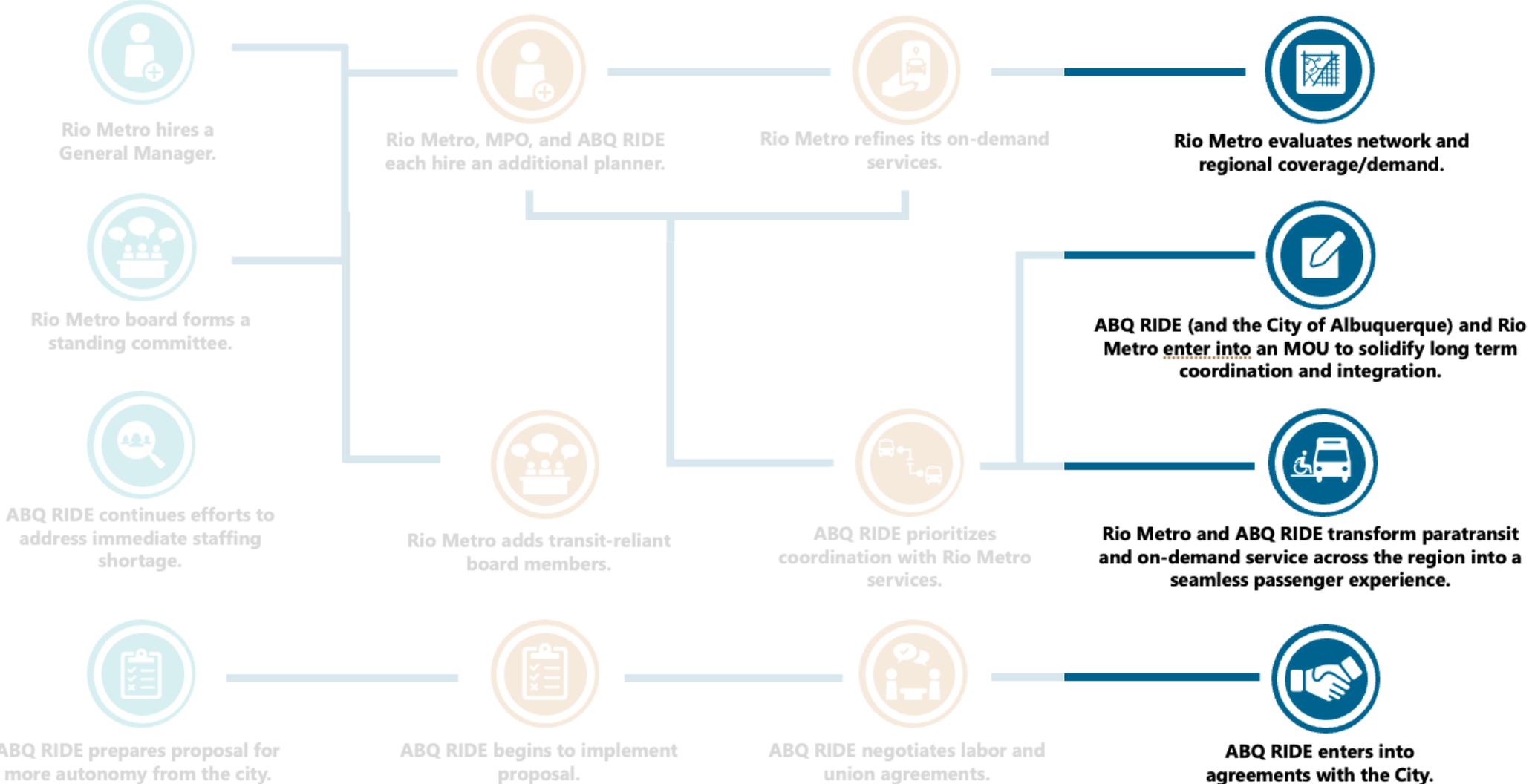
ABQ RIDE presents its proposal to the City. The department and City review the agency's needs to determine whether the best solution is for ABQ RIDE to become its own agency or to adjust current structures to keep ABQ RIDE as a city department.



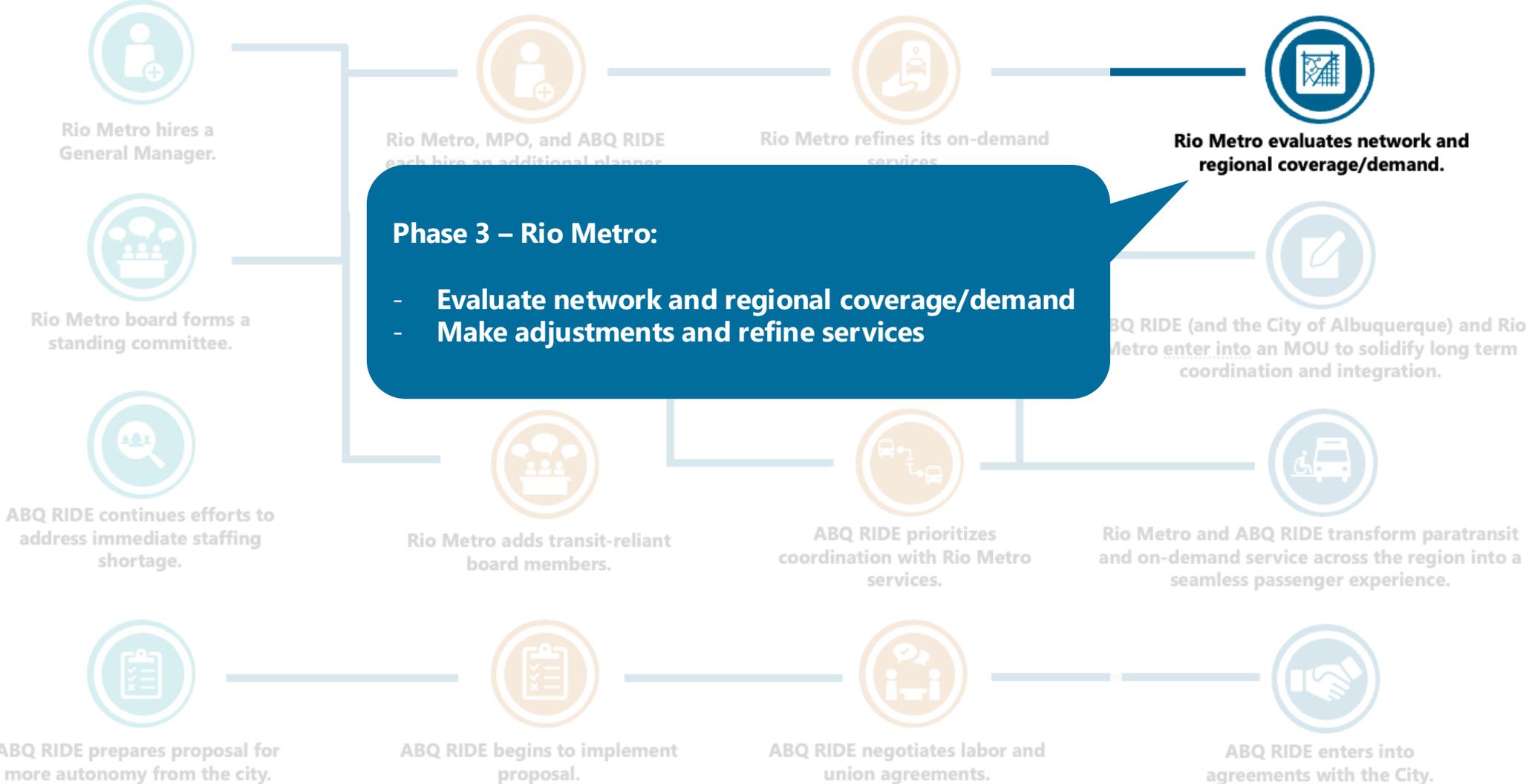
Negotiate labor and union agreements.

A key step for ABQ RIDE's success is creating sustainable staffing agreements with adequate pay that reflects working conditions and skill.

Phase 3: Execute the vision



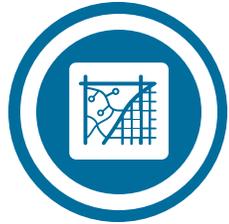
Phase 3: Execute the vision



Phase 3 – Rio Metro:

- Evaluate network and regional coverage/demand
- Make adjustments and refine services

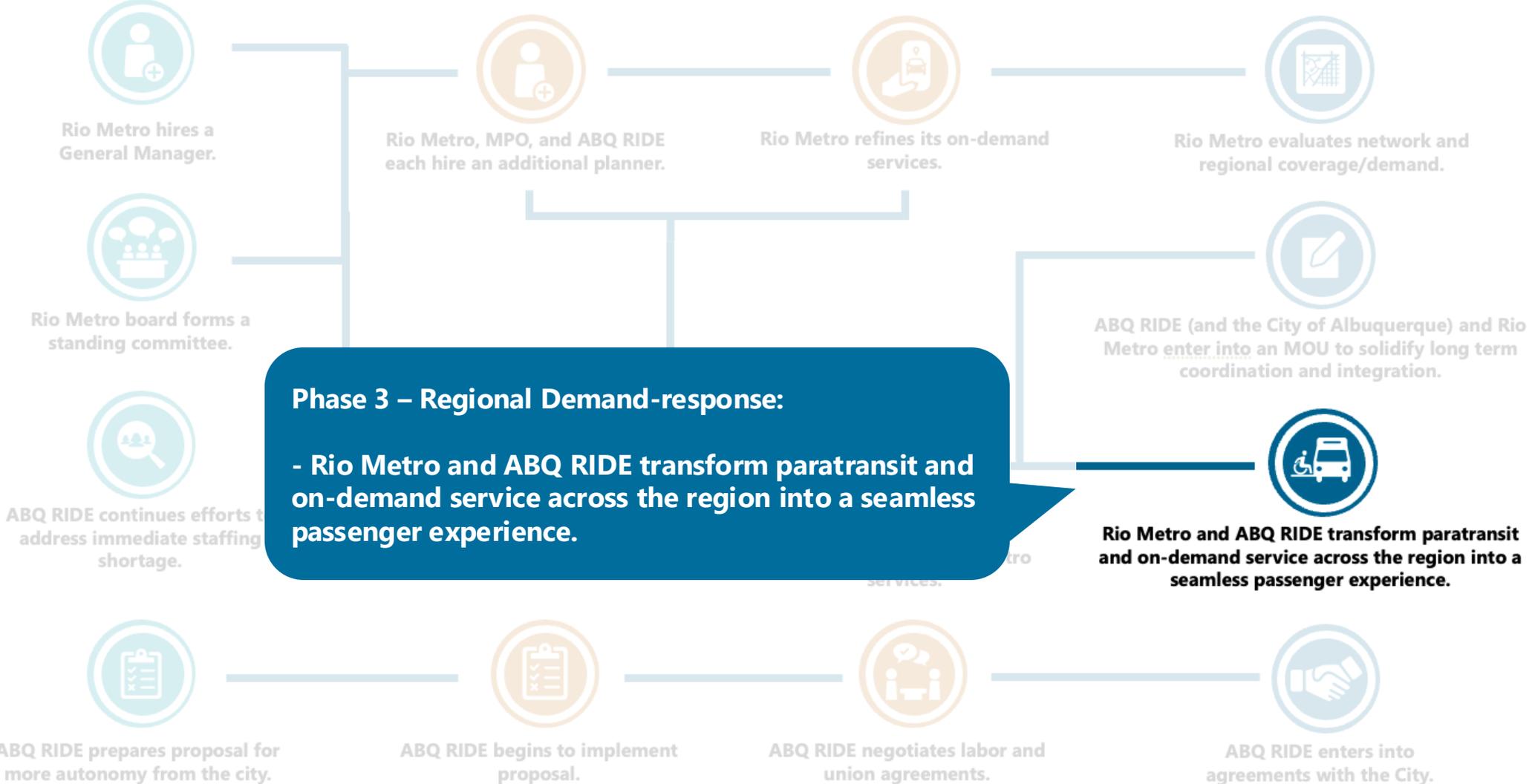
Phase 3



Rio Metro evaluates network and regional coverage/demand.

Through the larger planning team and by leveraging the transit standing committee, Rio Metro uses the updated understanding of their system to evaluate its existing network and how it achieves regional coverage and meets transit demand.

Phase 3: Execute the vision



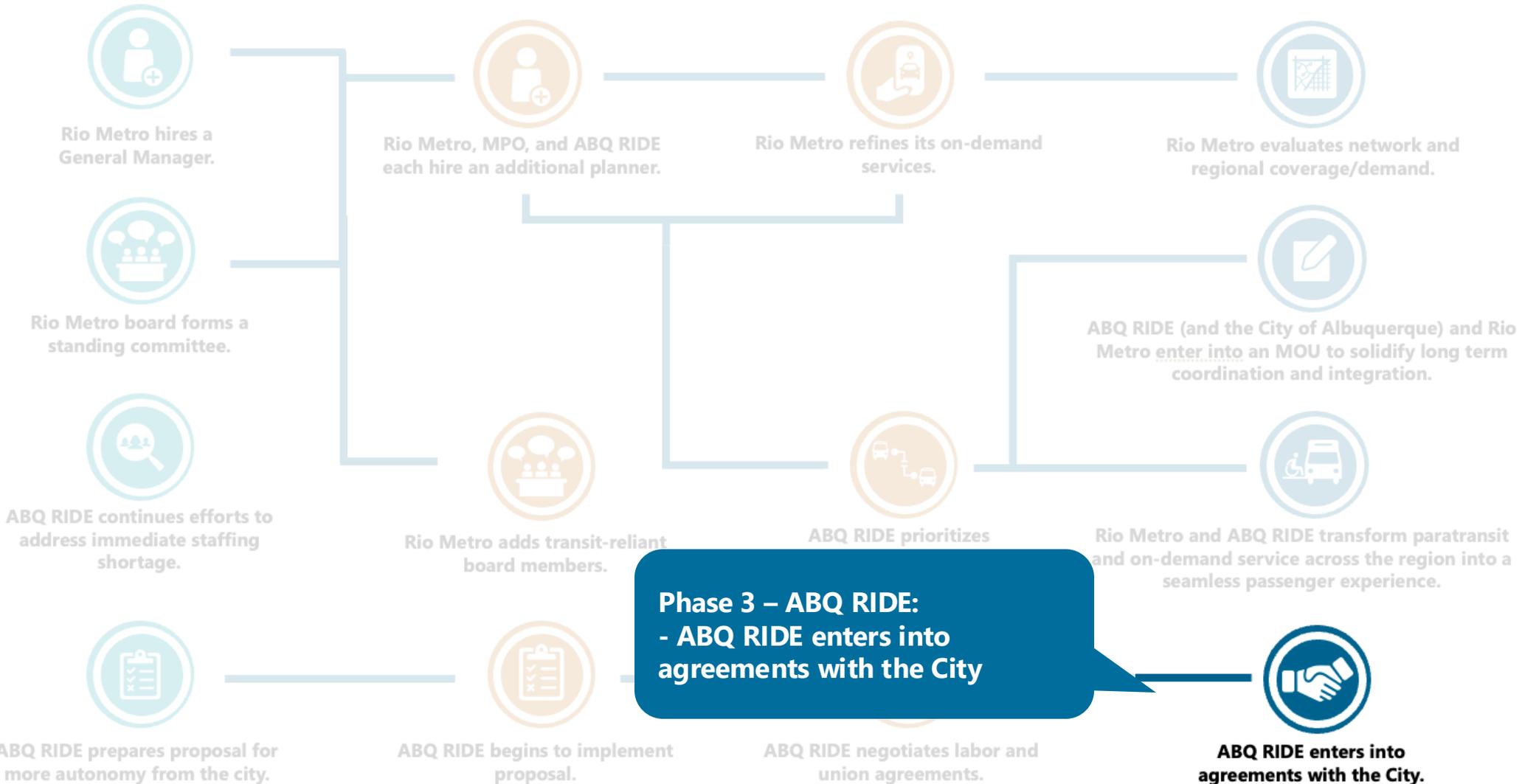
Phase 3



One Regional Demand-Response Program

Rio Metro and ABQ RIDE coordinate on all demand-response services, including those for older adults and people with disabilities, but also Job Access and microtransit. This coordination can combine or consolidate call centers, communicate all services to passengers on one webpage with clear information about using both services, and coordinating the eligibility application process.

Phase 3: Execute the vision



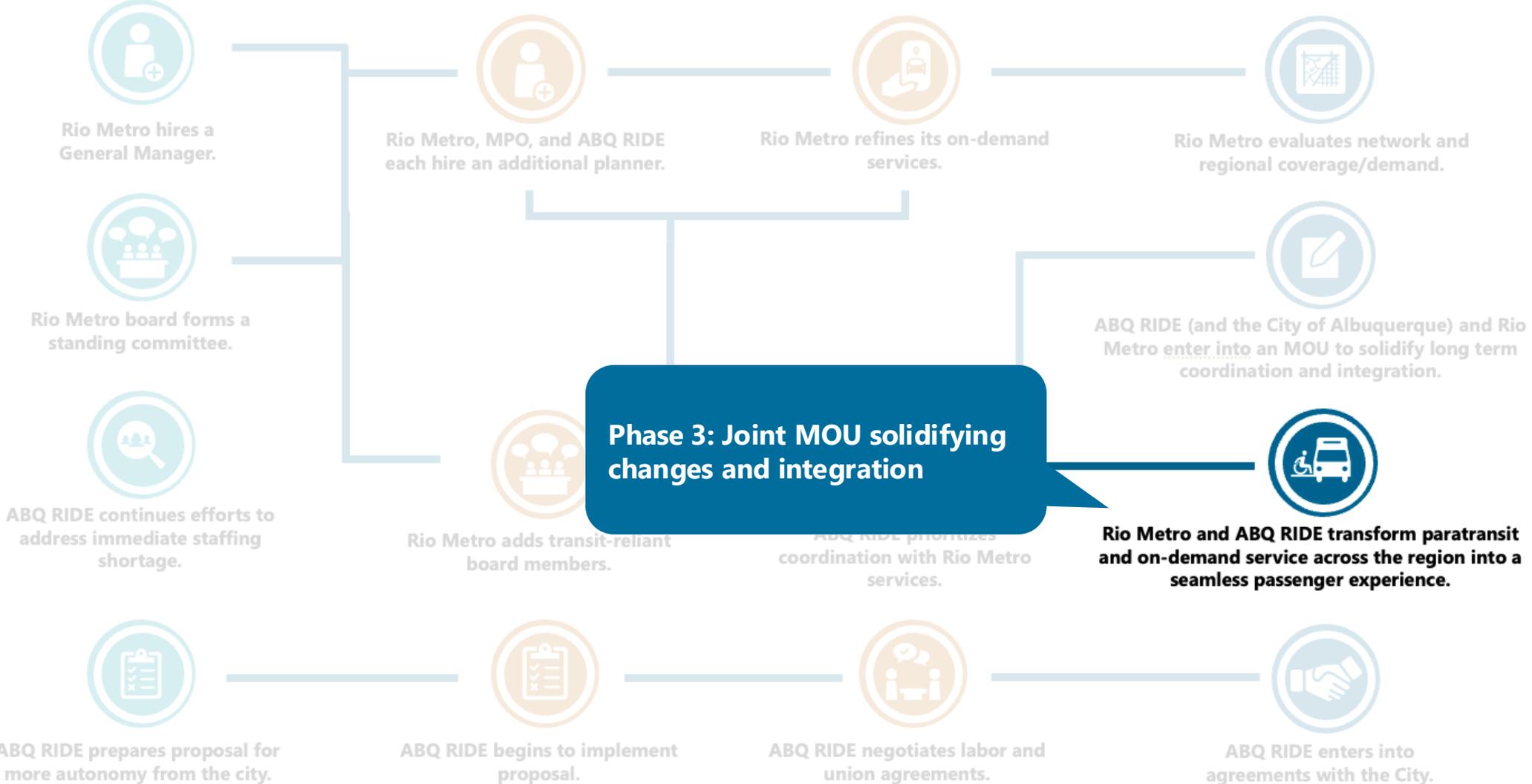
Phase 3



ABQ RIDE enters into agreements with the City.

Whether the City decides that ABQ RIDE becomes its own agency or stay as a department, ABQ RIDE and the City can develop multi-year structure that secures more dedicated funding for service improvements.

Phase 3: Execute the vision



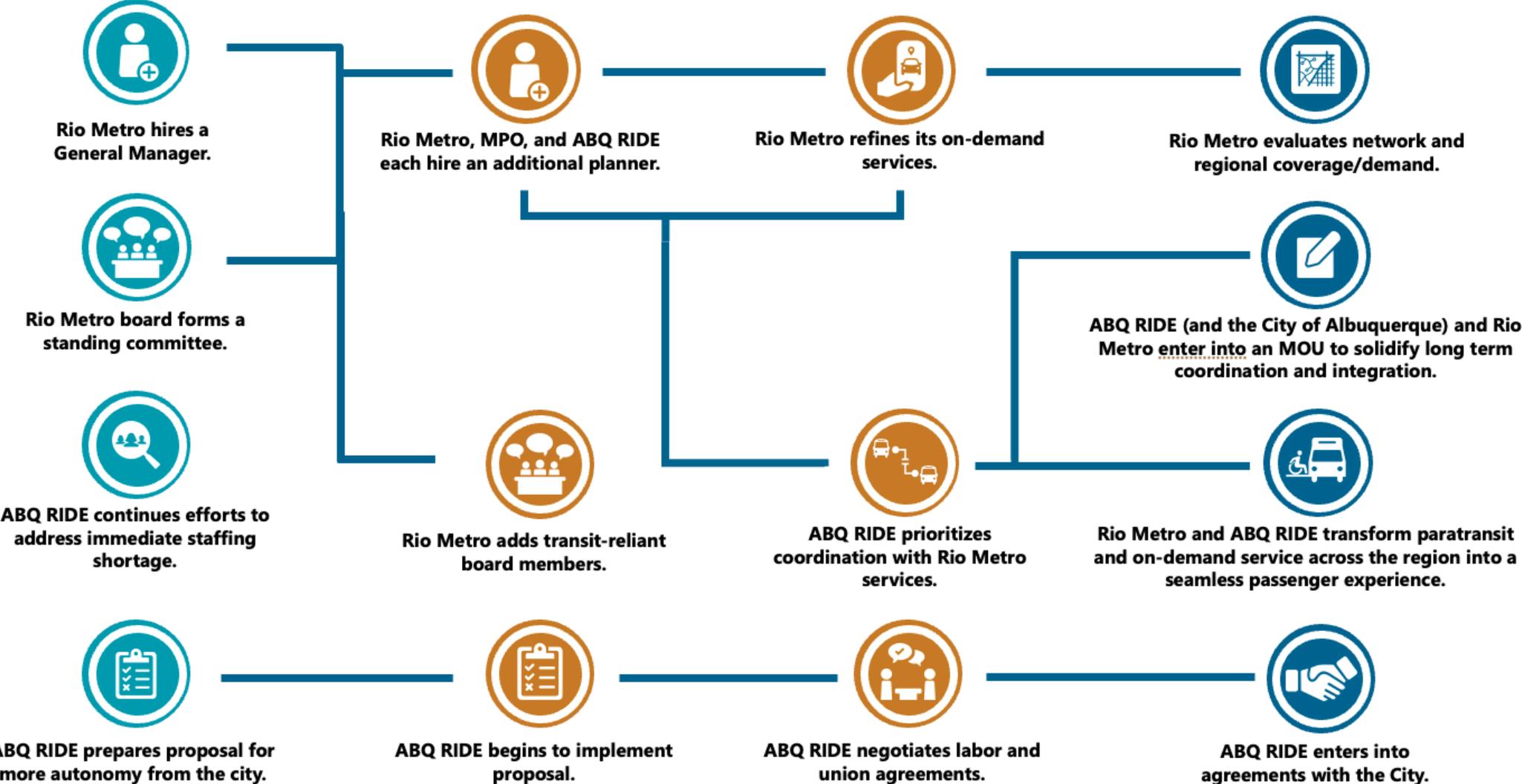
Phase 3



Joint MOU solidifying changes and integration

ABQ RIDE (and the City of Albuquerque) and Rio Metro enter into an MOU to solidify long term coordination and integration.

Phased approach to Implementation



Phase 1

Phase 2

Phase 3

Next Steps

Potential RMRTD Board Next Steps

- Review study report and provide comments
 - **Comments to Tony Sylvester by October**
- Produce letter supporting the study and its recommendations to include in the Executive Summary
- Create resolution to move forward with understanding the feasibility of additional staffing
- Create resolution to form standing committee
- **What else?**

Overall Project Next Steps

- The report will be finalized by the end of this month
- The project will conclude and further action will require agency direction

Thank you



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