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 NCACC Board
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2015 NCACC Strategic Plan
Final Report



NCACC Members:



It is my pleasure and honor to present the NCACC's 2015 Strategic Plan to you. The process to develop this plan took more than a year, and involved many of you. Thank you for your input and contributions to this important roadmap for the NCACC.

Please take a few moments to review the contents of this report. We view our Strategic Plan as a dynamic plan – it sets a course for the next 10 years, and will be adapted as the political, economic and social environments in North Carolina change. Together, we will build upon the NCACC's solid foundation to lead our counties and the Association into a new and successful era.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronnie Beale". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ronnie Beale, NCACC President
Macon County Commissioner

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Why prepare a strategic plan?

In 2005, the NCACC began implementing its first strategic plan. It was a pivotal time for the Association, as it was the first time in more than 30 years the executive leadership had changed. The year 2015 is equally important as it represents another important benchmark for the Association. With a new Executive Director and 10 years of experience towards accomplishing our adopted goals, the Board recognized the importance of evaluating the NCACC's achievements, as well as learning about new trends or challenges facing the counties. The purpose of this 2015 Strategic Plan is to position the NCACC to meet the needs of counties over the next 10 years.

Current State of North Carolina

The world in which county commissioners govern is changing. North Carolina is growing and the county government environment is both influenced and affected by this growth. During strategic input sessions around the state, the NCACC heard county commissioners and others who are interested and care about county government issues reflect on the changes in North Carolina and the expectations of counties and residents. Many of the challenges the NCACC heard about are related – or a result of – changes our state is experiencing.

Consider the following context as background for the NCACC's 2015 Strategic Plan:

Population & Demand for Services

In the 2010 census, North Carolina became the 9th largest state in the nation with a population of just more than 9.5 million residents. Seventy percent of North Carolina's population growth comes from net migration – people moving into North Carolina from other places. That growth is expected to continue over the next decade, and is estimated to increase by about one million people per decade for the foreseeable future.

The population breaks down into the following generations:

2015 NC Population by generation	Greatest (-1927): 82,800
	Silent (1928-1945): 849,400
	Baby Boomers (1946-1964): 2,329,500
	Gen X (1965-1981): 2,273,700
	Millennial (1982-2004): 2,317,000

Baby Boomers are now between the ages of 51 and 69; they make up 31% of all adults and are our largest adult population today.

Millennials will outnumber **Generation X** by 2016, and by 2017, they will outnumber Baby Boomers. These generational changes have significant impacts on our labor markets, residents' expectations, and economy.

Fifty-one counties saw population increases between 2010 and 2014, and 49 counties lost population. Counties in North Carolina have traditionally been grouped as either rural or urban. A third category, suburban, has recently started to emerge, in an attempt to describe counties in the halo of a larger metropolitan area. These counties are typically experiencing population growth, while their residents commute to jobs outside their home counties.

Our residents want low taxes, but the growing population of younger adults in urban and suburban counties increases demand for schools, safe communities, libraries and internet connectivity, clean air and water. A declining population likewise causes stress because schools and other infrastructure continue to age, and these kinds of capital investments are expensive. Counties' use of long term debt has increased 60% in the past decade, and the ratio of debt to total general fund expenditures has been rising steadily.

Labor Force

North Carolina's labor force is changing and generational differences factor into this change. Baby Boomers are the largest part of our population but they are now passing retirement age, and are a declining part of our workforce.

Counties want and need to attract younger adults to their communities. Attractive jobs for them are considered non-traditional, as younger adult generations are tech-savvy and task oriented; they do not need an office to feel fulfilled – they want a work environment that is collaborative, not hierarchical, and they want flexible work hours. Many will stay in their jobs for less than three years.

They value safe streets and clean air and water; they have active lifestyles; affordable housing and proximity to jobs are key factors in where they live. Attracting this younger workforce is key to counties' economic vitality.

Citizenship & Voting

The profiles of those who serve as civic leaders, and those who elect them, are changing. By 2016, Millennials will make up 32% of our eligible voter pool, and by 2017, they will be the largest segment of our population. Only 74% of them are registered to vote. In the 2012 Presidential election, only 55% of them voted; 29% of them are termed inactive, meaning they did not vote in the last two Presidential elections. Almost 40% of this generation do not identify with either of the traditionally strong political parties in North Carolina.

Keeping in mind that the Millennial generation will be the largest segment of North Carolina's adult population by 2017, it is important to recognize that they have a vastly different sense of civic responsibility than their parents, not only in voting but also in staying informed of the news. For example:

- The Pew Charitable Trust reports that 60% of Millennials and more than 50% of Generation X get their news from Facebook, while 60% of Baby Boomers get their news from local television stations.
- It is interesting and important to note that younger adults far exceed their parents' generation in volunteerism. They strongly believe they should help make the place they live better. This dynamic presents an opportunity for leaders to harness this sentiment and develop their civic engagement as they become more attuned to the economic and political environments.

What steps were taken to develop the 2015 Strategic Plan?

The Board enlisted the help of the UNC School of Government with the project. With their help, the NCACC Board of Directors and staff charted a multi-phase process:

Phase 1

NCACC Board defined objectives and approach for strategic planning effort.

Phase 2

NCACC Board evaluated efficacy of accomplishments to-date and defined strategic advantages of the Association.

Phase 3

NCACC gathered input from members and other key stakeholders on trends, influences and challenges affecting counties.

Phase 4

NCACC expanded member input process to include real-time survey of mission elements and regional member input sessions.

Phase 5

NCACC senior management drafted mission statement and updated goals for Board consideration. NCACC Board finalized and approved vision and mission statements, considered new and/or modified goal language, and identified potential strategies to support the 2015 Strategic Plan.

Phase 6

2015 NCACC Strategic Plan presented at NCACC Annual Conference.

What did we hear during the strategic plan input sessions?

We asked...

Of All:

- Biggest issues and challenges facing counties
- How NCACC should respond

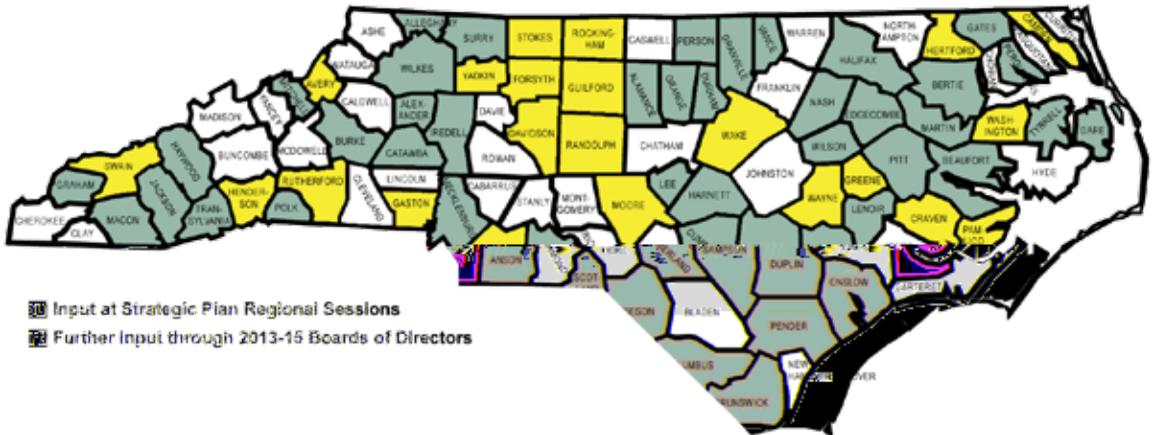
Of Affiliates, Partners and Legislative Leaders:

- Current and future role of county government
- Ways to strengthen relationships, partnering (between NCACC and Key Stakeholder)

We talked with...

	Participants	Groups	Total
Commissioners	100	5	100
Managers	38	1	38
Affiliates	11	3	11
Partners	6	0	6
Legislative Leaders	11	0	11
TOTAL	156	9	156

From all over North Carolina...



They said...

- Growing awareness of growing divergence between urban and rural perspectives
- Changing relationships between state and local government
- Critical role of infrastructure

These factors drive ALL challenges!

All Challenges		
Urban - Rural Differences	State - Local Relationships	Infrastructure

Challenge Areas

Citizen Expectations & Services

Revenue & Expenditures

Quality of Life

Economic & Workforce Development

Intergovernmental Issues

Citizen Expectations & Services

- Never-ending need to explain what counties do
- Everything for nothing (Citizens expect high service and low taxes)
- Counties as safety nets and gap-fillers
- Inadequate technology and applications
- Overcrowded jails; few resources for mental health; poor pre-K prep

Revenue & Expenditures

- Non-level playing fields, especially funding for economic development, infrastructure and schools
- 'Ability to fund' inequities created by growth/no growth gaps, changes in state formulas, or cuts in amount of funding
- Revenue options dwindling and/or require (unlikely) voter approval

Quality of Life

- Aging infrastructure: schools, community colleges, jails, water & sewer, and roads
- No good funding strategies
- Limited revenue options
- Need more education on partnering options
- Digital divide; broadband gaps and uncertainty
- Technology- keeping up with what's next
- Concern towards re-segregation in schools
- Outmigration of youth and workforce from rural areas

What are the elements of the 2015 NCACC Strategic Plan?

NCACC VISION STATEMENT

“Empowering 100 counties to work together for the betterment of one state.”

NCACC MISSION STATEMENT

“Our Association supports and promotes the well-being of all North Carolina counties through advocacy, education, research, and member services.”

NCACC 2015 Strategic Plan Goals

Goal 1: Promote the positive impact of county government on the lives of people.

Goal 2: Enhance county leadership capabilities to address challenges, provide efficient and effective governance, and develop future leaders.

Goal 3: Empower counties to be strong, proactive, and effective voices on local, state, and national issues.

Goal 4: Facilitate and enhance relationships, collaboration, and strategic partnerships.

What strategies will help us achieve the plan goals?

The following are specific ideas that emerged during the strategic planning process as ways to execute the four key goals:

NCACC 2015 Strategic Plan Goals & Corresponding Strategies

Goal 1: Promote the positive impact of county government on the lives of people.

- Tell the story of what counties do.
- Provide talking points for executive officers.
- Create opportunities for commissioners to educate the public.

Goal 2: Enhance county leadership capabilities to address challenges, provide efficient and effective governance, and develop future leaders.

- Help elected officials develop their leadership skills.
- Encourage commissioners to seek higher offices.
- Provide training programs that are up-to-date and issue oriented.
- Extend programming and opportunities to develop younger leaders.

Goal 3: Empower counties to be strong, proactive, and effective voices on local, state, and national issues.

- Build personal relationships with legislators, especially with newer members.
- Be proactive in providing information, new ideas, and solutions.
- Offer public support of policy directions that align with NCACC priorities.
- Act in bipartisan ways to leverage influence of all 100 counties; acknowledge the needs of different types of counties.
- Educate legislators about the implications of decisions [with research, legislative recommendations, and potential best practices].
- Offer access to county-specific information on NCACC website.
- Leverage the influence of all 100 counties by means of the power of their diversity and differences.
- Communicate programs and benefits of the Association among county officials and all North Carolinians.

Goal 4: Facilitate and enhance relationships, collaboration, and strategic partnerships.

- Build relationships among Members, Affiliates, and Partners.
- Convene partners to identify common problems and potential solutions.
- Engage in more frequent and proactive communications with affiliates.
- Expand intergovernmental networking opportunities.
- Create seminars to appeal to wider audiences.
- Actively participate in others' conferences.
- Create an association initiative to explore our urban-rural diversity: create forums for discussions where differences can be recognized and explored.

How will the strategic plan be implemented?

Our counties ARE North Carolina; we are one state built on 100 counties and we all have a stake in meeting the challenges ahead. NCACC staff will work hand-in-hand with our county members to implement the strategic plan over the next several years.

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