



**North Carolina  
Association of  
County Commissioners**

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# **Legislative Goals Handbook**

**Spring 2022**



## **The NCACC Legislative Goals Process**

### ***Mission Statement***

The Association's Legislative Goals process is thoughtful, deliberative, inclusive, and fair. The investment of time and energy, and value of full discourse, strengthens our Association as we advocate for counties. The process is designed to create an informed grassroots organization and to build a cohesiveness of purpose within the organization that, in turn, grants a degree of credibility to the Association. All counties and all county officials are invited and encouraged to participate in the Legislative Goals process.



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This handbook is intended to offer the reader an overview and guidance about the rules and processes used to develop the legislative agenda of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. Information is presented in a format that tracks the chronological course of action for the goals adoption process.

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## Background and 2022-2023 Timeline

Every two years, in the months preceding a long session of the General Assembly, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners engages in a process to determine the legislative goals it should pursue in the best interest of the counties. The process is thorough, deliberative, and time intensive. It is designed to allow for input from as many county commissioners, county officials and stakeholders as possible. By maximizing participation from so many of the organization’s members, it is possible to reach agreement on goals that are important to all members of this diverse organization.

NCACC goals-setting process begins in May of each even-numbered year and consists of six stages. These stages are described in detail in this handbook.

Below is the timeline for the 2022-2023 legislative goals process:

<b>Legislative Goals Process Timeline</b>	
<b>When</b>	<b>What</b>
May – September	Submission of county goal proposals
June	Review of Guiding Principles by Steering Committees (non-voting session)
Mid-September	Review and voting of goal proposals and Guiding Principles by Steering Committees
October	Legislative Goals Committee reviews Steering Committee recommendations, approves Core Values and package of goals for Board of Directors  Board of Directors finalizes package to be presented to full membership
November	Membership adopts goals at Legislative Goals Conference

## Stage 1 — Seeking Proposed Goals (May - September)

The Association's goals-setting process begins with an effort to solicit proposals that members think should be part of the county legislative agenda for the upcoming legislative biennium. The Association solicits proposals from county boards of commissioners. Suggested goals can be submitted by:

- adopted resolutions from full boards,
- a letter from Board Chairs on behalf of the full boards
- a letter from the president of an affiliate and related county organizations (which are groups of county officials/staff organized by function)

Affiliate Organizations include but are not limited to:

- Association of North Carolina Boards of Health
- N.C. Association of Assessing Officers
- N.C. Association of County Boards of Social Services
- N.C. Association of County Attorneys
- N.C. Association of County Clerks to the Board
- N.C. Association of County Directors of Social Services
- N.C. Association of Government Finance Officers
- N.C. Association of Emergency Medical Services Administrators (NCAEMSA)
- N.C. Association of Local Health Directors
- N.C. Association of Registers of Deeds
- N.C. Tax Collectors' Association

The Association casts a wide net to encourage inclusiveness and full membership participation. Discussion and action on proposed goals by full boards of commissioners is requested because this interaction contributes to the deliberative process and builds consensus.

Goal proposals must be submitted via the NCACC online form. Proposals should be in the form of a policy statement and include background information on the impetus of the proposal.

## Stage 2 – Steering Committee Review of Guiding Principles (June)

The Steering Committees review guiding principles from each of the respective subject areas set forth by the Association, and these areas are outlined in the next section of the handbook. The guiding principles are general declarations of ongoing positions that give guidance on broad policy objectives, such as “no mandates without funding.” These statements also guide the staff in dealing with unanticipated issues that arise in the legislative context or that affect the counties in other ways, as with proposed administrative rules and regulations or state agency policies.

Recommendations made by the Steering Committees in June will be voted on at Steering Committee meetings in September in conjunction with goals proposals.

Because Steering Committees are ongoing and have broad member participation, they are a critical first step in the Legislative Goals development process. The committees meet regularly and are available to review legislation during the legislative session; they are used to guide unanticipated legislative action and to recommend any actions that might be advisable to the NCACC Board of Directors for formal consideration and action. This issue is described in greater detail in a later section included in this handbook.

## Stage 3 – Steering Committee Review (Mid-September)

The Steering Committee review of goal proposals is the first step in the legislative goals development process. The Association has seven Steering Committees, organized by subject matter. These are permanent, standing committees. Membership on Steering Committees is open to any county official – elected, appointed or administrative; chairs are appointed by the Association President following each Annual Conference. The Steering Committees are:

- Agriculture
- Environment
- General Government
- Health and Human Services
- Justice and Public Safety
- Public Education
- Taxation and Finance

Proposed goals are sorted according to subject matter by NCACC staff and referred to the appropriate Steering Committees for review. Steering Committees may hear from county officials who submit goal proposals and may review staff research and analysis. The participation of county staff on Steering Committees provides professional expertise that can be critically important when Steering Committees deliberate. Though staff expertise is critical, particularly at this early stage, it is ultimately elected county commissioners who will decide the legislative goals package as the goals-setting process moves forward.

During the goal setting process the Steering Committee members are asked to make specific recommendations and take action on each submitted goal.

Committee actions include:

- Favorable – A goal is approved to send to the Legislative Goals Committee for further discussion and consideration.
- Amend – The committee may revise or amend a proposal.
- Unfavorable – The committee declines to send the goal forward.
- Needs Further Study – The committee has insufficient information to make an informed decision and requests that the sponsors either do further research or bring back answers to particular questions at a later date.
- Motions must be approved by a two-thirds majority of members present. Only county commissioners present at the meeting may vote.

The committees are empowered to develop their own suggested goals, as needed. Each committee submits its proposed goals to the Legislative Goals Committee. Prior to the meeting of Steering Committees, NCACC staff may consolidate similar proposals and put forth proposed language for consideration.

## Stage 4 – Legislative Goals Committee (October)

The Legislative Goals Committee is a non-standing committee. The committee membership is traditionally no more than 35 members. The committee is composed of county commissioners who are nominated and selected by the President. Members may nominate others or themselves. The committee is newly appointed every two years and meets as needed. Members are selected to ensure balance with respect to political affiliation, county population, race, and gender to accurately reflect the diversity of Association membership. Two co-chairs, a Republican and a Democrat, are appointed by the NCACC President to lead the Legislative Goals Committee.

The members of the Legislative Goals Committee include:

- Legislative Goals Committee Chairs
- Steering Committee Chairs
- NCACC Board of Trustees Chair or their designee
- An elected commissioner from each of the Association's 18 districts
- Other members as appointed by the President

The Legislative Goals Committee reviews the recommendations of the Steering Committees. Steering Committee chairs present their committees' recommendations and relay the committee discussion regarding each proposal. The county officials who want to advocate for their proposals are allowed to make presentations to the Legislative Goals Committee. The committee may also review research and analysis related to the proposals provided by NCACC staff.

The Legislative Goals Committee may and is encouraged to narrow the list of proposals. It also reconciles conflicts or duplication between Steering Committee recommendations and prioritizes its recommendations. The Goals Committee may rank goals in a priority order and may also select a limited number of priority goals to assist in focusing the Association's legislative efforts. The proposals and guiding principles are then submitted to the Board of Directors for consideration. Goals forwarded to the Board of Directors must receive a two-thirds majority vote by the Legislative Goals Committee.





## **Core Values Statement Review**

The Goals Committee is also charged with reviewing the Association's core value statement. This statement provides fundamental policy guidance regarding the Association's advocacy efforts. The Goals Committee may review, evaluate, and make suggested changes to periodically update these core values to recognize changing advocacy environments. The committee shall include the core values statement along with its recommendations to the Board of Directors for inclusion in the goals package to be presented to the full membership.

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## Stage 5 — Board of Directors (October)

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As the Association’s goal-setting process moves forward, the elected county commissioners become more involved in the decision-making process. The Board of Directors is almost exclusively elected commissioners, with the one exception of a non-voting county manager, and the Executive Director.

At its October meeting, the board reviews the recommendations of the Legislative Goals Committee. As is customary during earlier stages of the process, the board may hear presentations, review research and analysis, and add, delete, or amend proposals to the core values and guiding principles statements.

Goal proposals approved by the board must receive a two-thirds majority vote.

The board gives final approval to a package of goal proposals, Association core values, and guiding principles that are to be voted on by the full membership at the Legislative Goals Conference in October. This process provides individual county boards of commissioners’ time and opportunity for a full review prior to the conference.

## Stage 6 – Legislative Goals Conference (November)

The final stage of the Association’s Legislative Goals process is the Legislative Goals Conference, to which all Association members are invited. Historically, more than 85 counties have been represented. The goals conference is conducted according to rules designed to encourage member participation and consensus.

### Goals Voting Process and Procedures

- *Prior to the conference:*
  - NCACC staff coordinate with the President, the Legislative Goals Committee Chairs and the parliamentarian to review the voting process and procedures.
  - Every member county appoints a voting delegate. A letter requesting notification of the county’s voting delegate shall be sent from the Association to each county.
  
- *At the conference:*
  - Voting delegates register to obtain appropriate voting credentials.
  - Every county in attendance has one vote. The voting delegate can be any county official, including non-elected officials, and a county may choose an alternate. No proxies are allowed.
  - Goals are presented en bloc by each Steering Committee subject category. Goals Committee Chairs present the goals to the membership. The Association President or presiding officer is responsible for action.
  - All motions will be ruled on by the Association President or presiding officer.
  - The President of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners will appoint a parliamentarian for the conference.
  - Upon motion of any voting delegate, any individual goal proposal can be set aside for detailed discussion.
  - Two-thirds majority votes are required to approve or alter the proposed goals.
  - Following approval of the goal proposals, members will be asked to select five priority goals. These represent goal proposals that address the most critical need of counties.
  - Pursuant to Article VIII, Section Three of the NCACC Constitution the latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority on questions not covered by the Constitution or by this handbook.



## **Conclusion**

All goals and policies approved at the Legislative Goals Conference are included in the official NCACC legislative agenda. The official document containing the Association's core values, legislative goals and guiding principles shall be mailed to all 100 counties and presented to each member of the North Carolina General Assembly, to the Governor, and to other executive branch leaders.



## Guidance Outside of Legislative Goals Process

Throughout the legislative biennium, new issues will arise that were not anticipated or considered during the organization's legislative goals process. The Association Steering Committees have the authority and responsibility to study new issues, to research and analyze the effect or implications of proposed legislation, and to make recommendations to the NCACC Board of Directors. Any such action is communicated on a regular basis to the Association members.

Upon recommendation of the Legislative Goals Committee Chairs, the committee may meet between the legislative long and short sessions, to review goal progress and make suggestions to the board related to goal priorities, especially given an ever-changing legislative environment.



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