

# Legislative Goals Handbook

Spring 2024



# 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.

## **Contents**

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 & 2024-2025 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 five stages. These stages are described in detail in this handbook.

Below is the timeline for the 2024 legislative goals process:

Legislative Goals Process Timeline	
When	What
May-September	Submission of county goal proposals
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 14-15	Membership adopts goals at Legislative Goals Conference

# Stage 1 – Seeking Goal Proposals

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. Government Finance Officers Association
- N.C. Association of Emergency Medical Services Administrators
- 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 Appointment Structure**

NCACC's seven Steering Committees assist the Board of Directors in setting policy for the Association in the areas of Agriculture, Environment, General Government, Health and Human Services, Justice and Public Safety, Public Education, and Tax and Finance. Each year, the NCACC President appoints committee chairs to lead and represent each Steering Committee on the Board of Directors. The Steering Committees review guiding principles and legislative goals proposals from each of the respective subject areas set forth by the Association.

Steering Committee membership is done through a nomination process and ultimately appointed by the Association President. Membership is limited to county commissioners; county staff and affiliates can participate in steering committees as non-voting attendees.

Nominations for Steering Committees open in the summer and appointments are made in early September. Members can be self-nominated or nominated by someone else. The goal of this committee structure is to identify a group of dedicated county commissioners who are eager to become subject matter experts in a policy issue area and can strategically advise the Association on the development of the legislative agenda.

## Stage 3 – Steering Committee Review

The Steering Committee review of guiding principles and 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.

The guiding principles are general declaration 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. The Steering Committee will review these as the first step of the legislative goals process prior to reviewing specific goals proposals.

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. Prior to the meeting of Steering Committees, NCACC staff may consolidate similar proposals and put forth proposed language for consideration.

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. The committees are empowered to develop their own suggested goals, as needed. Each committee submits its proposed goals to the Legislative Goals Committee.

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. Amendments and revisions shall be relevant to the originally proposed goal. The Chair shall decide any question of relevancy to the original goal.
- Unfavorable — The committee declines to send the goal forward.
- Needs Further Study — The committee has insufficient information to make an informed decision, and the goal will not move forward in legislative goals process.

Motions can be made by any county commissioner present and voting. Seconds are not required for motions. Only county commissioners present at the meeting may vote.

At the direction of the Chair, staff may be asked to propose alternate language to approved or proposed goals and bring them for consideration at the next step of the process.

## Process for Motions

Motions must be approved by a two-thirds majority of members present. Only county commissioners present at the meeting may vote.

Should any motion receive two-thirds majority vote, the motion carries. Should a motion fail to receive two-thirds, the following process should be followed:

- Should a favorable motion fail to receive two-thirds majority vote, the goal will not move forward.
- An unfavorable motion only requires a simple majority to pass.
- Should an amendment motion fail to receive two-thirds, the original goal shall remain on the floor.
- Should a needs further study motion fail to receive two-thirds, the goal shall remain on the floor.

## **Stage 4 – Legislative Goals Committee**

The Legislative Goals Committee is a non-standing committee. The committee membership is traditionally no more than 35 members. Members and the President may make nominations to the committee with final appointments made 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 to the committee discussion regarding each proposal. The committee may also review research and analysis related to the proposals provided by NCACC staff. Goals presented to the Legislative Goals Committee will be considered individually.

The Legislative Goals Committee may and is encouraged to narrow the list of proposals. It also reconciles conflicts or duplication between Steering Committee recommendations. Possible motions for the committee:

- 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. Amendments and revisions shall be relevant to the originally proposed goal. The Chair shall decide any question of relevancy to the original goal.
- Unfavorable – The committee declines to send the goal forward.
- Needs Further Study – The committee has insufficient information to make an informed decision, and the goal will not move forward in the legislative goals process.

The proposals and guiding principles are then submitted to the Board of Directors for consideration. Goals forwarded to the Board of Directors must pass the voting thresholds outlined in this handbook.

## **Core Values Statement Review**

The Legislative Goals Committee is also charged with reviewing the Association’s core values statement. This statement provides fundamental policy guidance regarding the Association’s advocacy efforts. The Legislative 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.



## Stage 5 – Board of Directors

As the Association’s goals-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 NCACC 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. The goals reviewed at the Board of Directors meeting will be presented en bloc by the Legislative Goals Committee Chairs, alternating by committee. Any board member may make a motion to pull a goal from the bloc to review individually. Motions do not require seconds. The remaining goals in a steering committee bloc will be considered together.

Possible motions:

- 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. Amendments and revisions shall be relevant to the originally proposed goal. The Chair shall decide any question of relevancy to the original goal.
- Unfavorable – The committee declines to send the goal forward.
- Needs further study – The committee has insufficient information to make an informed decision, and the goal will not move forward in the legislative goals process.

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 November. This process provides individual county boards of commissioners’ time and opportunity for a full review prior to the conference.



## Stage 6 – Legislative Goals Conference

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.
  
- *During 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 individually 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.
  - Seconds are not required.
  - The President of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners will appoint a parliamentarian for the conference.
  - Two-thirds majority votes are required to approve or amend 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.
  
- *Bringing New Proposals to the Floor*
  - Any voting delegate may submit a new goal proposal for consideration that has not previously been considered during the process. New goal submissions must be submitted by the stated deadline at the conference.
  - The Presiding Officer, in consultation with the Legislative Goals Co-Chairs, will determine eligibility of new goals for consideration.
  - Any proposal for eligible new goals to be considered may be brought to the floor with two-thirds vote.
  - All motions will be ruled on by the Association President or presiding officer.

## **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 delivered 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 Association'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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