

NCCCMA Senior Partner Guide

North Carolina City and County Management Association
in cooperation with
The Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

www.ncmanagers.unc.edu

The North Carolina City and County Management Association sponsors a Professional Partners Program as a key part of the Institute of Government's orientation for new city and county managers in North Carolina.

The Professional Partners Program connects new managers with seasoned North Carolina managers, called Senior Partners, as mentors.

The Institute of Government coordinates the Professional Partners Program as a part of its New Manager Orientation Program, which provides resources to first-time city and county managers, experienced managers coming to NC from other states, and experienced NC managers switching from cities to counties or vice versa. The program is available throughout the year for new managers as they are appointed.

Senior Partners are city or county managers or assistant managers who

- have worked in a North Carolina city or county for at least three years and preferably longer,
- are members of NCCCMA and preferably also ICMA,
- have completed the IOG Municipal/County Administration Course,
- have a bachelor's degree and preferably a master's degree or equivalent in public administration or a related field,
- have completed the Senior Partner orientation program, and
- have agreed to serve as an advisor to new managers.

NCCCMA helps recruit Senior Partners, advises IOG on the program, and maintains a roster of Senior Partners on its web site.

Professional partnerships are initiated by a new manager's request to IOG. IOG identifies an appropriate Senior Partner from the roster and invites that Senior Partner to contact the new manager to establish the mentoring relationship.

The extent of a new manager's work with the Senior Partner depends on the new manager's interests and the Senior Partner's availability. Either party may terminate the partnership at any time by simply reducing communications to those that would be customary in normal business. A new manager may also request a new Senior Partner at any time.

IOG will periodically survey new managers and Senior Partners about the Professional Partners Program to evaluate and improve the program.

Why have Senior Partners?

Turnover among North Carolina managers often brings into office:

- 1) people who have been city or county managers elsewhere, but are new to North Carolina;
- 2) people who have been in North Carolina local government, but have not been managers previously;
- 3) people who are moving from managing NC municipalities to managing NC counties (and vice versa); and
- 4) people who are from military or other careers and have not served in local government here or elsewhere.

Depending on his or her prior experience, each of these new managers needs to learn (quickly) about local government in North Carolina, the role of the manager in that system, and/or the resources available to support North Carolina manager's work.

Senior Partners are NCCCMA members who have a wealth of information about management issues and practices in North Carolina. They can be valuable mentors to new managers in the state.

By sharing their professional insights and knowledge with new managers, Senior Partners reinforce and extend the resources about North Carolina local government available to new managers from the UNC School of Government at www.ncmanagers.unc.edu. Senior Partners put a human face on local government management in North Carolina. They can

- Shorten the learning curve for new managers
- Help new managers learn important norms and customs relevant to their work
- Provide a sounding board for new managers to express concerns or test ideas
- Link new managers into professional networks more quickly
- Serve as role models for those new to the profession

Senior Partners also benefit themselves through opportunities to reflect on their own experiences as they discuss professional practices and concerns with their colleagues who are new managers in North Carolina.

What does a Senior Partner do?

- Initiate contact with the new manager you've been asked to partner with.
- Discuss your partnership with the new manager and complete the **Statement of Mutual Understanding**.
- Make yourself available for conversation
 - It may be useful for the Senior Partner to schedule an initial conversation or two, simply to become acquainted, but the new manager also needs to feel welcome to call you with questions or concerns after your initial “get-acquainted” discussions.
 - Regular conversations (by phone or in-person) can help build and sustain the mentoring relationship. We recommend regular contact at least once a month, and probably more often initially.
- Be yourself.
- Listen.
- Share information.
- Share contacts – Introduce the new manager to others and help him or her build a network with other North Carolina professionals.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Tell stories.
- Respect the new manager as a professional colleague.
- Avoid giving instructions or “selling” your solutions. You are dealing with another professional who needs your wisdom, not your answers.
- Don't “preach” – help the new manager understand and appreciate situations s/he encounters and develop problem-solving skills to deal with them.
- Enjoy the relationship as an opportunity to serve the profession and to learn fresh perspectives and new ideas!
- Keep a private journal of your conversations and reflections and encourage the new manager to do the same.
 - These records create a history for reference when planning and carrying out work; they give both parties a chance to ensure that communications have been clear; they note agreements; and documentation provides protection for both parties in case there is need.
- Feel free to terminate the partnership either by mutual agreement with the new manager or unilaterally, as needed.
- Contact the Institute of Government with questions, suggestions, or information about how the Senior Partner program is working and how it might be improved. (Contact Gordon Whitaker – whitaker@sog.unc.edu .)

Statement of Mutual Understanding

Between a New NC Manager and a Senior Partner

We are voluntarily entering into a professional development relationship which we hope will be of benefit to both of us and to our profession and the communities we serve. We want this to be a rich, rewarding experience. The following elements outline how we intend to proceed.

- **Confidentiality** (What expectations do each of you have regarding the information you exchange during this professional development relationship?)

- **Intended duration of the relationship** (We suggest an initial term of 3 to 6 months.)

- **Anticipated form and frequency of communication** (in-person, phone, email) (We suggest connecting at least once a month to maintain continuity and sustain momentum.)

- **Additional points** _____

The extent of a new manager's work with the Senior Partner depends on the new manager's interests and the Senior Partner's availability. Either party may terminate the partnership at any time by simply reducing communications to those that would be customary in normal business. A new manager may also request a new Senior Partner at any time.

Senior Partner	_____	_____	_____
	date	New NC Manager	date

The Senior Partner Program is sponsored by the North Carolina City and County Management Association in cooperation with the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. IOG will periodically survey new managers and Senior Partners about their experiences in the Professional Partners Program to evaluate and improve the program. For information about New Manager Orientation in North Carolina, contact Gordon Whitaker at whitaker@sog.unc.edu or go to www.ncmanagers.unc.edu.

*Please send a signed copy of this agreement to
Gordon Whitaker, Box 3330, School of Government, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330*