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In the coming years, 80 million baby boomers will reach retirement eligibility. A generation half that size will be left to replace them. Changing demographics and increased demands on government require thoughtful strategic planning and workforce management.

This special issue of *Popular Government* examines the topic of planning and people through four articles. Heather Anne Drennan looks at strategic planning in North Carolina municipalities to understand which factors determine its effectiveness. She addresses how the state's cities compare with cities nationally in the use of strategic planning.

Establishing strategic priorities is a common first step taken by North Carolina cities and counties. To achieve these priorities, public employers must have the staff in place, with the right skills. Workforce planning enables agencies to ascertain their need for human resources to meet their objectives, and the availability of such resources. Willow S. Jacobson discusses the compelling importance of workforce planning, describes steps in the process, and reviews efforts under way in North Carolina municipalities.

Christina E. Ritchie then examines succession planning, a component of workforce planning that focuses on leadership and critical positions at every level of the organization. She presents data on succession planning in North Carolina as well as across the nation. The article concludes with a set of lessons and recommendations.

Finally, Brittany F. Whitmire illustrates how workforce and succession planning apply to small family-farm businesses in North Carolina. She demonstrates the usefulness of workforce planning for these organizations and shows the importance of tailoring efforts to the specific needs and characteristics of the profession.

This issue of *Popular Government* takes you on a journey that begins with the need to set objectives and continues with a guide to knowing your workforce requirements and preparing your workforce for the efforts ahead. It progresses to an examination of how to ensure leadership succession and ends with lessons drawn from North Carolina's farms, which have long served as a foundation of the state's economy. We hope that this special issue will be an aid in your planning process, wherever you may be on the workforce management journey.

—Willow S. Jacobson, Guest Editor, and John B. Stephens, Editor



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ON THE COVER *With retirements looming and demands growing, it is time for governments to look—and plan—ahead.*