



PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS PROGRAM

North Carolina City and County Management Association

School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The North Carolina City and County Management Association sponsors the Professional Partners Program as a key part of the School 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 ("senior partners") who serve as mentors.

A RESOURCE FOR NEW MANAGERS

Depending on prior experience, new managers need to learn quickly about local government in North Carolina, the role of the manager in that system, and the resources available to support North Carolina's manager network. Working with a senior partner can provide a new manager with a wealth of information about management issues and practices in the state.

The School of Government coordinates the Professional Partners Program as part of its new manager orientation program, which provides resources to new managers as they are appointed throughout the year:

- First-time city and county managers
- Experienced managers coming to North Carolina from other states
- Experienced North Carolina managers moving from a city to a county or vice versa
- Leaders moving from military or other careers into local government management

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SEASONED MANAGERS

Seasoned managers have a wealth of information about management issues and practices in North Carolina. By sharing their professional insights and knowledge with new managers, senior partner volunteers reinforce and extend the resources available to new managers through the School of Government's Managing in North Carolina website at www.ncmanagers.unc.edu.

North Carolina city or county managers who are serving as, or who wish to volunteer as, NCCCMA senior partners generally meet the following criteria:

- Have served in the role of manager for at least three years and preferably longer
- Are members of the NC City and County Management Association and preferably also the International City/County Management Association
- Have completed the School of Government's Municipal and County Administration course
- Possess 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
- Have agreed to serve as a mentor to new managers



BENEFITS OF THE PROFESSIONAL PARTNER PROGRAM

Professional partners put a human face on local government management in North Carolina. Their mentorship can contribute in the following ways:

- 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
- Serve as role models for those new to the profession

Professional partners also benefit through opportunities to reflect on their own experiences as they discuss professional practices and concerns with their colleagues who are new managers in the state.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

NCCCMMA helps recruit professional partners and advises the School of Government on the program. The School of Government maintains a roster of senior partners on its Managing in North Carolina website at **www.ncmanagers.unc.edu**.

Professional partnerships are initiated by a new manager's request to the School of Government. Visit **www.sog.unc.edu/node/805** to access the web-based NCCCMMA Professional Partner Request Form, or contact Carl Stenberg, professor of public administration and government, at 919.962.2377 or stenberg@sog.unc.edu.

The School identifies an appropriate professional partner from the roster and invites that professional partner to contact the new manager to establish the mentoring relationship.

The extent of a new manager's work with the professional partner depends on the new manager's interests and the professional 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. The School of Government will periodically survey new managers and mentors in order to evaluate and improve the program.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A NEW MANAGER IN THE PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS PROGRAM?

- Request a senior partner via the web-based form at **www.sog.unc.edu/node/805** or contact Carl Stenberg, professor of public administration and government, at 919.962.2377 or stenberg@sog.unc.edu
- Once in contact with a senior partner, discuss your partnership and complete the Statement of Mutual Understanding (see below)
- Call your senior partner with questions or concerns after your initial "get acquainted" discussions
- Schedule regular conversations by phone or in person in order to help build and sustain the relationship; we recommend at least once a month and probably more often initially
- Be yourself
- Listen and ask questions
- Enjoy the relationship as an opportunity to learn fresh perspectives and new ideas
- Feel free to terminate the partnership either by mutual agreement with the new manager or unilaterally, as needed
- Keep a private journal of your conversations and reflections

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 a need.

- Contact Carl Stenberg at the School of Government with questions, suggestions, or information about how the Professional Partners Program is working and how it might be improved

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A SENIOR PARTNER IN THE PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS PROGRAM?

- Initiate contact with the new manager with whom you've been asked to partner
- 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 by introducing the new manager to others and helping 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" but help the new manager understand and appreciate situations she or 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 a need.

- Feel free to terminate the partnership either by mutual agreement with the new manager or unilaterally, as needed
- Contact Carl Stenberg at the School of Government with questions, suggestions, or information about how the Professional Partners Program is working and how it might be improved

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 three to six months.)

Anticipated form and frequency of communication (in-person, phone, e-mail)
(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 Manager

Date

Please e-mail or mail a signed copy of this agreement to Carl Stenberg, Campus Box 3330, School of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330 or stenberg@sog.unc.edu.

The Professional Partners Program is sponsored by the North Carolina City and County Management Association in cooperation with the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The School of Government will periodically survey new managers and senior partners about their experiences in order to evaluate and improve the program. For information about new manager orientation session offered each February at the NCCCMA Winter Seminar, contact Carl Stenberg at stenburg@sog.unc.edu or visit **www.ncmanagers.unc.edu**.