



TEAM 2021: PROPOSED STRATEGIC PLAN

Unifying the County Voice

TEAM 2021 Committee Members:

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TEAM 2021 Report: Proposed Strategic Goals

In 2007, the Association of County Commissions of Alabama's (ACCA) leadership created the 2015 Task Force to develop a strategic roadmap that would guide the Association through the year 2015. The result of those efforts was the *Looking Back, Pressing Forward* Report, which summarized the principal areas the Association would focus on to continue its statewide contribution to the advancement of county government. Since its adoption at the 2007 Legislative Conference, that Report has steered the short and long-term direction of the Association.

As the close of 2015 approaches, it is time to re-chart the strategic direction of the organization through the year 2021. Early in her tenure, ACCA Immediate Past President Merceria Ludgood appointed a group of county elected officials and employees from across the state to develop a working outline of strategic goals for the Association through the year of 2021. TEAM 2021 was asked to create a roadmap to “**Unify the County Voice**” and carry the Association through the next five years.

This report includes TEAM 2021's **10 goals and implementation recommendations** for the Association based on surveys of the ACCA membership, a critical review of the 2015 Task Force Report, comments from the ACCA Board of Directors, and the leadership and insight of the members of the TEAM based on the Association's current performance.

NEXT STEPS

After months of deliberation, TEAM 2021 has completed its task of developing a strategic outline to ensure that five years from now, the Association is stronger than ever. Now, the Association's Board of Directors and membership must take the final steps toward adopting a strategic plan to guide the organization to the year 2021:

- First, the Association's Board of Directors will review and give its final endorsement to the Strategic Goals for 2021.
- Then, the full Association membership will consider, discuss, and adopt a final version of the Strategic Goals for 2021.

The Strategic Goals are a critical component of the Association's success. Everything the organization has accomplished in the last 86 years is the result of many inclusive discussions about the future of this Association—discussions drawing upon the wisdom and experiences of hundreds of county officials from across the state. In order for any organization to grow and evolve, its leadership must commit to regular and frank evaluations of its current direction, and changes that will forge a sense of renewal and vision.



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Goal I:

Unify the County VOICE Through Increased Member Participation in the Association's Activities and Initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION

Develop county-issue experts who are prepared to represent the county's interests at the state and federal level on key subject matters.

Encourage stronger partnerships and collaboration between county officials and other elected/appointed officials as a means to further promote the activities and services of the Association, and to find common ground with like-minded organizations.

Collect detailed background information on commissioners from each county in order to improve efforts to respond to commissioners' specific interests (i.e. occupation, hobbies, professional memberships, business and political relationships).

Explore and expand opportunities for Association members to be actively involved in the growth and development of the organization.

Encourage greater support of the Association by providing the full membership with an informational publication detailing the services, trainings, and other activities offered by the Association.

Explore new and expanded opportunities to emphasize the use of electronic and real time communication as a means of empowering the membership.

Develop a social media committee or exchange group to ensure the Association is maximizing the benefits of electronic communication mediums.

Goal II:

Unify the County VOICE Through Expanded Educational and Research Capabilities—both Internally and Externally.

IMPLEMENTATION

Enhance the Association's public credibility as the voice of county government through more aggressive promotion of the organization in various communication mediums including print, television, radio, and social media.

Enhance the role of ACCA at the federal level by providing membership with a direct link to the NACo research database and by designating a staff person to connect with NACo's programs and activities in order to communicate with county officials on federal issues.



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Better utilize electronic media resources to promote educational publications—like the Comparative Data Survey and the Alabama County Wage, Salary, and Benefits Survey—to county officials, county employees, state and federal officials, members of the media, and citizens in need of information about the operation of county government.

Create and promote a resource center for county commission candidates that provides usable and productive information on county government in order to secure the future of the “One Voice” philosophy.

Goal III:

Unify the County VOICE by Placing an Enhanced Emphasis on Public Awareness of County Government Responsibilities and Activities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Encourage the promotion of the county commissions’ local programs by establishing the regular delivery of press release templates and media packets to be utilized at the local level to increase the visibility of county commission activities in the community.



Develop a multi-faceted mechanism to promote county accomplishments—both internally and externally—with a special emphasis on touting cooperation among multiple counties as a means to further develop the ‘67 Counties, ONE Voice’ brand.

Utilize local and statewide media in a proactive way to further promote the Association’s County Platform through regular media releases, blogs, social media campaigns, etc.

Assist counties with efforts to start public dialogue around important local issues or initiatives by providing more hands-on assistance and guidance with social media, campaign development, and advocacy strategies.

Establish a hands-on training program on the use of electronic communication to assist counties with improving their social media presence.

Goal IV:

Unify the County VOICE by Further Empowering the Advocacy Efforts of the Association’s Membership.

IMPLEMENTATION

Further emphasize the Association’s assistance with local legislation, to include more detailed monitoring of the movement of local legislation and more hands-on assistance with the development of content of local legislation.

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Expand attendance at the existing governmental relations training programs offered by the Association-sponsored education programs to ensure all elected officials and employees are exposed to the importance of participation in the legislative process.

Further engage membership in the Association's advocacy efforts by creating a process to match their identified "interests" to certain bills and/or legislative topics.



Identify and implement strategies to build stronger relationships between legislators and county commissioners—including the continued development of the "Coffee at the Courthouse" program.

Re-evaluate legislative training programs to ensure understanding of the legislative process, confidence interacting with legislators, and a strong grasp of how to influence decision-making at the Statehouse.

Improve the execution of the "County Days" program to ensure members get the maximum benefit and exposure during their time in Montgomery.

Explore and create a communication methodology that will encourage more active engagement from the Association's members, and make it easier to access the organization's legislative development process.

Motivate *all 67 counties* to take an active role in the Association's efforts to pass a long-term, sustainable transportation funding legislation in the legislature.

Goal V:

Unify the County VOICE by Mobilizing and Energizing the Association's Affiliate Organizations.

IMPLEMENTATION

Re-energize the affiliate organizations by further engaging them in the legislative process, regularly providing information specific to their areas of expertise, and creating more opportunities for them to engage in Association activities and initiatives.

Utilize the affiliate organizations to communicate the benefits of Association membership, and garner more participation from county employees that are not currently engaged with Association activities.

Increase exposure for affiliate organizations' contributions to the advancement of county government through recognition via various conferences, the website, and the magazine.



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Implement a leadership training program or seminar for each affiliate group to give members the opportunity to develop long-term strategies for the growth and longevity of the each organization.

Explore the creation of new affiliate organizations for county officials and employees that are closely associated, but not directly affiliated with the Association (i.e., law enforcement and personnel).

Encourage regional meetings of each affiliate group and annual meetings of all affiliate group leaders to establish coordinated plans and mentor relationships.

Assign specific Association staff members to provide policy research, expertise, and leadership to further engage the affiliates as active advocates for the enhancement of county services and programs.

Goal VI:

Unify the County VOICE Through Continued Nurture and Growth of the Association's Existing Programs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Create opportunities for counties to share their training and joint bid success stories utilizing Association-run programs via social media and other traditional media outlets.

Emphasize the importance of county "staff" participation in the training programs through the use of peer-to-peer recruitment, revisit the evaluation methodology, and provide incentives for those completing the training programs.



Provide trainer resources for county department heads and others in order to facilitate the delivery of training programs at the local level for county employees.

Develop a training and resource manual for counties to utilize in making appointments to boards and commissions.

Grow and expand the joint-bid program by adding more heavy equipment items to the bid process; and continue building the income tax debt set-off program by offering it as a service to other eligible entities.

Evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of integrating web-based trainings into the Association's educational programs.

Form a committee to consider and evaluate new program opportunities for the Association.

Create a statewide evaluation method for the performance of vendors that provide goods and services to county governments throughout Alabama.

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Goal VII:

Unify the County VOICE Through Continued Nurture and Growth of the Association's Insurance Programs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Promote the new county-owned property insurance program as part of the Association's self-funded insurance programs with the goal of 100-percent participation from Alabama counties.

Place a more direct and proactive emphasis on the importance of safety in day-to-day work activities.

Increase the use of jail guidelines in at least 60-percent of jails.

Provide training tools for the Insurance Board of Trustee members in order to continue building their knowledge base and enhancing their performance.

Create and distribute a printed annual report detailing the performance of the insurance programs.

Enhance customer service to members by providing active and effective responses to local concerns or problems.

Goal VIII:

Unify the County VOICE by Strengthening the Membership's Commitment to Securing the Future Influence of the Association.

IMPLEMENTATION

Establish an annual program to recognize those members who make significant contributions to the Association, and go above-and-beyond the call of duty to strengthen and promote the "County Voice" in all aspects of the organization's efforts.

Formalize, expand, and promote the Association's mentoring program to partner seasoned commissioners with new commissioners after each election cycle in hopes of better preparing newly elected officials for the responsibilities of leading county government.

Emphasize the TEAM mentality by focusing on common interests, while imparting a stronger understanding of the various issues faced by counties based on factors like region, population, socio-economic and/or racial make-up.

Improve the recruitment process for PLAN, and brand the program as the Association's primary leadership development tool for county officials seeking to make an impact during their tenure as county officials—within the Association, in their home counties, and statewide.



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Emphasize the importance of member attendance and participation prior to annual election of ACCA officers and the Legislative Committee in order to ensure each district elects board and legislative committee members who are dedicated to actively participating in a leadership role.

Goal IX:

Unify the County VOICE by Encouraging and Facilitating More Communication Among County Officials to Enhance the Delivery of Local Services.

IMPLEMENTATION

Work closely with counties to implement a “First Thursdays” program to connect Probate Judges, Sheriffs, Tax Officials, Commissioners, and other county officials on the first Thursday of every quarter to discuss pressing county issues.

Create a short publication explaining how county budgets are funded for use with other local officials, state legislators, and federal officials.

Develop an online mechanism for county officials to showcase, discuss, and exchange ideas about successful (and problematic) programs and initiatives with officials in other parts of the state.

Establish a formal communication process with other elected officials’ associations that are interested in forming a collaborative legislative review and development process.

Goal X:

Unify the County VOICE Through Ongoing Evaluation and Improvement Efforts to Keep the Association Vital and Strong.

IMPLEMENTATION



Annually reevaluate the participation of individual board members as well as the participation of the membership in governance activities in order to offer suggested policy changes which will enhance the overall participation of the membership in the organization’s governance.

Continue building upon the Association’s efforts to connect county commissioners and county employees by identifying more opportunities to inform commissioners about the activities and accomplishments of the affiliate organizations.

Explore ways to further develop and improve successful Association initiatives like the Hot 5, the County Commission magazine, and the dissemination of legal and legislative information.

