

# A GOVERNOR'S GUIDE TO NGA



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The National Governors Association (NGA), founded in 1908, is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 55 states, territories, and commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. NGA also provides management and technical assistance to both new and incumbent governors. For more information, visit [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

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National Governors Association

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## ABOUT NGA

The National Governors Association (NGA) is the only bipartisan national organization of, by, and for the nation's governors. Its members are the governors of the 55 states, territories, and commonwealths. NGA was founded in 1908 after governors met with President Theodore Roosevelt to discuss conservation issues. Governors decided to form an association through which they could come together to discuss mutual concerns and act collectively. In 1967, governors established an Office of State–Federal Relations in Washington, D.C. In 1997, governors established the NGA Center for Best Practices.

Through NGA, governors share best practices, speak with a collective voice on national policy, and develop innovative solutions that improve state government and support the principles of federalism.

### NGA Structure

The association is governed by a nine-member Executive Committee elected by all governors in attendance at their Summer Meeting. The NGA chair and vice chair are voting members of the Executive Committee, and the chairs and vice chairs of the five standing committees are invited to participate as nonvoting members. The chair, in consultation with the vice chair, makes all committee and task force assignments.

Bipartisanship is ensured by NGA's Articles of Incorporation. The chair position rotates annually between the two major political parties, ensuring that the chair and vice chair are always from different parties. The vice chair automatically succeeds the chair at the completion of his or her term. The Executive Committee has four members of the chair's party and five members of the other party.

Collectively, governors set the association's priorities and determine its activities. Gubernatorial ownership of the NGA agenda is the driving force behind the priority-setting process.

The Executive Committee also works with the Legal Affairs Committee, which reviews U.S. Supreme Court cases of significance to states and files amicus briefs to reflect states' views; and with the Finance Committee, which monitors NGA's financial operations.

Five standing committees—Economic Development and Commerce; Education and Workforce; Health and Human Services; Homeland Security and Public Safety and Natural Resources—develop policies and provide a forum for governors to address key issues. In addition, the executive committee may establish a special committee, or the chair may designate special task forces or lead governors to focus gubernatorial attention on federal policy issues.

### Staff Advisory Councils

Each committee and task force has a staff advisory council (SAC) composed of gubernatorial staff designated by each governor on the committee or task force. SACs develop proposed policy positions, strategies for securing results, and committee materials for governors to consider. SAC members should know and be able to represent their governor's views on a wide range of issues and concerns and gather state information to help inform the committee.

### Governors' Washington Representatives or State-Federal Contacts

Each governor also designates a contact to serve as a liaison to NGA. This person receives copies of all NGA materials sent to the governor and is an important point of contact between the governor's office in the state capital and NGA.

## NGA Funding

State dues fund the association's lobbying, communications, management services, and a portion of general administration activities. NGA's dues-supported staff are organized into five offices that provide cross-cutting services across program areas (executive director, federal relations, management consulting and training, communications, and administration and finance).

## NGA Center for Best Practices

The NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), a 501(c)(3) corporation, is an integral part of the National Governors Association and is the only research and development firm that directly serves the nation's governors and their key policy staff. The NGA Center is funded through federal grants and contracts, fee-for-service programs, private and corporate foundation contributions, and NGA's Corporate Fellows program.

Four governors serve on the NGA Center board of directors. The NGA Center's board is chaired by the vice chair of NGA and is evenly balanced between the two major political parties. Lead governors are often appointed to provide oversight and leadership on major state-oriented initiatives.

NGA Center staff:

- Identify and share information about states' best practices in a wide range of program areas;
- Provide customized technical assistance to governors on policies and programs;
- Inform governors of emerging issues in the states and assist them in finding new, innovative solutions; and
- Assist governors in developing strategies for evaluating current state programs.

The NGA Center has five divisions. Division staff are experts in emerging program-related issues and innovative state policies and practices. Through funded projects, they publish reports and briefs and provide technical assistance to states in program development and implementation strategies.

For certain high-priority issues, the NGA Center often makes challenge grants available to states to help them design and implement policy initiatives. These grants are awarded on a competitive basis to states who are members in good standing.

The **Economic, Human Services & Workforce Division** provides information, research, policy analysis, technical assistance and resource development for governors and their staff

across a range of policy issues. The division covers economic development and innovation; workforce development focused on industry-based strategies; pathways to employment and populations with special needs; and human services for children, youth, low-income families and people with disabilities.

The **Education Division** provides information, research, policy analysis, technical assistance and resource development for governors and their staff in the areas of early childhood, K-12 and postsecondary education. The division focuses on helping governors develop effective policy and support its implementation in the areas of: early education, readiness and quality; the Common Core State Standards, Science Technology Engineering and Math and related assessments; teacher and leader effectiveness; competency-based learning; charter schools; data and accountability; and postsecondary (higher education and workforce training) access, success, productivity, accountability, and affordability. The division also works on policy issues related to bridging the system divides among the early childhood, K-12, postsecondary and workforce systems.

The **Environment, Energy & Transportation Division** provides information, research, policy analysis, technical assistance and resource development for governors and their staff in the areas of energy, environment and transportation sectors. The division focuses on several issues, including improving energy efficiency, enhancing the use of both traditional and alternative fuels for electricity and transportation, developing a modern electricity grid, expanding economic development opportunities in the energy sector, protecting and cleaning up the environment, exploring innovative financing mechanisms for energy and infrastructure and developing a transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people and goods.

The **Health Division** provides information, research, policy analysis, technical assistance and resource development for governors and their staff across a range of policy issues. The health division covers issues in the areas of health care service delivery and reform, including payment reform, health workforce planning, quality improvement, and public health and behavioral health integration within the medical delivery system. Other focus areas include Medicaid cost containment, state employee and retiree health benefits, maternal and child health, prescription drug abuse prevention and health insurance exchange planning.

The **Homeland Security & Public Safety Division** provides information, research, policy analysis, technical assistance and resource development for governors and their staff about emerging policy trends across a range of homeland security

and public safety issues. Current issues include cybersecurity, prescription drug abuse, public safety broadband, sentencing and corrections reform, homeland security grant reform, justice information-sharing, and public health preparedness.

### **Corporate Fellows Program**

NGA's Corporate Fellows program promotes the exchange of knowledge and expertise between the private sector and governors on public policy issues affecting business and states. Corporate Fellows participate in meetings with senior NGA executives and policy experts, provide background information for NGA Center projects, share private-sector best practices that show promise in state government, attend private seminars and conferences, and participate in special events at the governors' Winter and Summer Meetings. Each corporate sponsor supports the NGA Center's work through an annual contribution.

### **Office of Management Consulting and Training**

The Office of Management Consulting and Training (OMCT) provides training seminars, publications and short-term research to governors and their staff members concerning the leadership and management of state government and the effective organization and operation of the governor's office. OMCT also provides tailored consulting services for individual governors and offices, including management and operational reviews and strategic retreat planning.

### **Office of Communications**

NGA's Office of Communications (OC) coordinates the association's communications strategies to publicize governors' legislative activities, testimony, and key events to build public support for their positions and to provide media with timely, in-depth analysis and background information on positions and issues of interest to states. The OC also works with the NGA Center to publicize innovative best practices and policy solutions that often begin in the states. The OC offers a range of services for governors and staff, including media resources and support, communications consulting, and news releases and toolkits specific to NGA.

### **Other Regional and State Organizations**

The National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) is associated with NGA. In addition, NGA is a trustee of the State and Local Legal Center, which files amicus briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court on critical cases affecting states.

Individual governors are members of a variety of organizations, such as the Council of State Governments (CSG), the Democratic Governors Association (DGA), the Republican Governors Association (RGA), and other regional governors' organizations. Although it is not affiliated with these organizations, NGA does work with them to coordinate activities, as appropriate. In addition, NGA and state staff often coordinate lobbying strategies with groups representing state and local officials, such as the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), CSG, the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National League of Cities (NLC), The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).



## AFFECTING FEDERAL POLICY

### NGA Policies

NGA policies, described below, are the formal positions taken collectively by governors to influence action by the federal government and inform national debate on critical issues.

- Permanent policy outlines general principles for state-federal relations.
- Time-limited policy provides guidance on necessary federal action regarding current NGA priorities. It remains in effect for two years unless amended or reaffirmed.
- Interim policy enables the Executive Committee or a standing committee to take positions on specific new legislative issues quickly. Once adopted, interim policy must be reviewed by governors at the next NGA Winter or Summer Meeting.
- Resolutions reaffirm existing policy or recognize certain persons, places, or events. A resolution remains in effect for one year.

### How Policies Are Determined

Article IX of the NGA Articles of Incorporation determines the process for NGA policies. Policies reflect governors' current priorities, are considered by governors at every other Winter Meeting and generally are developed through NGA committees. Proposed policies are distributed to all governors at least 15 days in advance of the NGA meeting at which they will be considered. Policies are first considered by NGA's standing committees and must be approved by a majority of the members of the committee. Policies then proceed to the closing session, where two-thirds of governors in attendance must vote to pass the policy.

Any governor may propose a policy by submitting it to the NGA executive director 45 days before the Winter or Summer Meeting. These proposed policies are referred to the appropriate committee for further consideration. Policies not recommended by a committee or not adhering to the 45-day notice still may be considered; however, this occurs only under a suspension of the rules, which requires a three-fourths vote of governors in attendance to suspend both the rules and pass the policy.

### How Governors Influence National Action through NGA

Governors are uniquely positioned in American government. Their visibility as state leaders and credibility as chief executives give them unique standing to influence federal legislation and regulations.

Governors work both individually and collectively with NGA to promote positions and influence policy. Personal advocacy by governors through letters, testimony, and visits with federal officials is often the most powerful action a governor can take to influence federal policy.

Governors also work together through NGA to take positions on federal actions, communicate consensus opinions through association letters, and advocacy and on occasion, sign on to correspondence with fellow governors.

### NGA Office of Federal Relations

Governors' advocacy efforts on behalf of NGA are supported by the Office of Federal Relations (OFR). OFR maintains regular contact with congressional leaders and key administration

officials to ensure that state concerns are heard in the shaping of national policy.

OFR maintains up-to-date information on critical state–federal issues and coordinates state action on behalf of the association. It holds weekly legislative meetings with governors’ Washington, D.C., office representatives and provides governors and their staff with special and ongoing legislative and regulatory updates.

OFR also works closely with governors’ Washington, D.C., representatives, state–federal contacts, and other state and local government organizations to maximize the effectiveness of NGA’s lobbying activities. Specifically, OFR staff serve as policy experts and liaisons to Congress and executive branch agencies and coordinate the work and policy activities of the following NGA committees:

The **Economic Development and Commerce Committee** has jurisdiction over a broad range of issues in the areas of transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, international trade promotion, financial services regulation, science and technology development, and affordable housing.

The **Education and Workforce Committee** has jurisdiction over issues in the area of education (including early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary) as well as in the areas of workforce development. Members of the committee ensure that the governors’ views are represented in the shaping of federal policy.

The **Health and Human Services Committee** handles issues dealing with health care, particularly as they relate to Medicaid, and federal-state safety net programs such as

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and other social services. Members of the committee ensure that the governors’ views are represented in the shaping of federal policy.

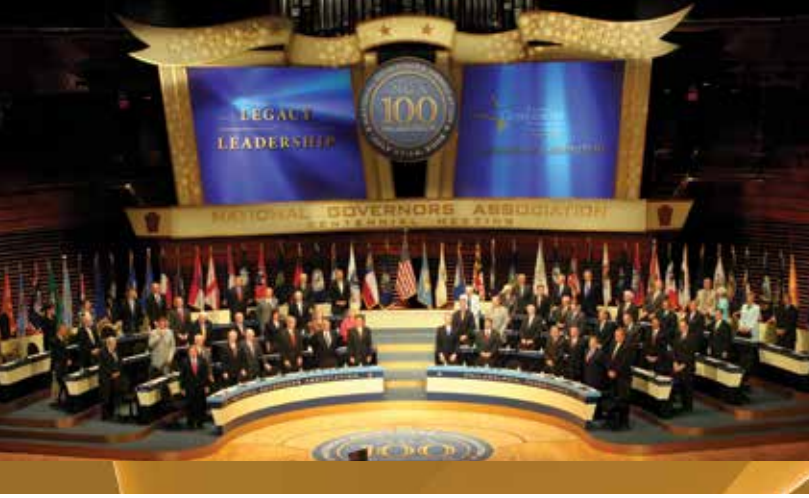
The **Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee** focuses on homeland security, the National Guard and homeland defense, criminal justice and public safety and veterans affairs.

The **Natural Resources Committee** has jurisdiction over issues related to agriculture, energy, the environment and natural resources. Members of the committee ensure that the governors’ views are represented in the shaping of federal policy.

OFR regularly provides governors and their staff members with information on legislative or regulatory actions, status reports, strategic guidance, and other assistance related to federal policy activities.

## How NGA Affects Regulations on Behalf of Governors

NGA frequently works with federal regulatory agencies to ensure state concerns and needs are considered in programs administered by or affecting states. In some cases, NGA has been asked to convene state workgroups to develop draft regulations for programs that will be run by states. At other times, NGA provides guidance to federal regulators to ensure rules do not go beyond federal standards and authority and do not result in undue administrative or enforcement burdens.



## NGA MEETINGS

### Winter and Summer Meetings

Governors meet twice each year to discuss common issues and challenges and promote collective action on national priorities. The Winter Meeting, held in February in Washington, D.C., focuses primarily on state–federal priorities. The Summer Meeting, held in a different state each year, generally focuses on state and intergovernmental issues. These meetings provide a unique opportunity for governors to work with one another to pursue common objectives.

Often, corporate executives, international leaders, government officials, and other policy leaders are involved in these meetings.

The NGA chair, in consultation with the vice chair, sets the overall agenda for NGA's Winter and Summer Meetings. NGA committee chairs, in consultation with their individual committees and task forces, determine topics for their sessions. Although committees have considerable flexibility in select-

ing topics, these agendas focus on the priorities determined collectively by the governors.

Each Winter and Summer Meeting includes private sessions exclusively for governors. The format can vary, giving governors a chance to meet in large or small groups, formally or informally, and with detailed or free-form agendas.

### Other Meeting Opportunities for Governors

Throughout the year, governors meet in smaller groups on issues critical to states and regions. These meetings include task force sessions, conferences, seminars, workshops, and hearings focusing on topics such as federalism, homeland security, budgetary issues, health care reform, welfare reform, and education reform. At times, all governors may be invited to participate in special meetings related to NGA priorities.





## PROMOTING STATE CONCERNS AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

### Informing the Public about Governors' Concerns

A wide array of NGA publications and materials provides context and concrete examples on NGA's priority issues. These reports are valuable tools for states and help educate the press and the public about critical state programs. Information is available on NGA's website, [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

NGA also conducts a variety of research projects and produces reports and briefs that highlight innovative state practices. NGA conveys governors' positions and the findings of state-based research and analysis to the media.

### Advocating for Governors in Washington

NGA's Office of Federal Relations provides various legislative services for governors. The office maintains regular contact with congressional leaders and key administration officials to ensure state concerns are heard in the shaping of national

policy. This office acts as a general liaison and provides assistance to governors' Washington, D.C., office representatives and state-federal coordinators in governors' offices in state capitals. The office holds weekly legislative meetings with governors' Washington, D.C., office representatives and provides governors with regular summaries of legislative issues that affect state government.

NGA's Office of Communications works with the governors' communications staff to maximize media coverage for governors while they are in the nation's capital and at NGA meetings, as well as in their own states. NGA publicizes governors' testimony, positions, and activities through news releases and media advisories. NGA also organizes news conferences, media availabilities, and satellite and radio activities, as appropriate. In addition, NGA may develop opinion articles and arrange editorial board meetings for governors.



## ASSISTING GOVERNORS

### Assistance for Newly Elected Governors

The Office of Management Consulting and Training (OMCT) offers transition assistance to newly elected governors from the day after the election through the first few months in office.

#### Written Materials

On the day after the election, NGA sends governors-elect a package of resources to assist them with their transition into office. New governors receive publications and issue briefs regarding critical policy and governance issues; management briefs and notes on leading and managing state government; and information on staffing, operating, and organizing the governor's office.

#### Seminar for New Governors

Within two weeks of the election, governors-elect, their spouses, and their transition staff participate in a Seminar for New Governors. Faculty for the Seminar includes veteran governors, spouses, and their staff.

#### Gubernatorial Mentors

NGA connects new governors and their staff with current governors and their staff to help governors during their first months in office. NGA facilitates the connection between offices. The mentor governor will take the initiative in offering assistance—governor to governor, spouse to spouse, and staff to staff.

#### Staff Consultation

NGA staff members consult with and provide advice to governors regarding the leadership and management of state government and effective governor's office operations. Assistance

can be provided over the phone or on-site on specific issues, such as structuring the governor's office, building an effective team, governing while running for reelection, and managing gubernatorial records.

### Ongoing Assistance for Governors and their Offices

#### NGA Center

Through the staff of the NGA Center, governors and their policy advisors can obtain assistance in designing and implementing new programs or making current programs more effective; receive up-to-date, comprehensive information about what is happening in other state capitals and in Washington, D.C.; and learn about emerging national trends and their implications for states. The NGA Center also provides tailored technical assistance to governors' offices as requested.

#### Management Seminars

NGA offers a series of unique management seminars that convene gubernatorial staff in similar positions to address common challenges and share best practices and innovative approaches to managing the work of the governor's office. Management seminars are offered for the following individuals:

- Appointment directors;
- Communications directors and press secretaries;
- Constituent services and correspondence directors;
- Schedulers;
- Legislative directors;
- Legal counsels;
- Washington office directors; and
- Spouses' assistants and executive residence directors.

### **Special Assistance to Chiefs of Staff**

NGA provides opportunities for chiefs of staff to meet with their counterparts through special work sessions at NGA's Winter and Summer Meetings. Information on staffing, operating, and organizing the governor's office and leading and managing state government is provided through publications on innovative state government leadership practices, governor's office operation models, and the transition in and out of office. Assistance is available through telephone consultations, referrals to counterparts in other states, short-term research, and on-site operational and management reviews. OMCT is the primary liaison to governors' chiefs of staff and maintains a listserv so governors' chiefs can share best practices and ask questions of their colleagues.

### **Special Assistance to Communications Staff**

NGA assists governors' communications staff through operational seminars and telephone and online consultation. The Office of Communications (OC) is the primary liaison to governors' press secretaries. The OC conducts outreach to the press offices and collects state-based information on governors' programs and innovations for use in public information activities. In addition, NGA helps press secretaries with governors' media activities in Washington, D.C.

### **Liaison to Executive Branch Organizations**

NGA staff members maintain contact with a large number of executive branch organizations. Often, these organizations can provide additional assistance to governors in specific program areas.

### **Fee-for-Service Program**

Federal Funds Information for States (FFIS), a non-profit corporation whose board is overseen by NGA and the National Conference of State Legislatures, provides state-specific federal program information on more than 200 federal grant-in-aid programs on a fee-for-service basis. FFIS also produces an annual analysis of the President's budget.

### **Assistance for Departing Governors**

OMCT provides assistance to help departing governors orchestrate their final year in office by finishing strong, leaving a legacy, executing a smooth transition to a new administration, and preparing for life after the governorship. In addition to special publications and phone consultations, special work sessions are conducted for spouses and chiefs of staff. On-site retreats and consultation can also be provided.

### **Assistance for Governors' Spouses**

OMCT staffs a six-member, bipartisan Spouses' Leadership Committee, which guides the governors' spouses' program and activities. In addition to the program for spouses at the Seminar for New Governors, spouses participate in their own business sessions at NGA's Winter and Summer Meetings and at an annual spouses seminar. OMCT conducts an annual seminar for spouses' assistants and executive residence managers.



## INFORMATION FOR GOVERNORS

NGA offers a variety of publications to serve the information needs of governors and their staff. Other NGA publications disseminate research on and analyses of key issues of interest to governors and other audiences. NGA also offers information through its website, [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

### Key Electronic Publications

#### Daily E-Mail

Primarily for governors and their top staff, the NGA Daily E-mail includes NGA meeting and event listings, press releases, NGA correspondence summaries, and *This Just In*, a daily digest that features up-to-date news from Capitol Hill and the courts and major Administration policy announcements.

#### Front & Center

This NGA Center newsletter is a weekly e-mail publication designed exclusively for governors' policy staff and provided at no cost to subscribing members. *Front & Center* brings the latest information on critical trends, policies, and issues affecting states to an individual's desktop. Each story summarizes valuable information, provides links to additional resources, and lists a staff contact for further inquiries.

### Informational Directories

*Directory of Governors.* This online directory includes biographies of governors, photographs of governors and their spouses, and information about terms of office and political affiliations.

*Governors' Staff Directory.* This online directory provides a complete state-by-state listing of governors' staff, including chiefs of staff; deputy chiefs of staff; assistants to the governor and chief of staff; schedulers; legal counsels; legislative directors; appointments directors; policy directors; Washington, D.C., directors; constituent services correspondence directors; communications staff; residence managers; and spouses' staff.

### Information about Governing, Management, and Office Operations

*Guidance on Governing.* These publications include transition guides, critical policy and management issue summaries, a handbook for new governors, and advice from incumbent governors on becoming and being a governor.

*Management Briefs.* These are summaries and publications on gubernatorial leadership and management of state government operations and governor's office operations.

*The Governor's Office Operation Guide.* This manual presents options for organizing and operating key functions within the governor's office including: appointments, constituent services, correspondence, legal counsel, legislative relations, office information technology, policy/agency liaison, press/communications, and scheduling.

## Information About State Programs and Policies

The NGA Center produces reports and briefs that analyze state programs and highlight best practices and policy options. Issues covered include health care, welfare, workforce development, economic development, technology, homeland security, transportation, telecommunications, and the environment. All reports and briefs are available on NGA's website, [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

Briefs provide timely information on emerging issues, policies, and practices of interest to states. They often feature ongoing research activities, highlight research findings, or summarize statistical information or trends. Reports explore the consideration, development, and implementation of state policy, as well as state implementation of federal policy. They provide technical information in specific functional areas, such as health care, education, economic development, workforce development, and the environment.

*The Fiscal Survey of States* is published semiannually by the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO). This report contains a narrative analysis of trends and significant developments in the fiscal condition of the states, along with tabular summaries of state general fund revenues, expenditures, and balances. It includes individual and aggregate totals based on state responses to a NASBO survey.

State-specific federal program information is provided on a fee-for-service basis by Federal Funds Information for States (FFIS). FFIS tracks and reports on the fiscal impact of federal, executive, and legislative decisions on state budgets and programs. This information is maintained in a database of more than 200 federal grant-in-aid programs and is disseminated to subscribers through a regular series of reports and briefs. Governors may also call on NGA for specific information or assistance. In addition, FFIS produces an annual analysis of the President's budget that is sent to all states within two weeks after the budget is presented to Congress.



## NGA OFFICES

The **Office of the Executive Director** works with the NGA Executive Committee to carry out the association's mission, recommend program priorities, prepare the budget and work plan, and oversee NGA staff and operations.

The **Office of Federal Relations** ensures governors' views are represented in the shaping of federal policy. NGA policy positions, reflecting governors' principles on priority issues, guide the association's endeavors to influence federal laws and regulations affecting states.

The **NGA Center for Best Practices** (NGA Center) develops and implements innovative solutions to public policy challenges. Through the staff of the NGA Center, governors and their policy advisors can quickly learn what works, what doesn't and what lessons can be learned; obtain assistance in designing and implementing new programs or making current programs more effective; receive up-to-date, comprehensive information about what is happening in other state capitals and Washington, D.C.; and learn about emerging national trends and their implications for states.

The **Office of Communications** creates and coordinates the association's communications strategies and media and public information activities to help convey timely, in-depth analysis and background information on NGA positions and issues of interest to states.

The **Office of Administration and Finance** is responsible for a broad range of administrative and fiscal management matters, human resources management, and staff development and training. It oversees cash management and investment portfolios, budgeting, contracts and grants development and monitoring, and general accounting and payroll.

The **Office of Management Consulting & Training** (OMCT) serves as a management consultant to governors and their offices and as NGA's primary liaison to governors' chiefs of staff. OMCT helps governors lead and manage state governments and assists in organizing and operating the governor's office.

The **Office of Corporate Relations** promotes the exchange of information between the private sector and governors and stimulates discussion within the business community on emerging trends and factors affecting business and government. Working through NGA's nonprofit arm, the NGA Center, the program generates a spirit of partnership through meaningful dialogue between public and private sector leaders.





National Governors Association  
444 North Capitol St, Suite 267  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
202.624.5300  
[www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org)