

The North Carolina Department of Labor

Strategic Plan
FY 2022 – 2025



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1. Strategic Plan Executive Summary

North Carolina's workforce contains more than 4 million workers in more than 270,000 private and public sector businesses. The laws and programs the N.C. Department of Labor administers affect every worker – and virtually every person – in the state. The General Statutes provide the Labor Commissioner with broad regulatory and enforcement powers to achieve the objective of promoting the health, safety, and general well-being of working North Carolinians.

Foremost among the department's duties are the administration and enforcement of the occupational safety and health standards. Departmental duties also include enforcement of wage and hour laws, employment discrimination involving retaliation and the provision of free education, training, and consultation to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for North Carolina's employers and employees. The department also ensures the public's safety through the inspections of boilers, elevators, escalators, amusement rides and inflatable devices and provides mine safety and health training to owners, operators and contractors working in the state's mining industry.

To create the biennial strategic plan, the department gathered a team of key senior staff members and division directors. This group reviewed previous and current strategic planning materials, brainstormed new ideas and ultimately formulated the goals, objectives and performance measures as contained in this plan. These goals ensure the agency remains in line with and moves forward on its mission, vision, and values.

The department has identified the following goals for inclusion in the FY 2021-2023 Strategic Plan:

- Goal 1 – Protect the safety and health of North Carolina's workforce.
- Goal 2 – Ensure public safety by conducting timely periodic inspections of elevators, boilers, pressure vessels, amusement devices, etc.
- Goal 3 – Protect employees from labor law violations by investigating allegations of wage and hour matters and retaliatory discrimination in response to protected activity.
- Goal 4 – Improve customer service.

2. Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

To foster a safe, healthy, fair, and productive North Carolina by:

- Providing responsive, effective, and efficient services
- Providing and encouraging quality education and training
- Administering consistently and fairly our regulatory mandates
- Enhancing public confidence in the Department of Labor

Vision Statement

To ensure every North Carolinian comes home each day free from injury and illness.

Organizational Values

Accountability	We are committed to maintaining the public's trust by ensuring that our regulatory responsibilities are met in a timely and professional manner.
Customer Service	We are committed to meeting or exceeding the needs of our citizens by evaluating those needs and by working in a manner which consistently produces quality service and outcomes.
Ethics and Integrity	We are committed to working in a direct and honest matter with colleagues and citizens by following through on commitments and obligations, always adhering to the highest of ethical standards.
Quality	We are committed to providing accurate, high-quality work in a timely manner and proactively seeking ways to improve results.
Safety and Health	We are committed to ensuring that all employees in the state have access to a safe and healthy workplace.

3. Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

Goal 1 – Protect the safety and health of North Carolina’s workforce.
Objective 1.1 – By the end of FY 2023, reduce the rate of workplace fatalities by 2%.
1.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured in number of annual workplace fatalities. Strategy Using previous years’ data, the Occupational Safety and Health Division will target high-hazard industries and geographic regions with a multi-pronged approach including compliance, consultative services, education, and training.
Objective 1.2 – By the end of FY 2023, reduce the rate of workplace injuries and illnesses by 5%.
1.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured in rate of annual workplace injuries and illnesses. Strategy Using previous years’ data, the Occupational Safety and Health Division will target high-hazard industries with a multi-pronged approach including compliance, consultative services, education, and training.
Objective 1.3 – Improve the safety and health of workers living in migrant housing.
1.3.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by number of pre-occupancy inspections conducted, the number of violations identified during pre-occupancy inspections, and the number of housing certificates issued. Strategy The Agricultural Safety and Health Bureau will utilize staff as effectively as possible to address all requests for pre-occupancy inspections. The Bureau will also timely respond to all valid safety and health complaints regarding migrant housing and field sanitation.
Objective 1.4 – Effectively train workers and managers, including OSH Division personnel.
1.4.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by number of persons trained; number of publications distributed; number of continuing education hours pursued by Occupational Safety and Health Division personnel; percentage of trained employees, external and internal, who rate the training as “useful.” Strategy Continue expanding training opportunities via a range of methods (webinar; in-person; mobile training unit; etc.); target training for employees in high-hazard industries; create hazard alerts when new hazards are detected.

Goal 2 – Ensure safety of elevators, boilers, pressure vessels, amusement devices, etc.

Objective 2.1 – Timely inspection of all devices subject to the Boiler Safety Act, Elevator Safety Act, Amusement Device Safety Act, and the Passenger Tramway Act.

2.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by the annual number of required inspections.

Strategy

The Boiler Safety Bureau and the Elevator and Amusement Device Bureau will prioritize and utilize all staff resources to address annual inspections in a timely manner. A variety of methods, such as temporary relocation of staff, will be considered.

Objective 2.2 – Ensure public safety by reducing accidents and incidents

2.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by yearly number of incidents, both patron-related and mechanically-related.

Strategy

Continue to expand educational efforts for both device operators and the riding public. These efforts include safety training and voluntary safety partnerships with amusement ride and fair operators, as well as rider safety materials for patrons.

Goal 3 – Protect employees from labor law violations by investigating allegations of wage and hour issues and retaliatory discrimination

Objective 3.1 – Resolve and collect back wages determined owed, using conciliatory means.

3.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by the dollar amount of wages collected by staff without further legal action.

Strategy

The Wage and Hour Bureau, upon substantiating a complaint, will seek from employers’ voluntary repayment of those wages, using all available methods without resorting to litigation.

Objective 3.2 – Conduct comprehensive investigations of all valid retaliatory employment discrimination and wage and hour complaints.

3.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured annually by the number of cases opened and closed.

Strategy

The Retaliatory Employment Discrimination and Wage and Hour Bureaus will continue to revise procedures to ensure that cases are screened, investigated, and finalized in a professional and timely manner, always working as a team.

Objective 3.3 – Engage in voluntary mediation on all valid retaliatory employment discrimination complaints.

3.3.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured annually by the number of mediations conducted and cases settled.

Strategy

The Retaliatory Employment Discrimination Bureau will continue to grow the mediation program as a method of resolving complaints.

Goal 4 – Improve customer service

Objective 4.1 – Improve customer service for citizens who file complaints with NCDOL.

4.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by percentage of calls answered on the 1-800-NC LABOR phone line.

Strategy

The Bureaus will improve the citizen experience by continuing to seek better call center techniques, streamlining the investigative process, and becoming more efficient in processing complaints.

Objective 4.2 – Expand workplace safety consultation, training and recognition programs for employers and employees

4.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by number of consultative visits conducted; year-over-year growth of recognition programs; and number of educational opportunities offered.

Strategy

As resources allow, the Occupational Safety and Health Division and the Mine and Quarry Bureau will prioritize the provision of workplace safety training for employers and employees. The Education, Training and Technical Assistance Bureau and the Consultative Services Bureau will continue to grow workplace safety recognition programs. The Department’s focus on voluntary compliance, using consultative services and training programs, has been the primary driver of the reduction in workplace injuries and illnesses.

Objective 4.3 – Maximize the department’s talent by pursuing new strategies with respect to advertising for vacant positions as well as developing and retaining existing departmental staff with specialized skillsets

4.3.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone – Measured by the vacancy rate, by both Division/Bureau and department-wide; also measured by the department’s ability to maintain competitive salaries in order to compete with the private market and retain highly skilled staff.

Strategy

As led by the Human Resources Division, the department will continue utilizing strategies to reduce the vacancy and turnover rate including reclassifying positions, adjusting starting pay as resources permit, offering sign-on bonuses, participating in job fairs, and seeking opportunities to advertise positions in trade publications. Leadership will continue to evaluate salary trends in the private sector to ensure internal salaries maintain competitiveness. A fully staffed, fully trained, and appropriately compensated department will ultimately better serve the needs of North Carolinians and more effectively fulfill the agency’s regulatory responsibilities.

4. Highlights and Opportunities

The N.C. Department of Labor's mission is to foster a safe, healthy, fair, and productive North Carolina. Our statutory mandates are wide reaching – from covering most employers and employees under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Wage and Hour Act and the Retaliatory Employment Discrimination Act, among others; from protecting the public safety by way of the Boiler Safety Act, Elevator Safety Act, and the Amusement Device Safety Act, among others. Our work touches the lives of almost every North Carolinian each day and we are proud of our accomplishments.

Through a combination of workplace compliance inspections, consultative services, education and training, our State's injury and illness rate is the lowest in history and is consistently below the national average. Process and procedure changes in the Wage and Hour Bureau have led to a significant reduction in the backlog of wage and hour cases and reduced errors in investigative findings. And our amusement device inspection program is nationally recognized for its thorough and meticulous inspection procedures.

During the next biennium, we will continue to build on these achievements by focusing on voluntary compliance, training employees, and increasing our partnerships with employers. We will seek continuous improvement in services for citizens contacting our Wage and Hour and Retaliatory Employment Discrimination Bureaus. Overall, the agency looks forward to further increasing the quality of customer service to all North Carolinians.