



***NCDOL***

**NC DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**  
**LUKE FARLEY, COMMISSIONER**

***North Carolina Department of Labor***

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**SFY 2026 - 2029**

**September 3, 2025**

***Luke Farley, Commissioner of Labor***

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## 1. Commissioner's Message

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Every North Carolinian deserves to return home safe and healthy at the end of the workday—and to go back the next day to a safe, good-paying job. That's our mission at the N.C. Department of Labor. We will enforce the law to the letter, treat people with professionalism and courtesy, and make this department a true secret weapon for economic development by keeping workers safe and giving job creators clear, even-handed enforcement of the rules.

Our safety strategy balances enforcement, education/consultation, and recognition—holding bad apples accountable, helping employers do the right thing, and rewarding excellence so safety becomes a culture, not just a checklist. We will fill critical inspector vacancies, shorten wait times for consultative safety visits, and expand recognition programs that inspire continuous improvement.

With this plan, we'll keep North Carolina the safest place to work and the best place to do business.

— *Commissioner Luke Farley*

## 2. Mission, Vision, and Values

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### 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 our regulatory mandates consistently and fairly; and enhancing public confidence in the Department of Labor.

### Vision Statement

To make North Carolina a place where workers and businesses can grow & prosper together – truly a place where the weak grow strong and the strong grow great.

### Organizational Values

Accountability, Customer Service, Ethics & Integrity, Quality, and Safety & Health.

### Guiding Principles (2026-2029):

1. Balance enforcement with education and consultation.
2. Recognize and scale safety excellence (positive reinforcement).
3. Common-sense, professionalism, courtesy, efficiency.

### Standards of Performance:

1. Extreme ownership.
2. Relentless execution.
3. Superior results.

### 3. Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

<b>Goal 1 – Protect the safety and health of North Carolina’s workforce.</b>
<b>Objective 1.1 – Reduce fatal and serious injury risk.</b>
<b>1.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone</b> Performance measured by the annual workplace fatalities; BLS Total Recordable Case (TRC) rate. <b>Target</b> Reduce fatalities by 2% and lower injuries/illnesses by 5% over plan period (baseline FY-2025). <b>Strategy</b> Targeting high-hazard industries with compliance, consultation, education, and training.
<b>Objective 1.2 – Build capacity by filling safety and health inspector vacancies.</b>
<b>1.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone</b> Performance measured by the compliance officer vacancy rate (monthly/quarterly). <b>Target</b> Less than 10% vacancy by FY 2027; maintain at/under target thereafter. <b>Strategy</b> Advocate competitive pay/retention (with NCGA), expand recruiting efforts, and training pipelines.
<b>Objective 1.3 – Expand voluntary safety consultations.</b>
<b>1.3.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone</b> Measured by average number of days from request to the consultative visit; the number of consultative visits; and the number of workplaces served. <b>Target</b> Cut consult wait time from ~95 days to less than 45 days by FY 2027; and sustain thereafter. <b>Strategy</b> Add capacity, streamline scheduling, and prioritize high-risk sectors.
<b>Objective 1.4 – Strengthen recognition programs (Safety Awards, SHARP, Carolina Star).</b>
<b>1.4.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone</b> Performance measured by year-over-year program participation; and retention rate of recognized sites. <b>Target</b> 25% participation increase by FY 2029. <b>Strategy</b> Simplify applications process and market programs through enhanced outreach.

## **Goal 2 – Ensure public safety through timely device inspections**

**Objective 2.1** – Complete required annual inspections for boilers, pressure vessels, elevators, trams, and amusement devices.

### **2.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Performance measured by the completion of required annual inspections.

#### **Target**

Achieving bureau-specific annual goals.

#### **Strategy**

Strategic staffing, cross-training, temporary geographic realignment as needed.

**Objective 2.2** – Keep incident rates low for regulated devices.

### **2.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Performance measured by the annual number of mechanical and citizen-related incidents.

#### **Target**

Year-over-year decrease or maintain at low level.

#### **Strategy**

Consistent scheduling and routing plans for operational efficiency.

**Objective 2.3** – Rebuild elevator inspection capacity and public confidence.

### **2.3.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Performance measured by the elevator inspector vacancy rate; and overdue (1+ year) inspections.

#### **Target**

Fill vacancies to clear backlog and meet annual schedule.

#### **Strategy**

Advocate competitive pay/retention and expand recruiting efforts.

### **Goal 3 – Enforce labor standards and resolve complaints efficiently**

#### **Objective 3.1 – Recover unpaid wages through conciliatory means.**

##### **3.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Performance measured by the amount of dollars recovered without litigation.

##### **Target**

Year-over-year increase (baseline FY 2025).

##### **Strategy**

Resolution-focused investigations, employer education, and enhanced marketing of the Wage and Hour program.

#### **Objective 3.2 – Conduct timely investigations.**

##### **3.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Performance measured by the average number of days to resolution; and the number of cases assigned/closed.

##### **Target**

Average resolution is less than 90 days.

##### **Strategy**

Streamline procedures within the Retaliatory Employment Discrimination and Wage & Hour bureaus.

#### **Objective 3.3 – Conduct timely mediations and conciliatory settlements**

##### **3.3.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone –**

Performance measured by the number of mediations and/or conciliations performed.

##### **Target**

Year-over-year increase (baseline FY 2025) and maintain high mediation and conciliatory utilization.

##### **Strategy**

Voluntary mediation and/or conciliatory settlements on valid REDA complaints.



## **Goal 4 – Deliver excellent customer service and modernize operations**

### **Objective 4.1 – Publish and meet customer service standards.**

#### **4.1.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Performance measured by percentage of calls answered on the 1-800-NC LABOR phone line.

#### **Target**

Year-over-year decrease of unanswered or abandoned calls (baseline FY 2025).

#### **Strategy**

Call-center improvements; plain-language guidance; and accessibility upgrades.

### **Objective 4.2 – Expand workplace safety training programs for employers and employees.**

#### **4.2.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Performance measured by the number of individuals trained by NCDOL staff.

#### **Target**

Year-over-year increase (baseline FY 2025).

#### **Strategy**

The Occupational Safety and Health Division's Education, Training & Technical Assistance Bureau and the Mine & Quarry Bureau will prioritize workplace safety training for employers and employees to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses.

### **Objective 4.3 – Develop and retain talent across the Department.**

#### **4.3.1 – Performance Measure or Milestone**

Measured by the Department's vacancy and turnover rates.

#### **Target**

Department-wide vacancy rate of less than 10%.

#### **Strategy**

Reclassifications, starting-pay adjustments (as resources permit), performance-based/retention bonuses, targeted recruitment, and supervisor training.

## 4. Highlights and Opportunities (2026 – 2029)

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- **Efficiency:** Reduce consultation wait-times and expand reach to high-hazard sectors, especially construction and agriculture.
- **Capacity:** Reduce inspector and compliance officer vacancies to strengthen prevention and enforcement.
- **Recognition:** Grow Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP), Carolina Star, and Safety Awards to make safety a competitive advantage.
- **Customer Service:** Publish service standards and dashboards; emphasize common-sense, professionalism, courtesy, and efficiency in every interaction.

## 5. Implementation and Reporting

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- **Baselining:** Confirm FY 2026 data sources and FY 2025 baselines for all measures; finalize annual targets for first quarter.
- **Quarterly Reviews:** Cross-division check-ins on key performance indicators (KPIs); public updates on key service and safety metrics.
- **Annual Report:** Summarize results, proposed rulemakings, and any statutory fixes needed — brought to the General Assembly as appropriate.

## 6. Collaborative Opportunities

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The North Carolina Department of Labor aims to be the state’s “secret weapon” for economic development. By providing clear, common-sense regulation and enforcement, we help create a predictable, safe, and business-friendly environment where employers can thrive and workers are protected. Overly burdensome or inconsistent regulation can drive jobs and investment away, while fair and efficient oversight helps attract and retain good-paying jobs in North Carolina.

NCDOL sees significant opportunities to collaborate with key partners to strengthen the workforce and support economic growth:

- **NC Community College System:** Partnering on apprenticeships, skilled trades, and workforce training programs to prepare North Carolinians for high-demand, high-paying careers.
- **NC Department of Commerce:** Coordinating on economic initiatives, workforce development, and business support to grow opportunities across the state.
- **Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC):** Working together to attract and retain businesses, support job creators, and ensure North Carolina remains a top state for business.

Through these partnerships, NCDOL can amplify its impact — keeping workers safe, growing North Carolina’s skilled workforce, and helping job creators succeed.

## 7. Priority Questions

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NCDOL has not identified priority questions at this time.