



NGA CENTER FOR BEST PRACTICES

PROVIDING GOVERNORS IDEAS THAT WORK



NGA Center for
BEST PRACTICES

“The NGA Center is an indispensable resource and provides a unique, innovative perspective on state issues for me and my colleagues. I’m very grateful to have them as part of my team.”

—Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty

OUR MISSION

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices develops innovative solutions to today’s most pressing public policy challenges and is the only research and development firm that directly serves the nation’s governors. Through the NGA Center, governors and their advisors:

- Learn what works, what doesn’t, and what lessons can be learned from other states grappling with similar challenges;
- Obtain specialized assistance designing and implementing new policy programs or improving the effectiveness of current programs;
- Receive up-to-the-minute information about what is happening in other state capitals and Washington, D.C.

OUR SERVICES

“The NGA Center brings an unparalleled level of passion and commitment to challenges facing not only the states, but the nation as a whole. I know my staff and I can count on them for unbiased, expert advice when we need it.”

—Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell

Identify and Share Best Practices

The NGA Center evaluates public policy innovations and ensures that all governors are aware of these advances by:

- Publishing research reports, policy analyses, issue briefs, and a variety of other materials on timely issues;
- Hosting policy workshops, seminars, academies, and cross-state learning labs across the country;
- Issuing challenge grants to states to build pioneering policy agendas or improve existing policies by implementing identified best practices.

Provide Tailored Technical Assistance

The NGA Center uses comprehensive information on best practices, on-site problem analysis, trusted advice from colleagues across the country, and in-house policy experts to:

- Analyze state challenges with governors’ policy and program staff;
- Produce confidential, quick-response memoranda on specific policy requests;
- Convene meetings of leading policymakers, program officials, and outside scholars;
- Facilitate strategic planning processes, including matching experts and peers across state boundaries to share common experiences and concerns.

Serve as an Information Clearinghouse

The NGA Center catalogs and disseminates vital information on various gubernatorial initiatives through:

- *The NGA Center Web site*: www.nga.org/center houses an array of timely material on state policy initiatives and is the preeminent stop for information on state activities.
- *NGA Today*: NGA’s monthly public newsletter features a summary of recent state innovations, ongoing federal activities, upcoming NGA activities, recent news releases, and a column from NGA’s executive director.
- *Front & Center*: Distributed to state policy staff, this weekly electronic magazine highlights critical trends and emerging issues affecting states.
- *Weekly Executive Report*: Prepared exclusively for governors, the WER keeps governors informed of innovative ideas and legislative accomplishments from their colleagues as well as breaking news from the nation’s capital.

OUR DIVISIONS



EDUCATION DIVISION

provides information on early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, including teacher quality, high school redesign, reading, access to and success in postsecondary education, extra learning opportunities, and school readiness.



HEALTH DIVISION

covers a broad range of health financing, service delivery, and public policy issues, including containing health care costs, insurance coverage trends and innovations, state public health initiatives, obesity prevention, Medicaid and long-term care reforms, disease management, health information technology, health care quality improvement, and health workforce challenges.



HOMELAND SECURITY & TECHNOLOGY DIVISION

supports the Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council and examines homeland security policy and implementation, including public health preparedness, public safety interoperable communications, intelligence and information sharing, critical infrastructure protection, energy assurance, and emergency management. In addition, this unit assists governors in improving public services through the application of information technology.



ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

analyzes state and federal policies affecting energy, environmental protection, air quality, transportation, land use, housing, homeownership, community design, military bases, cleanup and stewardship of nuclear weapons sites, and working lands conservation.



SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE PROGRAMS DIVISION

focuses on policy options and service delivery improvements across a range of current and emerging issues, including economic development, workforce development, employment services, criminal justice, prisoner reentry, and social services for children, youth, and low-income families.

OUR IMPACT

NGA's Graduation Counts Compact

With education priorities continually at the forefront of the nation's consciousness, the NGA Center recognized that the quality of state high school graduation and dropout data prevented states from accurately tracking their students' progress through high school. To resolve this problem, the NGA Center created a uniform method for calculating graduation rates and asked all governors to implement the new formula in their states. Within a year, all 50 governors signed the Graduation Counts Compact, pledging to show policymakers a true representation of their states' graduation successes and failures for the first time. Armed with more accurate data, the NGA Center is working with states to develop the most effective education reform policies in a century, thus ensuring today's high school graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century.

The State Alliance for e-Health

Increasing the electronic exchange of health information will dramatically improve the efficiency and quality of health care services in the United States. But migrating more and more personal data online creates new challenges and concerns. To help states develop solutions to these challenges, the NGA Center created the State Alliance for e-Health, a collaborative body comprised of governors, state legislators, attorneys general, insurance commissioners, and key policy advisors. The State

Alliance routinely consults with nationally recognized experts to tackle barriers to health information technology, including interoperability, state law and regulatory hurdles, and privacy and security concerns. Solutions identified by the State Alliance are guiding the decisions of state leaders as they begin to implement electronic health information exchange systems across the country.

Securing a Clean Energy Future

If left unchecked, energy use in the United States could skyrocket over the next 25 years, with detrimental effects to the environment and our current way of life. To ensure this future does not become reality, NGA launched Securing a Clean Energy Future, an initiative which enlists the efforts of all governors to make our nation a global leader in energy efficiency, clean energy research and technology, and alternative fuels use. The SCEF Initiative has successfully united public and private sector efforts to improve energy efficiency in the states, convened leading energy stakeholders and top-level experts at workshops across the country, and filmed national public service announcements encouraging citizens to conserve energy wherever possible. The SCEF Initiative is currently providing technical assistance to states to improve efficiency and conservation, promote use of non-petroleum-based fuels, take reasonable steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and accelerate development of advanced clean energy technologies in the states.



Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association 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 50 states, three territories, and two commonwealths. The *NGA Center for Best Practices* is the only policy research and development firm that directly serves the nation's governors by developing innovative solutions to today's most pressing public policy challenges.

John Thomasian, *Director*
NGA Center for Best Practices
444 North Capitol Street, Suite 267
Washington, DC 20001
202-624-5300
www.nga.org/center

