2025

NCPGA Strategic Plan

North Carolina Peanut Growers Association

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Overview

NCPGA has developed this strategic plan to articulate its core identity, strengthen its purpose, and identify high-level strategic direction for the next 5 years. This strategic plan will position NCPGA to achieve its long-term goals and advance our mission and vision. By identifying strategic focus areas, this plan aims to create a clear roadmap that also remains responsive to changing circumstances and opportunities.

Vision

To uplift North Carolina's peanut growers as the leading producer of nutritious and flavorful peanuts resulting from our passionate advocacy, innovative research, and effective education.

Mission

NCPGA is dedicated to championing all peanut growers across North Carolina through advocacy, research, and promotion, with the goal of ensuring long term profitability and sustainability of peanut farming.

Strategic Focus Areas

- Increase Awareness and Visibility of NC Peanut Production and the Producer
- Invest in Impactful Research to Support the Peanut Industry
- Advocate for the Needs and Betterment of the Peanut Industry
- Ensure Operational Excellence at NCPGA

NCPGA at a Glance

NCPGA has three primary mission areas. Each mission area fulfills distinct, but interconnected functions that achieve the association's collective goals.

- **Advocacy**. Our goal is to collaborate, communicate, and engage with local, state, and federal partners to advocate for the interests related to peanut production.
- **Education/Promotion**. We aim to increase consumer awareness through valuable facts around the nutritious value and sustainability factors to create a demand for peanut and peanut products grown in North Carolina.
- **Research**. Through a reinvestment of grower check-off dollars, we support research advancements in peanut seed varieties specific to the growing region, production and harvest practices, and best practices for economic sustainability.

STRATEGIC PLAN

AT A GLANCE

VISION & MISSION

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MISSION

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Education/Promotion. We aim to increase consumer awareness through valuable facts around the nutritious value and sustainability factors to create a demand for peanut and peanut products grown in North Carolina.

Advocacy. Our goal is to collaborate, communicate, and engage with local, state, and federal partners to advocate for the interests related to peanut production.

Research. Through a reinvestment of grower check-off dollars, we support research advancements in peanut seed varieties specific to the growing region, production and harvest practices, and best practices for economic sustainability.

OUR CURRENT CONTEXT

- Evolving political landscape
- Shifting environmental landscape
- Fickle consumers
- Financial challenges within agricultural economy

OUR OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhance our marketing to tell the story of the North Carolina peanut and the growers along with the commodity
- Support generational transition
- Strengthen relationships with internal partners (e.g shellers, brokers, and NCDA) and external partners

OUR UNIQUE STRENGTHS

- Strong, collaborative partnerships with research and extension partners and the National Peanut Board
- Accessible and supportive leadership
- Impactful and valuable research
- NCPGA Board is 100% growers

STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Increase Awareness and Visibility of the NC Peanut Production and the Producer

1.1 - Promote peanuts and advocate for the needs and awareness of the NC peanut producer and thus, the peanut industry

1.2 - Utilize researchers, growers for to create engaging marketing efforts

Key Decision

Improve the storytelling methods

Examples of Impact Indicators

- *Number of visits to our website*
- *Number of registrants on grower portal when created*
- *Number of followers on social media websites*

Invest in Impactful Research to Support the Peanut Industry

2.1 - Publicize research more broadly

2.2 - Enhance research through collaboration with NC State to ensure effective research outcomes

2.3 - Advocate for need based research

Key Decision

Decide if NCPGA should move forward with funding an endowed position

Examples of Impact Indicators

- *Increased use of research infographics on websites*
- *One research result shared monthly via the website's the grower portal*
- *Positive and increased feedback through survey gathering research needs and meeting engagement*

Advocate for the Needs and Betterment of the Peanut Industry

3.1 - Promote NCPGA with next generation of growers

3.2 - Advocate for needs through strong relationships with legislators and stakeholders

Key Decision

Continue to advocate for grading techniques, continuously assessing how involved the NCPGA CEO should be post USDA visitation

Examples of Impact Indicators

- *Increase in number of next generation growers at events and trainings*

Ensure Operational Excellence at NCPGA

4.1 - Expand the NCPGA Team

4.2 - Review existing practices for efficiency

4.3 - Strengthen outreach to NCPGA members

Key Decision

Decide which staff to hire and/or contract for to fulfill our priority strategies

Examples of Impact Indicators

- *Number of active members of NCPGA*
- *Number of clicks on our newsletters and other forms of communication*

Strategic Planning Process

To develop this strategic plan, NCPGA underwent a thorough and inclusive process involving growers and external stakeholders. In January 2025 the process began with a strategic planning retreat of the NCPGA board. The outcomes from this strategic planning retreat included:

- Strategic questions to guide the strategic planning process
- Greater insight into the internal and external factors impacting NCPGA
- Identifying key partners and the critical questions to ensure a meaningful partner engagement process

During the spring of 2025, NCPGA conducted 3 focus groups and 8 interviews with various stakeholder groups. These opportunities allowed those with ties to NCPGA to share feedback surrounding current issues and their hopes for the future of the association. During the focus groups and interviews, partners explored topics including:

- The value of NCPGA
- Current industry trends and challenges, including research needs
- Most effective communication methods NCPGA can utilize

The input from the board and stakeholders was synthesized and used as a foundation for the development of the strategic plan. This input served as an opportunity to assess the current state of the NCPGA, set future aspirations, and collaboratively chart a strategic course through the creation of specific focus areas.

Our Current Context and Value

Research and stakeholder engagement efforts helped to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges that NCPGA is facing. NCPGA is seen as the primary advocate for the North Carolina peanut industry and the growers working to produce peanuts. While NCPGA is already viewed as a strong and effective organization, there is still room to bolster relationships with external partners to align with our challenges and co-create solutions, expand marketing efforts, and improve our organizational systems.

Current Context:

The changing political, environmental, and economic context provides some challenges and opportunities such as:

- The **evolving political landscape** impacts our ability to be heard and because of agriculture's underrepresentation in Congress, the issues that we value most fall to the wayside. For example, the delays in passing the Farm Bill, which established updated price supports that benefit growers, causes growers to leave the peanut industry because it is no longer a sustainable means of support. Furthermore, this political landscape may result in a reduction of federal funding for our research partners, potentially prompting them to seek additional financial support from us.

- The **shifting environmental landscape** is impacting peanut production. Urbanization is creating a reduction in land availability, in addition to the impact of disease and weather on our peanut production.
- **Consumers are fickle** and are becoming more price conscious. Peanut allergies continue to impact demand for peanuts and consumers are shifting to nonscientific sources for information. We must think creatively about how we promote our peanuts.
- The **agricultural economy** is facing profitability challenges, making it difficult to see a return on investment in peanut production. These challenges can pressure farmers to cut corners and discourage the next generation from entering the profession.

Opportunities:

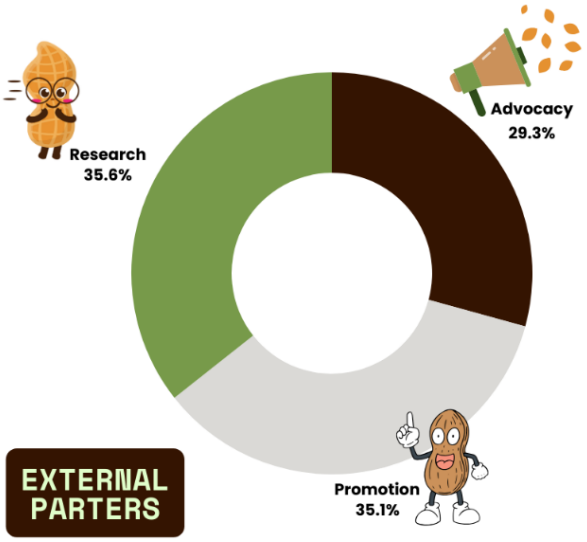
- **Enhance our marketing to tell the story of the North Carolina peanut producer and the value of the peanuts they grow to unaware consumers.** The NCPGA is uniquely placed to engage consumers through modern methods to share the message of the NC Peanut producer as well as the value of peanuts they produce.
- **Support Generational Transition.** With the current generation of peanut growers aging, NCPGA has the opportunity to support education and attract new peanut growers to ensure that the peanut industry can continue to grow and thrive.
- **Strengthen relationships with external and internal partners.** NCPGA has the opportunity to build relationships with partners that share their challenges and co-create solutions. NCPGA will work with internal partners such as shellers, brokers, and NCDA.

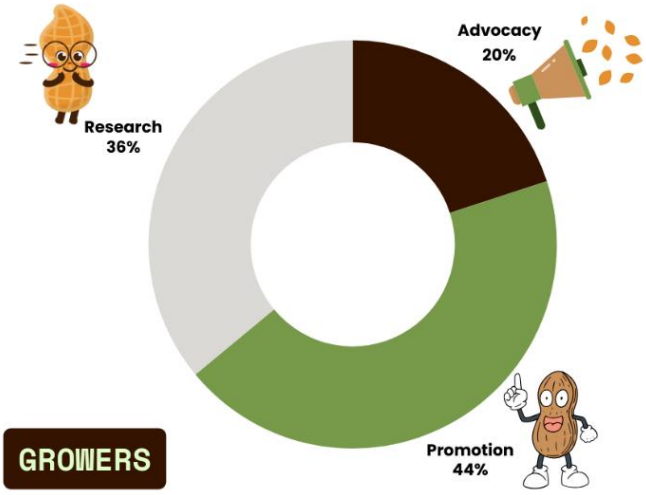
Our Unique Strengths:

- **Strong, Collaborative Partnerships.** Our existing partners, including partners in research, extension and the National Peanut Board, consistently speak highly of our relationship, describing it as mutually beneficial, rooted in trust and shared goals.
- **Accessible and Supportive Leadership.** Our CEO is actively engaged and readily accessible, fostering open communication with both growers and external stakeholders.
- **Impactful and Valuable Research.** We maintain strong, reciprocal relationships with research institutions that are committed to advancing our priorities, ensuring that our work is informed by valuable, actionable insights.
- **NCPGA board is 100% growers.** We are proud that the NCPGA board is made up of only growers who will consistently champion for the North Carolina peanut and the growers.

Prioritizing Our Mission Areas

NCPGA believes that all our mission areas remain crucial to the work we do and our ability to support growers. In the spirit of creating a more strategic path, we also asked external partners and growers what mission areas should be prioritized. Both groups prioritized research and promotion the most. They also emphasized advocacy as a crucial mission area but stated that NCPGA should **prioritize research and education/promotion**.





Making Decisions

Before moving forward, it's important for the board to make a few key decisions that will shape our direction and guide future decision-making. Clarifying our priorities, defining roles and responsibilities, and aligning expectations will ensure we're all moving forward with a shared understanding. These decisions will serve as a foundation for the effective implementation of the strategic planning process.

Develop a decision-making framework.

As NCPGA advances its work in advocacy, research, and education, it is essential to clarify which decisions fall within the CEO's discretion and which require board and or Executive Committee consultation. The board should engage in a discussion to establish a framework that outlines which decisions the CEO can make independently, and which decisions require board input or approval.

What Should We Stop?
While a strategic plan helps us identify what we want to start or continue doing to reach our goals, it's also important to take a step back and consider what might no longer be serving us. Exploring what we might pause or stop doing is just as important as deciding what to prioritize moving forward. These conversations help ensure we stay focused, effective, and aligned with our mission.

In the strategic focus areas outlined below, you'll find **key decisions recommended for the board to help drive progress** in each area. As NCPGA implements this strategic plan, it's important to view it as a living document—one that should evolve alongside the association's changing needs. Over the next five years, regularly reassessing NCPGA's priorities and making timely decisions will be essential to ensuring continued progress and success for our growers.

Impact Indicators
To ensure that NCPGA is making progress with the various focus areas, there are potential impact indicators that have been listed for each focus area. Please note that these impact indicators have been developed to align with the current capacity of NCPGA. The impact indicators below are count based versus outcome based to ensure that the NCPGA staff can accurately measure progress without creating additional burdens.

Strategic Focus Areas

In pursuit of our mission and to best serve our researchers, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders, NCPGA will prioritize the following strategic focus areas for the next 5 years.

- Increase Awareness and Visibility of NC Peanut Production and the Producer
- Invest in Impactful Research to Support the Peanut Industry
- Advocate for the Needs and Betterment of the NC Peanut Industry
- Ensure Operational Excellence at NCPGA

Increase Awareness and Visibility of the NC Peanut Production and the Producer

We are committed to relentlessly promoting North Carolina grown peanuts through a variety of methods, establishing NCPGA as the central voice for the North Carolina peanut. Through our engaging methods and efforts, we will counter the negative perceptions associated with allergies to build a greater understanding of the profession and the nutritious value peanuts

Potential Impact Indicators

- Number of visits to our website
- Number of registrants on grower portal when created
- Number of followers on social media websites
- Number of likes and comments on social media
- Number of partnerships with external partners (schools, nutritionists, etc.)

- Number of people that click the QR code on shared educational materials from NCPGA
- *Key Decision completed*
    - Increased use of grower stories shared on multiple platforms
    - Marketing evaluation and assessment completed
    - Targeted marketing efforts

Objective 1.1 - Promote peanuts and advocate for the needs and awareness of the NC peanut producer and thus, the peanut industry

We aim to enhance our ability to share compelling stories that will showcase our accomplishments and the vital contributions of all partners in the peanut industry. It is our priority to elevate the visibility of our work through thoughtful storytelling and strategic outreach methods.

Top Action Items – to be completed 1-2 years

- Enhance our website to be more engaging to partners
    - Add more ethnic based recipes
    - Create confidential board portal for growers on the board to gain updates regarding research outcomes, meetings, and connect with each other
    - Work on the backend (SEO – Search Engine Optimization) to show up on Google search about peanuts
- Develop a marketing plan that evaluates the effectiveness of different types of marketing efforts in alignment with the focus areas of this plan such as:
    - Attendance national or international trade shows or other larger scale marketing events
    - Marketing activations at various events such as culinary shows, athletics, state fairs, festivals, etc. through partnerships or sponsorships

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Shift our marketing efforts based on the marketing plan
- *Key Decision for the board:* Improve storytelling methods
    - Share grower stories and their efforts through social media, radio, and news stories
    - Share grower efforts around sustainability with legislators/policy makers
- Explore various uses of peanuts for recipes in various cultures or regions
- Develop a marketing plan by identifying preferred marketing efforts and focus on the highest impact efforts

Objective 1.2 – Utilize researchers, growers, and stakeholders to create engaging marketing efforts

We will adopt engaging methods to educate our consumers that will combat the negative connotation that allergies have around our peanuts.

Top Action Item – to be completed in the next 1-2 years

- Explore partnerships with school nutrition programs, dieticians, pediatricians, feeding programs (WIC), food banks etc. to teach the nutritious value of peanuts to their students, patients, customers, etc.

Potential Activities - to be completed over the next 5 years

- Continue to use the National Peanut Board as a resource
    - Partner with national campaigns to tailor campaigns for local/statewide use
    - Use best practices
    - for impactful marketing efforts to extend the NC reach
- Launch social media campaign educating consumers about the 'Virginia-type' peanut being grown in North Carolina

Invest in Impactful Research to Support the Peanut Industry

We currently have a strong, mutually beneficial relationship with NC State University that equips us with research outcomes to improve our ability to grow our peanuts. We want to maintain this relationship while always looking for opportunities to improve and share our outcomes.

Potential Impact Indicators

- Increased use of research infographics on websites
- One research result shared monthly via the website's the grower portal
- *Key Decision completed* – process for Endowed position begins, halted, or postponed
- Positive and increased feedback through survey gathering research needs and meeting engagement
- Increased number of meetings/gatherings with other university research, agriculture, food system departments

Objective 2.1 – Publicize research more broadly

We benefit greatly from the research and its outcomes and recognize that the outcomes can continue to be shared across the industry. Other commodity groups can benefit from our findings to improve their production, establishing NCPGA as a credible source and reemphasizing our value to our partners.

Top Action Item – to be completed in the next 1 – 2 years

- Work with NC State, Extension to promote and disseminate research outcomes more broadly
- Create infographics to share research outcomes on the updated website and with growers, breeders, and other commodity groups through annual meetings, board meetings, etc.

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Provide platform for researchers to share new findings
- Share research outcomes with legislation to demonstrate the value
- Consider partnerships with other universities to broaden the reach of our research

Objective 2.2 – Enhance research through collaboration with NC State to ensure effective research outcomes

We recognize the value that the researchers at NC State bring to the growers at NCPGA. We strongly value this relationship and want to ensure we maintain it, while strengthening it to ensure longevity and sustainability.

Top Action Items – to be completed in the next 1 -2 years

- Explore the endowment of a position at NC State
    - *Key Decision for the board:* Decide if NCPGA should move forward with funding an endowed position

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Explore new funding opportunities
    - Private sector to fill the federal funding gap
    - Sponsor a school's research in Food Science through a sponsorship of their Food Science department
- Create flowchart to improve the understanding of the funding timeline for research partners
- Continue to provide equipment and explore updating equipment to support research work
- Continue to explore innovative, engaging ways for researchers to share their findings
    - Create engaging videos to educate people on the value of peanuts (for example, Beer with a Breeder)

Objective 2.3 – Advocate for need based research

We have already experienced the benefits of the research, but the majority of the research is based on what researchers find important. Researchers are interested in basing their research on what growers are facing and need.

Top Action Item – to be completed in the next 1 – 2 years

- Gather the grower's research needs through a survey or a meeting to inform the researcher's study topics
- Continue research reporting and proposal forum engagement style in future research meetings

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Provide opportunities for growers to share their research needs with researchers
- Support research and strategies that address the weather changes impacting our peanut growth
- Support research, including but not limited to, disease resistance and growing techniques that will aid in improved peanut yields

Advocate for the Needs and Betterment of the Peanut Industry

Remaining true to the core missions of NCPGA, we will continue to advocate for growers and the North Carolina peanut on all platforms by addressing various issues in the peanut industry. We will continue to uplift critical issues to state and federal governments for them to address and support our growers. Furthermore, we will invest in the next generation of peanut growers to ensure the long-term vitality of the peanut industry in North Carolina. Investing in our future growers is the investment in the future of the agricultural community and economy here in North Carolina.

Potential Impact Indicators

- Increase in number of next generation growers at events and trainings
- *Key Decision completed*
    - Identify a baseline for knowledge and interest level of next generation board members
    - Established role in NCPGA's advocacy efforts for the grading technique with regular check ins

Objective 3.1 – Promote NCPGA with next generation of growers

We are dedicated to developing partnerships that will attract the next generation of growers by actively promoting NCPGA as a valuable and future-focused resource. Through partnerships, with Extension, FFA, and involvement in endeavors such as AgLeads, dedicated to outreach and education, we will begin to engage the next generation of growers to fill the gap of the dedicated, impactful growers who may be aging out of the industry.

Top Action Items – to be completed in the next 1 – 2 years

- Connect the next generation of growers with opportunities to gain skills that will position them for success as a grower (for example, technical skills for farming, grading techniques, etc.)
- Invite the next generation of growers to trainings focused on finances, grading techniques, and the importance of the importance of the Plant Variety Protection Act and Title V of the Federal Seed Act.

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Partner with farm shows, trade schools, possibly 4-H and FFA, to connect with students and partner with growers
- Continue internship opportunities at NCPGA
- Explore sponsorship or curriculum development opportunities with Food and Consumer Science departments at colleges and high schools

Objective 3.2 – Advocate for needs through strong relationships with legislators and stakeholders

NCPGA is committed to voicing the needs and challenges of peanut growers to influence policies that will support the sustainability and success of the peanut industry. Our efforts will also address the stigma surrounding peanut allergies by sharing accurate information and educating key partners. We will work to demonstrate that by addressing the needs of the peanut industry, it will strengthen the broader agricultural community and economy.

Top Action Item – to be completed in the next 1 – 2 years

- Participate in trade missions to increase the visibility of the peanut growers within North Carolina's agricultural industry
- Maintain and strengthen relationships with partners in state and federal governments in Congress and institutions such as USDA, etc.
- Uplift issues such as the Farm Bill, grading system, crop insurance, and challenges of our insurance
    - ***Key Decision for the board***: Continue to advocate for grading techniques, continuously assessing how involved the NCPGA CEO should be post USDA visitation

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Partner with researchers to use research outcomes to inform the needs that should be highlighted and shared with legislators
- Build strong relationships with congress members to serve as ambassadors of the agriculture and the peanut industry
- Partner with other commodities to demonstrate shared needs and value to legislation
- Advocate for pricing support and insurance to make peanut production more profitable and stable

- Inform governmental partners about key educational findings on early exposure (e.g., the LEAP study), so they are better equipped to support or develop legislation that communicates this information to a broader range of stakeholders
- Partner with NC Chamber create a forum with external partners to discuss the needs and challenges of the peanut industry
- Explore the possibility of inviting external partners to board meetings primarily in an informational or advisory capacity to foster relationships

Ensure Operational Excellence at NCPGA

To advance the strategic focus areas articulated in the strategic plan, it is critical that the NCPGA staff and board is equipped to support the work required to accomplish each focus area. Operational excellence stands as the foundation to ensure that the strategic focus areas move beyond conceptual ideas and into actionable items.

Potential Impact Indicators

- *Key Decision completed* – Determine if any additional committees should be formed (Finance/Promotion/Marketing), meeting frequency, etc.
    - Determine and clarify job descriptions for the new staff that will support the NCPGA CEO
    - Prioritize what responsibilities will be completed by staff or contracted out through an agency
- Increased engagement of board member involvement in national level peanut related associations at board meetings
- Number of clicks on our newsletters and other forms of communication
- Consistent pipeline of membership for the NCPGA board

Objective 4.1 – Expand the NCPGA Team

We are committed to building a team structure that will support NCPGA's mission and operations. We will intentionally hire roles that will support the NCPGA Team, ensuring the work is not concentrated on one person but distributed through a system of shared responsibility.

Top Action Items – to be completed in the next 1 – 2 years

- Hire or contract for additional staff based on the Association's needs. These new functions could include:
    - An Engagement and Outreach Manager to attend county meetings and serve as liaison between growers and the NCPGA
    - Marketing Manager to manage the relationship with the marketing agency and lead marketing efforts
    - Education and Advocacy Manager to develop education initiatives and engage with key partners who can promote this information
    - *Key Decision for the board*: Decide which staff to hire and/or contract for to fulfill our priority strategies

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Explore a partnership with a third-party marketing agency to support visibility work
- Continue to utilize interns to support NCPGA
- Encourage board members to join national boards to ensure national reach

Objective 4.2 – Review existing practices for efficiency

We will assess our existing practices for any areas that can be adjusted to create an organization that runs more smoothly. The changes we implement will be intentional and designed to enhance NCPGA's effectiveness to maintain strong support for our partners while ensuring efficient use of our time and resources.

Top Action Item – to be completed in the next 1 – 2 years

- Continue to share external communication updates that are relevant to the various needs of our stakeholders
- Review travel plans and frequency of meetings to:
    - Provide opportunities for researchers to attend meetings
    - Review the need of a yield contest
    - Review the possibility of splitting the field day, annual meeting, and board meeting into different days
    - *Key Decision for the board:* Reassess involvement county meetings that may be burdensome to our staff and external partners

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Review our financial investment strategy
- Reassess our reporting format/minutes
- Develop pipeline for growers to join the board as members

Objective 4.3 – Strengthen Outreach to NCPGA members

We will focus on showcasing our strengths and value to the growers and existing members of the NCPGA. By enhancing our outreach and introducing new avenues for engagement, we aim to foster more opportunities for learning and connection among our board members.

Top Action Items – to be completed in the next 1 – 2 years

- Highlight website portal for members to engage

Potential Activities – to be completed over the next 5 years

- Enhance communication through newsletters, emails, and other methods
- Ensure that research outcomes are shared with members

Next Steps

To advance the strategic focus area, it is critical that the NCPGA grows internally to support these efforts. This is why implementation requires the core focus area - Improve Internal Operations. The impact indicators will also serve as a tool to track the progress of strategic focus areas through the implementation process.

Special Thanks

NCPGA would like to extend our appreciation to all the participants who were involved in the stakeholder engagement process. We appreciate the time you shared, whether it was through interviews or focus groups. In addition to the 2024/2025 NCPGA Board of Directors who initiated and were involved in this process, we would like to thank the following stakeholders for their input:

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