



NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

The National Council on Disability (NCD)'s Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FYs) 2012-2017 describes NCD's plan for meeting its strategic goal and objectives. It also describes some of the opportunities and challenges NCD faces and discusses future trends that may affect the achievement of the agency goal.

*Strategic Plan
FY2012 - 2017
Revised
November 2012*



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National Council on Disability

STRATEGIC PLAN

FY2012 – 2017

(revised November 2012)



A letter from the Chairman

The National Council on Disability has a proud history. First established as a small advisory Council within the Department of Education in 1978, NCD was transformed into an independent agency in 1984 and charged with the daunting task of reviewing all federal disability programs and policies. In 1986, NCD recommended enactment of an Americans with Disabilities Act, and then drafted the first version of the bill introduced in the House and Senate in 1988. Since that time, NCD has continued to play a leading role in analyzing the needs of people with disabilities, crafting policy solutions, and advising the President and Congress.

Notwithstanding our past leadership, NCD realizes that given present state and federal realities, NCD can best serve our stakeholders by helping determine practical paths to implement the recommendations the Council has proffered over the years, while also keeping a vigilant watch on policy issues likely to arise down the road. We also recognize this must happen in conjunction with an abiding commitment to meaningful opportunities to hear from our stakeholders to inform our understanding of “on the ground” realities.

We had a great opportunity to interact directly with many of the members of our diverse community at NCD’s National Summit on Disability Policy 2010. At the Summit, we began a national conversation with over 475 participants from 46 different states. The attendees represented a broad spectrum of the disability community. Concurrent with our planning for the Summit, we also began a strategic planning process to contemplate our future as a small, independent federal agency. The culmination of those efforts is reflected in this Strategic Plan for FY2012 – 2017. I believe this plan provides a pathway to a meaningful future for the agency.

The National Council on Disability advises the President, Congress, and other federal entities on policies, programs and practices that help create equal opportunities for people with disabilities to live, learn, and earn success as they choose. Implementation of our strategic plan will fully support that responsibility. The Council Members and staff collectively have laid the challenge before us. We are enthusiastic about the opportunities before us to “deliver the goods!”

*Jonathan Young, Chairman
August 2011*

Introduction

The National Council on Disability (NCD) is an independent federal agency that leads national disability policy and advances full inclusion, independence, and equal opportunity for people with disabilities. It is a team of fifteen Presidential appointees, and a full-time professional staff hired by the Executive Director, who is appointed by the Chairman.

NCD's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FYs) 2012-2017 describes NCD's plan for meeting its strategic goal and its supporting objectives. It also describes some of the opportunities and challenges NCD faces and discusses future trends that may affect the achievement of the agency goal.

Mission Statement

The mission of the National Council on Disability (NCD) is to be a trusted advisor to the President; Congress; federal entities; state, tribal, and local governments and communities; and private sector entities. NCD fulfills its advisory role by promoting disability policies, programs, procedures, and practices that enhance equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability and empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society.

In Fiscal Years (FY) 2012 through 2017, NCD will execute its mission through:

- **ENGAGEMENT** – Engage stakeholders in order to assess concerns and priorities and build networks of agency partners.
- **POLICY DEVELOPMENT & COLLABORATION** – Address stakeholder concerns and priorities by advancing specific, practical policy solutions and encouraging collaboration.

This strategic plan describes NCD's broad array of stakeholders, presents NCD's values and commitment in executing its plan, the process used to develop the plan, and its strategies to overcome identified challenges to mission success.

NCD's Stakeholders

- **All Americans with disabilities** – a population diversified by geography, age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, education, political party, type of disability, and other affiliations and identities;
- **Policymakers and decision makers** – including the President and all federal agencies, Congress, state, tribal, and local governments and communities – who create and implement federal policies and programs that affect people with disabilities;
- **Groups and organizations** concerned with people with disabilities;
- **Families and support systems** of people with disabilities, including parents and guardians; and
- **Society at large** – employers, educators, manufacturers, service providers, engineers, designers, entertainers, and other individuals and organizations who influence inclusion and participation of Americans with disabilities

Values & Commitment

INTEGRITY—NCD will uphold a standard of transparency, honesty, accountability, reliability, and ethical conduct.

EXCELLENCE— NCD will provide superior products and support to its stakeholders that reflect NCD's commitment to the highest standards of quality.

RELEVANCE— NCD will ensure its work is useful and timely in addressing priority issues of concern to the disability community.

DIVERSITY— NCD will honor people with disabilities by embracing the broad spectrum of human difference and by learning about, including, and respecting the various perspectives and backgrounds reflected in the disability community.

INNOVATION— NCD will seek new ways to accomplish its work by generating creative and workable solutions.

COLLABORATION— NCD will coordinate effective practices internally and externally with traditional and non-traditional partners.

RESPECT— NCD will foster a fair, open, and honest work environment.

ENTHUSIASM— NCD will embrace its mission with excitement, energy, and optimism.

ACCOUNTABILITY— NCD will remain responsible stewards of the federal funds entrusted to the agency by engaging in sound financial management practices and fiscal responsibility.

Development of the Strategic Plan

NCD embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process beginning in the summer of 2010, after eight of the fifteen Member Presidentially appointed Council joined as new additions beginning in the spring of 2010. NCD coordinated with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to select outside consultants, Serco, Inc., to assist in the strategic planning process. During the summer of 2010 all staff and nearly all members were interviewed about agency functions, operations, and resources to evaluate NCD's success in meeting its mission. These efforts culminated in a multi-day, facilitated strategic planning workshop with the participation of the Council Chair, six Council Members, the interim Executive Director, and two former NCD employees who provided institutional memory and context. An initial draft of this plan was developed based on the outcome of the workshop.

However, between fall 2010 and spring 2011, NCD experienced significant staff changes, including the departures of two senior staff, the addition of four new staff and an Executive Director, and a new organizational structure. In addition, NCD welcomed three newly confirmed Council Members. In early summer 2011, the Chairman also secured top level financial consulting services. These significant organizational changes resulted in significant revisions to the draft strategic plan to reflect the adjustments in human resources and structure.

Consultation and Outreach

NCD prepared its strategic plan with the input of a broad spectrum of stakeholders who attended NCD national and regional events, using electronic and other communications. After completing a draft strategic plan, NCD solicited stakeholder feedback once more, utilizing the NCD website and the agency's Facebook and Twitter accounts to inform NCD stakeholders of the additional opportunity to comment. NCD did not receive additional feedback as a result of our follow-up efforts.

Strategic Framework

NCD's strategic framework consists of a mission statement supported by a single, overarching strategic goal in keeping with NCD's statutory mandate. The two supporting objectives and their corresponding strategies indicate how NCD will achieve its goal and provide an approach for measuring NCD's progress and success. The framework that follows provides an overview of the strategic goal, the supporting objectives, and their strategic activities that will direct NCD's performance. A detailed view of each objective and its corresponding strategies, key outcomes, means and key activities, and performance measures follows the overview.

NCD's Strategic Framework OVERVIEW

STRATEGIC GOAL: Advance the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act by promoting policies, programs, practices, and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity and provide for economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society for individuals with disabilities.

OBJECTIVE 1: Engagement

Engage stakeholders in order to assess concerns and priorities and build a network of NCD partners.

Strategies:

- Create and maintain regular opportunities to receive direct input from community stakeholders.
- Cultivate trusted relationships with Congress.
- Establish and cultivate trusted relationships with state, local, and tribal governments and other entities.
- Brand NCD as a principal national voice of the disability community.

OBJECTIVE 2: Policy Development & Collaboration

Address stakeholder concerns and priorities by advancing specific, practical policy solutions and encouraging collaboration.

Strategies:

- Cultivate trusted relationships with other federal agencies and look for opportunities to coordinate and work collaboratively.
- Work closely with and enlist the support of stakeholders to develop and advance policy responses to priority issues.
- Produce materials that have practical utility for federal, state, tribal, and local stakeholders regarding successful implementation of federal policies.
- Update NCD's annual progress report to be more responsive to Congress and the Administration.

Objective 1: Engagement

Engage stakeholders in order to assess concerns and priorities and build a network of NCD partners.

Overview

NCD cannot fulfill its mission without regular, meaningful engagement with its stakeholders. NCD's authorizing statute mandates this valued interaction. More importantly, the value of policy evaluation and recommendations should be measured by whether they are consistent with the needs, challenges, and aspirations of NCD's stakeholders. By facilitating meaningful communication with stakeholders, Objective 1 (Engagement) supports the agency's strategic goal through identification of systems of success as well as shortfalls, toward which NCD can direct its attention in the formulation of policy solutions.

Over the last several years, NCD has closely consulted stakeholders as key advisors in shaping NCD's policy endeavors. NCD gathers information through a variety of means: public testimony, national and regional forums, electronic mail or letters from the public, public consultations via the Internet, research reports, conferences and meetings of stakeholder groups, federal workgroups, and meetings with members of Congress or their staff. In addition, NCD has also pursued creation of public-private working groups and/or federal advisory committees on priority issues to ensure NCD is both in continual contact with stakeholders and to act nimbly and efficiently when responding to identified need for action.

Strategy 1A – Inform NCD stakeholders of the policy projects it has underway and create and maintain regular opportunities to receive direct input from community stakeholders.

Coordinated collaboratively by the General Counsel and Policy Directorate and Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate, at the start of every calendar year, NCD will develop a summary of the previous year’s policy projects and events, and an overview of the upcoming year’s policy projects, scheduled Council meetings, and planned stakeholder input activities, and disseminate the summary broadly.

Key Outcomes 1A

Successfully engaging in this strategy will better inform NCD stakeholders of the policy priorities of the Council and enable NCD to receive valuable information regarding individuals’ and community’s challenges, priorities, and emergent needs, which in turn informs NCD’s policy development and collaboration. Testimony received from stakeholders will enable identification of recurring, pressing, and/or particularly troubling barriers to economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into society for people with disabilities. NCD also enhances its credibility as an informed, in-touch voice of the disability community by offering regular opportunities to hear from stakeholders from across the country.

Means & Key Activities 1A

- Develop an annual preview of the policy work and engagement opportunities NCD has planned for the year and disseminate broadly across the NCD listserv, website, and social media websites.
- Utilize topically-focused event formats including regional forums, field hearings, town halls, and other similar events in locations representing differing geographic cross-sections.
- Designate a period of time for public comment in the agenda of every Council meeting that is subject to the Sunshine Act, and publicize the opportunities.
- Leverage NCD’s website, listserv and social media to offer formal and informal prompts for community opinion and experience regarding current policy developments.

Strategy 1B – Cultivate trusted relationships with Congress.

Coordinated collaboratively by the General Counsel and Policy Directorate and Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate, NCD will develop and implement a program for meaningful NCD engagement with Congressional Members and their staff and Committee leadership and their staff.

Key Outcomes 1B

Successfully engaging in this strategy will enable NCD to be a trusted, independent, nonpartisan authority regarding the challenges, priorities, and emergent needs of the disability community; and a leader in the development of sound disability policy.

Means & Key Activities 1B

- Prioritize Legislative Affairs staff time toward a greater presence on Capitol Hill.
- Partner with appropriate Congressional Membership Organizations (caucuses) to host policy briefings.
- Invite Congressional staff to join NCD meetings and/or Council Committee calls to share updates on legislative work and indicate opportunities for NCD assistance.

Strategy 1C – Establish and cultivate trusted relationships with state, local, and tribal governments and other entities.

Coordinated collaboratively by the Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate and the General Counsel and Policy Directorate, NCD will develop and implement a program for meaningful NCD engagement with leaders of state, local, and tribal governments and other entities.

Key Outcomes 1C

Successfully engaging in this strategy will enable NCD to broaden its collaboration and coordination initiatives; access existing state, local and tribal data; and thoroughly evaluate the feasibility and prudence of proposed federal policy solutions.

Means & Key Activities 1C

- Establish relationships with the National Governor’s Association (NGA), the National Council on State Legislatures (NCSL), and the Council of State Governments (CSG), and other non-traditional partners.
- Continue to allocate staff resources to support NCD’s Tribal Consultation Workgroup to deepen existing relationships and identify additional tribal thought leaders for NCD outreach.
- Leverage the geographic representation of NCD Council Members to cultivate agency relationships with local, state, and tribal relationships, particularly with underserved or previously un-served populations.

Strategy 1D – Brand NCD as a principal national voice of the disability community.

Coordinated by the Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate, NCD will develop and implement a communications plan to develop messages and modes of delivery designed to enhance the understanding of NCD’s mission, activities, and accomplishments with its stakeholders.

Key Outcomes 1D

Successfully engaging in this strategy will enable NCD to achieve name recognition appropriate to its proud history; increase NCD’s reach; and improve NCD’s ability to influence and frame discussion and debate around critical policy issues.

Means & Key Activities 1D

- Develop an annual NCD communications / public affairs plan.
- Anticipate, plan, draft, and disseminate press releases as warranted by policy development and NCD activities.
- Engage NCD Council and staff in a message platform workshop.
- Develop relationships with traditional print and broadcast media as well as online media leaders by both responding to media inquiries as well as proactively pursuing relationships by pitching stories, offering experts, and seeking to place opinion-editorial pieces.
- Determine key areas of interest and expertise of all Council Members for purposes of media referrals.
- Increase use of social media – NCD listserv, website, Facebook, Twitter, and other emerging social media contexts – to disseminate important information faster and in wider-reaching ways.

Objective 1 (Engagement) Performance Measures

- By January 2012, develop and publicize an initial outreach schedule for the remainder of FY 12. Develop and publicize subsequent annual outreach plans by September 15 of each year, outlining the agency's anticipated stakeholder engagement opportunities for the following fiscal year.
- By January 2012, and reviewed and updated annually in March of subsequent FY, develop an initial communications / public affairs plan that supports "branding" NCD as a national voice of the disability community.
- Beginning in FY13, commence organization of opportunities for Council Members to meet with their Members of Congress and/or their key staff in their legislative and/or district offices, with all Members of the Executive Committee of NCD having met with their Members of Congress or key staff, in person or via conference call, by the end of FY13. Repeat annually as necessitated by changes in Members of Congress, their staff, or the Council Membership.

Objective 2: Policy Development & Collaboration

Address stakeholder concerns and priorities by advancing specific, practical policy solutions and encouraging collaboration.

Overview

Using the information NCD has gained from its engagement activities with its stakeholders, as outlined in Objective 1 (Engagement) above, NCD must identify and prioritize opportunities to add value and make a real difference in peoples' lives. NCD does not have rulemaking or enforcement authority. Rather, NCD serves as an independent advisor on disability matters to the President and Congress. This role is essential to assure the Federal Government is well-informed and qualified to perform its duties and effectively serve the public, including individuals with disabilities. In addition to meeting with stakeholders, NCD advocates for equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities of all ages and backgrounds by continually reviewing disability programs and policies and providing analysis and recommendations on disability policy to the President, Congress, and other federal agencies.

NCD's analysis and recommendations have led to enactment of important laws and other improvements to the programs and services provided by the many federal agencies that serve the disability community. Yet people with disabilities continue to face personal, social, and economic disadvantages and barriers that prevent access to the same opportunities as Americans without disabilities. Therefore, NCD will increase emphasis on providing recommendations and looking for opportunities for their implementation.

NCD desires to create opportunities to put to practical use its vast amount of acquired knowledge through years of intensive research activities. This research is reflected in NCD's reports, papers, and briefs which each contain analysis and recommendations for actions at all levels of government. These reports and papers are available on NCD's agency website at www.ncd.gov.

Objective 2 (Policy Development & Collaboration) supports the activities of identifying and formulating solutions to emerging and existing challenges; providing tools to facilitate effective implementation of policy solutions; and engaging and influencing current debates, all of which directly support the strategic goal. Further, Objective 2 supports the strategic goal by leveraging NCD's resources through coordination and collaboration to amplify its impact relative to the agency's size.

Strategy 2A – Cultivate trusted relationships with other federal agencies and look for opportunities to coordinate and work collaboratively.

Coordinated collaboratively by the General Counsel and Policy Directorate and Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate, NCD will develop and implement a program for meaningful NCD engagement with other federal agencies.

Key Outcomes 2A

Successfully engaging in this strategy will enable NCD, as authorized by statute, to accurately evaluate federal disability programs and initiatives of fellow agencies with a greater likelihood of constructive and coordinated response to NCD's findings and recommendations. It will also help maintain and enhance NCD's reputation as a trusted federal partner.

Means and Key Activities 2A

- Participate in existing interagency working groups responsible for developing coordinated policy solutions, and establish new ones as policy implementation may require.
- Prepare and offer comments and recommendations on regulatory proposals.
- Divide the portfolio of key federal partners amongst NCD Legislative and Policy staff for purposes of maintaining regular communications.
- Obtain useful disability policy related data from other federal agencies through formal and informal partnering arrangements.

Strategy 2B – Work closely with and enlist the support of stakeholders to develop and advance policy responses to priority issues.

Coordinated collaboratively by the General Counsel and Policy Directorate and Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate, NCD will develop and implement a program to partner with a cross-section of stakeholders to consider priority policy issues and strategic activities to address them, and to support successful implementation of federal legislation that benefits people with disabilities.

Key Outcomes 2B

Successfully engaging in this strategy will enable NCD to foster community ownership of solutions and ensure that NCD's policy analysis and recommendations are consistent with "on-the-ground" realities for state, tribal, and local implementation of federal policies.

Means and Key Activities 2B

- In collaboration with NCD stakeholders, collect input and/or analysis on current issues and legislation to assist Congressional Members and their staff in the development and amendment of legislation and reauthorizations.
- Continue to utilize existing and establish, as necessary, new public-private working groups and/or federal advisory committees.

Strategy 2C –Produce materials that have practical utility for federal, state, tribal, and local stakeholders regarding successful implementation of federal policies.

Coordinated collaboratively by the General Counsel and Policy Directorate and Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate, NCD will produce and disseminate shorter, timely policy briefs, white papers, “policy toolkits,” and other materials.

Key Outcomes 2C

Successfully engaging in this strategy will enable NCD to nimbly respond to the concerns of the disability community and the immediate needs of NCD’s policymaker stakeholders, particularly in light of today’s fast-paced communications. It will also enable NCD to maximize its effectiveness as a resource to the disability community.

Means and Key Activities 2C

- Consult with various groups of stakeholders to determine the most useful format of policy report / paper for the work they do.
- Review existing NCD reports for actionable policy recommendations.
- Continue the migration of content from NCD’s previous website to its new website to ensure NCD’s substantial library of research reports and papers remains available to a broad range of stakeholders.
- Plan for strategic distribution / dissemination of new reports and papers.
- Create a model for developing “policy toolkits” to assist state, local, and tribal stakeholders with the implementation of federal policies.

Strategy 2D – Update NCD’s annual progress report to be more responsive to Congress and the Administration.

Coordinated collaboratively by the General Counsel and Policy Directorate and Legislative Affairs and Outreach Directorate, NCD will develop a new model for its statutorily mandated annual progress report that will contain a significant discussion of the overall state of the disability community and the policies affecting it based upon information NCD acquires through use of strategies envisioned throughout this plan.

Key Outcomes 2D

Successfully engaging in this strategy will enable NCD to provide an accurate and valuable annual snapshot of how people with disabilities are faring in America that will help inform and influence Congressional and Administration agendas and budget proposals.

Means and Key Activities 2D

- Utilize and reference information from stakeholders received throughout each year at NCD events and through multiple channels of correspondence and communication with the agency within the progress report.
- Allocate staff resources toward the development of a new progress report model and its writing.

Objective 2 (Policy Development & Collaboration) Performance Measures

- By FY14, secure NCD participation on at least one newly established (via legislation or Executive Order) federal commission or advisory council.
- Participate in at least one major federal agency conference or meeting a year to bring a disability policy perspective to a non-disability-specific federal government event.
- At least twice a year, engage with other federal agencies regarding their implementation of regulations, policy, guidance, etc. to ensure they take people with disabilities into account.
- Beginning in FY 2013 and continuing each subsequent FY, review five past NCD reports, extracting timely, actionable recommendations, and strategically “repackage them” for renewed focus and suggestion.
- Produce an annual progress report that meets the October 31st deadline.

Challenges to Mission Success

The Scope of NCD's Mandate

One of the obvious challenges is how best to allocate our agency's limited financial and human resources. With the resources provided, NCD is limited in its engagement, policy development, and collaborative activities, having to balance and prioritize stakeholder needs and priorities with available resources.

NCD has a critical role to play in preserving and strengthening the impact of the ADA in our nation's policies and programs. Indeed, NCD's very identity is inextricably intertwined with the ADA and its history. NCD began as a small advisory body within the Department of Education. In 1984, Congress made NCD an independent agency and charged it with a new mandate to review all federal policies and programs. Two years later, NCD delivered on that charge with its path breaking report, *Toward Independence*, which called for enactment of the ADA. NCD later helped rally the disability community around it by offering the first draft in 1988. After the ADA was signed into law, NCD's mission was amended to reflect the national disability policy goals now enshrined in the ADA.

NCD serves a unique role among federal agencies because its mission reflects the breadth and diversity of the disability community itself. In its authorizing statute, the agency's duties are extensive and belie the agency's limited financial and human resources. In FY11, NCD had a \$3.2 million annual lump sum appropriation to support a mission of gathering information and reviewing and evaluating on a continuing basis all "policies, programs, practices, and procedures concerning individuals with disabilities conducted or assisted by Federal departments and agencies..." and "all statutes and regulations pertaining to Federal programs which assist such individuals with disabilities..."

NCD's statutory authority is limited to advising and doesn't include enforcement or regulatory authorities. Most Council members balance their service on NCD with full-time careers and embrace the breadth of NCD's mission even while acknowledging that difficult choices must be made about priorities.

Strategic Plan Revisions

As required by Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), NCD's strategic plan will be updated or revised no later than **July 15, 2014**. However, interim adjustments will be considered at least once annually, by July, as necessary as a reflection of altered circumstances or evaluations of actual performance against targets, and will be conducted in collaboration with the Policy/Legal, Legislative/Outreach and Administrative/Finance directorates.

Council Membership (as of November 1, 2012)

Jonathan M. Young, J.D., Ph.D., <i>Chairman</i>	Bethesda, MD
Janice Lehrer-Stein, <i>Vice Chair</i>	San Francisco, CA
Gary Blumenthal	Sudbury, MA
Chester Finn	Albany, NY
Sara Gelser	Corvallis, OR
Matan Koch	New York, NY
Janice Lehrer-Stein	San Francisco, CA
Lonnie Moore	Chula Vista, CA
Ari Ne'eman	Silver Spring, MD
Kamilah Oni Martin-Proctor	Washington, DC
Stephanie Orlando	Albany, NY
Dongwoo Joseph ("Joe") Pak, MBA	Garden Grove, CA
Clyde Terry, J.D.	Concord, NH
Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil, Ph.D.	Los Angeles, CA
Linda Wetters	Columbus, OH
Pamela Young-Holmes	Madison, WI

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