

Perceived Educational Needs and Knowledge Gaps of Newly Elected County Commissioners

by

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The attached paper represents work done by a UNC-Chapel Hill Master of Public Administration Student. It is not a formal report of the Institute of Government, nor is it the work of School of Government faculty.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the critical information needs of newly elected County Commissioners in North Carolina, their perceived level of knowledge in critical areas, and the prevalence of local orientation programs. The information gained from this research can be used by local government leaders and educators to ensure that County Commissioners in North Carolina are well prepared to serve and lead.

Introduction

Newly elected County Commissioners in North Carolina are asked to make difficult decisions as soon as they are sworn into office. Commissioners have no “honeymoon” period to become acquainted with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively govern. Further, Commissioners’ experiences, values and backgrounds differ vastly, influencing each Commissioner’s need for information and orientation.

Joe Ohren, in describing his experience facilitating workshops for elected officials in Michigan, explains that one barrier to effective decision making for elected officials is a lack of training and initial orientation into their role. Because of the lack of training, elected officials often undervalue the amount of time required in their respective positions. According to Ohren, if elected officials are unsure of their official responsibilities as a Commissioner or Councilmember, communities lack a clear mission and boards can become reactive.¹

Although Ohren and others note the lack of training and orientation, several case studies in a recent *Public Management* highlight various methods for orienting newly elected officials such as creating informational manuals, conducting orientation sessions with department heads, and even holding mock board meetings. The local government managers interviewed for the article also reach out to candidates before the general election to familiarize them with the governing process.²

The purpose of this study is to evaluate what critical information newly elected County Commissioners in North Carolina need, their perceived level of knowledge in these areas, and the prevalence of local orientation to provide them with this critical information. This research will be useful for County Managers and Clerks who work with and provide initial local orientation for Commissioners, faculty at the School of Government who provide initial and ongoing training for Commissioners, and leaders at the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC).

Methods

To assess the knowledge needs and prevalence of local orientation, each Commissioner received an invitation to participate in a web-based survey. A survey was used for this research because the survey instrument could concisely capture the perceptions of Commissioners on a large number of topics. The population for this survey consisted of the 571 North Carolina County Commissioners. The Commissioners were asked to rank the importance of several areas of information for newly elected County Commissioners³ and their initial level of knowledge in each of the areas.⁴ Commissioners were also asked if they received any local orientation for each of the areas of information. The areas of information originated from research of orientation programs across the State, a Board Self-Assessment tool⁵, and focus groups of County Commissioners conducted by the NCACC. The twenty-four areas of information included in the survey cover topics such as general government, process, budget and finance, government partnerships and external resources. Please see Appendix I to review the survey.

Ninety-eight Commissioners responded to the web-based survey. To ensure every Commissioner ample opportunity to participate in the survey, paper surveys were mailed to Commissioners in January with

¹ Joe Ohren, “Improving Local Government Decision Making: Insights from Local Government Officials,” *Public Management*. 89, no. 1 (January/February 2007): 28 February 2008. <<http://www.icma.org>>

² “Case Study: How Do I Get New Councilmembers up to Speed?” *Public Management*. 88, no. 10 (November 2006): 28 February 2008. <<http://www.icma.org>>

³ Commissioners rated importance as either very (4), moderate (3), slightly (2), or not (1).

⁴ Commissioners identified their initial knowledge as either high (4), moderate (3), limited (2), or none (1).

⁵ Course Materials from Vaughn Upshaw’s “How Are We Doing? Manager Evaluation and Board Self-Assessment” UNC School of Government, 2006.

instructions to complete the survey only if they had not completed the online version (the paper version was the same in content as the electronic version). Ninety-three Commissioners completed and returned the paper version of the survey, bringing the total response rate to 33.8%. At least one Commissioner from 83 of the 100 North Carolina Counties responded to the survey. There is wide variation in the years of service of Commissioners who responded. The distribution of responses by region vary widely as well. Although the demographics of non-respondents was not available for comparison, the variation in the sample demographics minimize concerns that an important population of commissioners was missing from this analysis. See Table I and II.

Years of Service	Percentage
0-2 yrs	23.30%
3-4 yrs	16.10%
5-8 yrs	26.90%
9-12 yrs	17.10%
13+ yrs	16.10%

Region	Percentage
Western	28.50%
Central	26.90%
Eastern	38.90%
Not identified	5.70%

Findings

The results that follow highlight research findings for the entire sample and by Commissioner’s years of service. Evaluating responses based on years of service shows any discrepancies in commissioner’s perceptions as they gain tenure. Findings are presented for Commissioner’s ranking of importance, their initial knowledge, and the prevalence of orientation.

Overall Importance. Commissioners generally ranked each area of information from moderately to very important on a scale from not (1) to very (4) important. The mean score of importance for the general categories are as follows: General Government (3.69); Process (3.58); Budget and Finance (3.63); Government Partnerships (3.30); and External Resources (3.12). Aggregate responses indicate that understanding the role of the Manager is the most important knowledge need for newly elected Commissioners, closely followed by understanding the role of the Commissioner.⁶ Next, Commissioners identify the mission of the County government as a very important knowledge need. The fourth most important knowledge need for Commissioners is an understanding of the time commitment of Commissioners. See Appendix II for the importance rankings of all twenty-four variables.

Overall Importance by years of service. As Commissioners gain tenure they tend to value the importance of understanding government partnerships and external resources more heavily than their counterparts with less experience. See Appendix III for a detailed graph of the importance rankings of Commissioners by years of service. Table III shows the difference of means tests results for Commissioners with less than two years and greater than 13 years of experience.

Category	0-2 yrs	13+ yrs
External Resources*	2.95	3.40
<i>Areas of Information</i>	0-2 yrs	13+ yrs
Ability to Partner with School Boards**	3.42	3.74
Services of NACo**	2.71	3.16
Services of NCACC*	2.93	3.58

*Significant at the 0.01 level.

**Significant at the 0.05 level.

⁶ The mean score for the Role of Manager is 3.82, while the mean for the Role of Commissioner is 3.81.

As Commissioners gain tenure, there is a statistically significant difference in their perception of the importance of external resources. Specifically, there is a strong and significant difference in the perceived importance of services of the NCACC. There is also a significant difference in the perceived importance of understanding the ability to partner with School Boards and services of NACo, although it is not as strong.

Initial Knowledge. Commissioners generally assessed their initial knowledge as either limited or moderate in each area of information, except for external resources, on a scale from none (1) to high (4). The mean initial knowledge score for the general categories are as follows: General Government (2.82); Process (2.67); Budget and Finance (2.62); Government Partnerships (2.47); and External Resources (1.85). The majority of Commissioners responded that they had limited or no knowledge of external resources available to them such as the National Association of Counties, the NCACC and the SOG when they took office. Commissioners surveyed indicate they had the most knowledge of the role of the Commissioner (2.94) when they entered office, followed by the Commission-Manager Form of Government (2.87) and mission of the County government (2.87). See Appendix IV for the rankings of initial knowledge for all twenty-four variables. Also see Appendix V for a parallel listing of importance and initial knowledge for all variables.

Initial Knowledge by years of service. Commissioner’s perception of their initial knowledge does not seem to change with additional years of service. However, Commissioners with nine to twelve years of experience report less initial knowledge, on average, than Commissioners with less than nine years and 13 or more years of experience. This difference can perhaps be accounted for by the difference in orientation programs provided by the School of Government for newly elected commissioners.⁷ See Appendix VI for a graphic description of the initial knowledge of Commissioners by year.

Differences in importance and initial knowledge. In several knowledge areas there are significant differences between the importance rating and the initial knowledge of the Commissioners. Table IV shows the significant differences in importance rating and initial knowledge.

Table IV. Difference in Recognized Importance and Initial Knowledge			
Area of Information (Importance Rank)	Importance Mean	Initial Knowledge Mean	Difference
Rules and Procedure of the Board (9)	3.64	2.66	0.98
Time Commitment of Commissioner (4)	3.74	2.65	1.09
Role of Manager (1)	3.82	2.84	0.98
Working with Staff (11)	3.53	2.55	0.98
Revenue Sources (6)	3.65	2.67	0.98
County Expenditures (7)	3.65	2.62	1.03
Budget Process (10)	3.59	2.58	1.01
Services of NACo (24)	2.91	1.61	1.30
Services of NCACC (21)	3.21	1.80	1.41
Services of the SOG (19)	3.25	2.15	1.10

⁷ Commissioners with 9 or more years of experience took part in the previous orientation program provided by the School of Government, the School for Newly Elected Commissioners. This program was replaced by the Essentials of County Government program.

This chart shows that in many areas of information there is a substantial difference in the perceived importance of the knowledge and Commissioner’s initial knowledge. These differences underscore the importance of providing orientations early in Commissioner’s tenure to increase their initial knowledge.

The greatest differences in means for importance and initial knowledge are for external resources. However, these three variables were given relatively low importance ratings by the respondents. Commissioners know very little about these information areas, but they only think these areas are somewhat to moderately important. What is more interesting is the large difference in Commissioner’s initial knowledge about the role of the Manager and its importance. Commissioners rank understanding the role of the Manager as most important, yet there is a substantial difference in the mean importance rating and their initial knowledge. The same is true with the time commitment of the office. In both of these cases and others in Table V, Commissioners think knowledge areas are very important, yet they do not know a great deal about them initially. It is imperative that Commissioners receive local orientation in these areas to increase their awareness.

Percentage of Commissioners reporting local orientations. 37.3% of Commissioners surveyed received no local orientation when they entered office. Table V shows the number of information areas for which Commissioners received orientation. For example, 20.2% of Commissioners received orientation on one to six areas of information, while only 13% received orientation on seven to twelve areas of information.

Table V. Orientation Index		
<i>Number of Orientations</i>	<i>Number of Commissioners</i>	<i>Percentage of Commissioners</i>
None	72	37.3
1-6	39	20.2
7-12	25	13
13-18	24	12.4
19-24	33	17.1

Orientation by general categories. Commissioners reported the greatest prevalence of local orientation for the general government category (58.03% orientation available and attended). Commissioners received orientation for the remaining categories at the following rates: Process (40.09%); Budget and Finance (48.20%); Government Partnerships (34.40%); and External Resources (44.07%).

Orientation by areas of information. Commissioners receive orientation on the Commission-Manager Form of Government at a higher rate than all other topics (62.1% orientation available and attended.) 58.4% of Commissioners report local orientation for the Mission of County Government. A large percentage of Commissioners also receive orientation on rules and procedure of the Board (56.8%). Not surprising the fourth most prevalent orientation subject, county services (54.8%), is also in the general government category. Interestingly, orientation is highly prevalent for services of the School of Government, although this information area ranks low in importance. Also interesting to note, it is not common for Commissioners to receive orientation about the time commitment of the office (31.9%). However, this information area is highly ranked in importance (4th) and mediocre in initial knowledge (9th). Orientation on partnering with the federal government is least common for Commissioners (25.4%). See Appendix VII for the prevalence of orientation for all areas.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

The research indicates broadly that Commissioners perceive nearly every area of information as moderately to very important and they report limited to moderate initial knowledge. Further, almost 40 percent of Commissioners report they received no local orientation when they entered office. What are the implications of this research? What does this mean for local government managers and clerks working with Commissioners in counties across North Carolina? Further, what does this mean for professionals and faculty working with Commissioners at the NCACC and the SOG?

First, Commissioners need information. Commissioners overwhelmingly ranked all but one area of information as very or moderately important. Means for half of the areas of information were ranked as very important by Commissioners. Commissioners believe that understanding these basic knowledge areas are important to effectively carrying out their job. As local government managers, ensuring that Commissioners understand these basic and integral concepts is important.

As Commissioners gain tenure, they perceive external resources and partnerships as more important. Even though these categories did not rank highly in overall importance, they should be included in an orientation program because tenured Commissioners see that they do matter in effectively governing.

Currently, local orientations are not comprehensive. Only 17.1 percent of Commissioners reported receiving orientation on most of the areas of information included in the survey. Almost 40 percent reported no orientation while an additional 20.2 percent reported orientation on only one to six areas of information. More comprehensive local orientations are needed.

| *Current local orientations do cover some of the important knowledge areas.* -Over 60 percent of Commissioners received orientation on the commission-manager form of government, a highly ranked area of information. A little over 58 percent of Commissioners received orientation on the mission of County government, the third ranked area of information in importance. Also, over 54 percent of Commissioners received information on county services, another highly ranked knowledge need. Local orientations across the State are covering some of the most important knowledge needs and they should continue to hit these areas.

Some of the most important knowledge areas are not being covered in local orientations. Commissioners rank the role of the Manager as most important of all the knowledge areas included in the survey, yet less than half of Commissioners received any orientation about the role of the Manager. Just over 50 percent of Commissioners received orientation on the role of the Commissioner, the second most highly ranked information area. Time commitment is ranked fourth in importance in this survey, yet only 31.9 percent of Commissioners report any orientation on the matter. All three variables related to budget and finance are highly ranked, yet in every case less than half of the Commissioners surveyed received orientation on budget and finance. These are the areas where information for Commissioners is lacking and new efforts are needed to inform and orient Commissioners.

Conclusion

This research shows that Commissioners perceive a number of knowledge areas to be vitally important to effectively govern. Further, Commissioners in their early tenure lack knowledge in many of these areas and only around sixty percent actually receive orientation. Commissioners specifically need orientation for topics such as Commission-Manager Form of Government, Roles of the Manager and the Commissioner, time commitment of the office, and budget and finance. To ensure that Commissioners in North Carolina are equipped to effectively govern, local government managers and clerks, professionals at the NCACC and faculty at the SOG must work together to be certain that Commissioners have access to this information and more when they enter office.

Appendix I

County Commissioner Knowledge Needs Assessment

For what county do you serve as a Commissioner? (used for aggregate purposes only; information will not be connected to you)

How many years have you served as a Commissioner?

How important is it for a County Commissioner to know about the following topics when they enter office?

General Government

	Not	Slightly	Moderate	Very
Commission-Mgr Form of Govt	___	___	___	___
Mission of County Govt	___	___	___	___
Rules and Procedure of the Board	___	___	___	___
County Services	___	___	___	___

Process

	Not	Slightly	Moderate	Very
Agenda Process	___	___	___	___
Time Commitment of a County Commissioner	___	___	___	___
Role of the County Commissioner	___	___	___	___
Role of the County Manager	___	___	___	___
Role of the County Clerk	___	___	___	___
Role of the County Attorney	___	___	___	___
Procedure for working with County Staff	___	___	___	___

Budget and Finance

	Not	Slightly	Moderate	Very
Revenue Sources	___	___	___	___
County Expenditures	___	___	___	___
Budget Process	___	___	___	___

Government Partnerships

	Not	Slightly	Moderate	Very
Knowledge of Local Health and Human Services Boards	___	___	___	___
Purpose of appointed Boards and Commissions and appointment process	___	___	___	___
State Government Process	___	___	___	___
Ability to partner with the Federal Government	___	___	___	___
Ability to partner with State Government	___	___	___	___
Ability to partner with School Boards	___	___	___	___
Ability to partner with Municipal Governments	___	___	___	___

External Resources

	Not	Slightly	Moderate	Very
Services of NACo	___	___	___	___
Services of the NCACC	___	___	___	___
Services of the SOG	___	___	___	___

Please indicate your perception of your knowledge of each of the following topics when you entered office and if local orientation or training was available.

General Government

	My level of knowledge when I took office?	Local orientation available?
Commission-Manager Form of Government	___None	___Yes; available and attended
	___Limited	___Yes; available, did not attend
	___Moderate	___Not available
	___High	___Do not know
Mission of County Government	___None	___Yes; available and attended
	___Limited	___Yes; available, did not attend
	___Moderate	___Not available
	___High	___Do not know
Rules and Procedure of the Board	___None	___Yes; available and attended
	___Limited	___Yes; available, did not attend
	___Moderate	___Not available
	___High	___Do not know
County Services	___None	___Yes; available and attended
	___Limited	___Yes; available, did not attend
	___Moderate	___Not available
	___High	___Do not know

Process

	My level of knowledge when I took office?	Local orientation available?
Agenda Process	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Time Commitment of a County Commissioner	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Role of the County Commissioner	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Role of the County Manager	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Role of the County Clerk	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Role of the County Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Procedure for working with County Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know

Budget and Finance

	My level of knowledge when I took office?	Local orientation available?
Revenue Sources	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
County Expenditures	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Budget process	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate <input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended <input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend <input type="checkbox"/> Not available <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know

Government Partnerships

	My level of knowledge when I took office?	Local orientation available?
Knowledge of Local Health and Human Services Boards	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Purpose of appointed Boards and Commissions	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
State Government Process	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Ability to partner with the Federal Government	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Ability to partner with the State Government	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Ability to partner with School Boards	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Ability to partner with Municipal Governments	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know

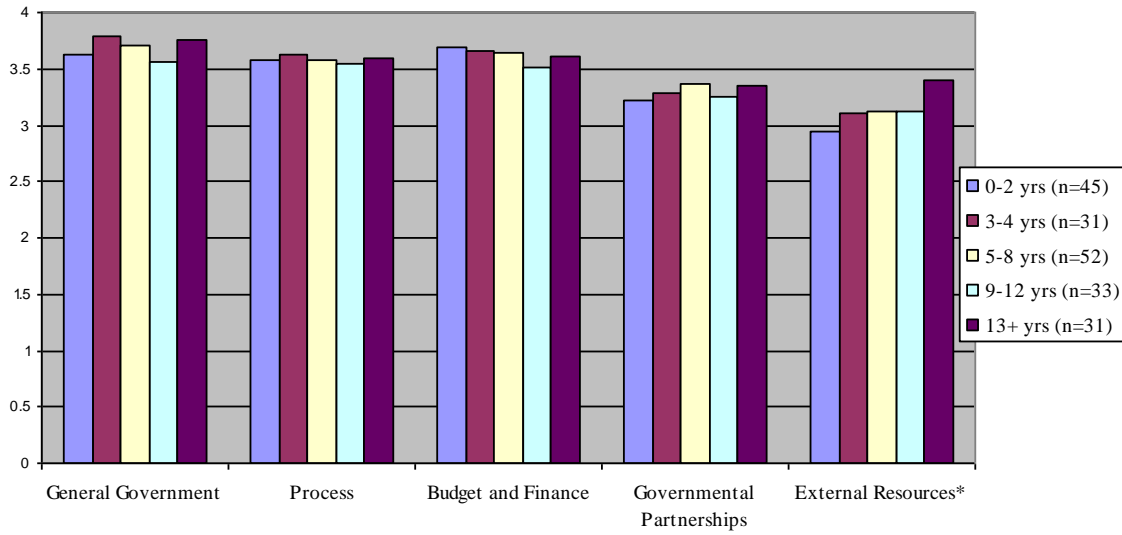
External Resources

	My level of knowledge when I took office?	Local orientation available?
Services of NACo	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Services of the NCACC	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know
Services of the SOG	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available and attended
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes; available, did not attend
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> Not available
	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know

Appendix II: Importance Rankings		
Area of Information	N*	Mean
Role of Manager	193	3.82
Role of Commissioner	192	3.81
Mission of County Govt	192	3.77
Time Commitment of Commissioner	193	3.74
Knowing County Services	193	3.69
Revenue Sources	193	3.65
County Expenditures	193	3.65
Commission-Mgr Form of Government	193	3.64
Rules and Procedure of the Board	193	3.64
Budget Process	193	3.59
Working with Staff	192	3.53
Ability to Partner with School Boards	192	3.51
Role of Attorney	193	3.45
Ability to Partner with Municipalities	191	3.41
Role of Clerk	190	3.4
Ability to Partner with State	192	3.35
Agenda Process	191	3.34
State government process	191	3.28
Services of the SOG	191	3.25
Purpose of appointed boards	191	3.23
Services of NCACC	192	3.21
Ability to Partner with Feds	192	3.18
Knowledge of HHS Board	189	3.15
Services of NACo	190	2.91

* These responses drawn from total sample of 193. Number indicates responses out of 193.

Appendix III. Importance of Categories of Information: By Years of Service (4=very; 1=not)



*Difference of mean importance scores for Commissioners with less than two years of experience and more than 13 years of experience for external resources is significant at the 0.01 level.

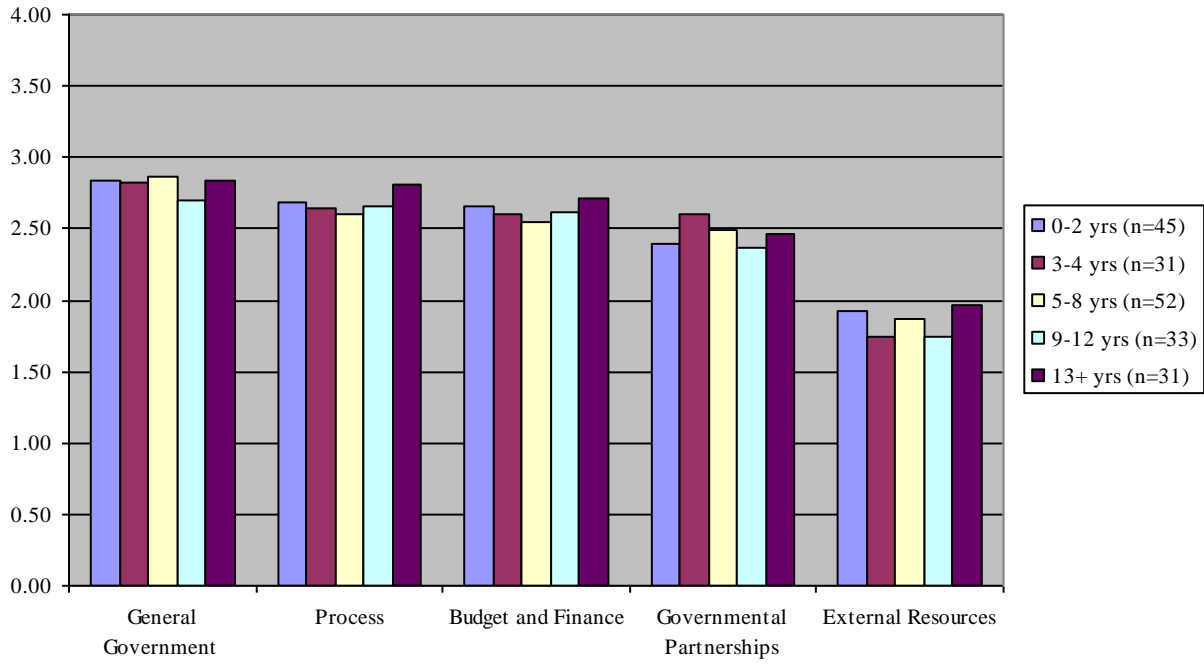
Appendix IV: Initial Knowledge Rankings		
Area of Information	N*	Mean
Role of Commissioner	189	2.94
Commission-Mgr Form of Government	189	2.87
Mission of County Govt	190	2.87
Knowing County Services	190	2.86
Role of Manager	190	2.84
Ability to Partner with School Boards	190	2.72
Revenue Sources	187	2.67
Rules and Procedure of the Board	190	2.66
Time Commitment of Commissioner	189	2.65
Role of Attorney	186	2.63
County Expenditures	185	2.62
Agenda Process	190	2.59
Budget Process	185	2.58
Working with Staff	189	2.55
Role of Clerk	190	2.51
Ability to Partner with Municipalities	189	2.5
State government process	191	2.49
Ability to Partner with State	190	2.49
Purpose of appointed boards	190	2.44
Knowledge of HHS Board	191	2.37
Ability to Partner with Feds	190	2.26
Services of the SOG	191	2.15
Services of NCAACC	191	1.8
Services of NACo	191	1.61

* These responses drawn from total sample of 193. Number indicates responses out of 193.

Appendix V

Mean Scores: Importance (Not=1; Very=4)	Mean Scores: Initial Knowledge (None=1; High=4)
<i>General Government</i>	<i>General Government</i>
Commission-Mgr Form of Government	Commission-Mgr Form of Government
Mission of County Govt	Mission of County Govt
Rules and Procedure of the Board	Rules and Procedure of the Board
Knowing County Services	Knowing County Services
<i>Process</i>	<i>Process</i>
Agenda Process	Agenda Process
Time Commitment of Commissioner	Time Commitment of Commissioner
Role of Commissioner	Role of Commissioner
Role of Manager	Role of Manager
Role of Clerk	Role of Clerk
Role of Attorney	Role of Attorney
Working with Staff	Working with Staff
<i>Budget and Finance</i>	<i>Budget and Finance</i>
Revenue Sources	Revenue Sources
County Expenditures	County Expenditures
Budget Process	Budget Process
<i>Government Partnerships</i>	<i>Government Partnerships</i>
Knowledge of HHS Board	Knowledge of HHS Board
Purpose of appointed boards	Purpose of appointed boards
State government process	State government process
Ability to Partner with Feds	Ability to Partner with Feds
Ability to Partner with State	Ability to Partner with State
Ability to Partner with School Boards	Ability to Partner with School Boards
Ability to Partner with Municipalities	Ability to Partner with Municipalities
<i>External Resources</i>	<i>External Resources</i>
Services of NACo	Services of NACo
Services of NCACC	Services of NCACC
Services of the SOG	Services of the SOG

Appendix VI. Initial Knowledge of Commissioners: By Years of Service (4=high; 1=none)



Appendix VII: Prevalence of Local Orientation		
<i>Area of Information</i>	<i>N*</i>	<i>Orientation Available and Attended</i>
Commission-Mgr Form of Government	153	62.1
Mission of County Govt	149	58.4
Rules and Procedure of the Board	148	56.8
Knowing County Services	146	54.8
Services of the SOG	137	51.8
Role of Commissioner	141	51.1
Budget Process	138	49.3
Revenue Sources	140	48.6
Services of NCACC	138	47.1
County Expenditures	137	46.7
Role of Manager	142	46.5
Agenda Process	144	38.9
Working with Staff	143	38.5
State government process	141	37.6
Ability to Partner with School Boards	141	37.6
Role of Clerk	142	37.3
Purpose of appointed boards	140	37.1
Role of Attorney	140	36.4
Ability to Partner with State	142	35.2
Knowledge of HHS Board	140	35
Services of NACo	138	33.3
Ability to Partner with Municipalities	140	32.9
Time Commitment of Commissioner	141	31.9
Ability to Partner with Feds	142	25.4

* These responses drawn from total sample of 193. Number indicates responses out of 193.