Since the early 1990s, the North Carolina City County Management Association’s (NCCCMA) Civic Education Project has supported the creation and dissemination of *Local Government in North Carolina*, working with author Dr. Gordon Whitaker. The first edition was published and made available free of charge to classrooms across North Carolina in 1993. Dr. Whitaker updated the text as a second edition in 2003, and again, thanks to funding from the Civic Education Project, the text was made available to classrooms across the state.

In 2009 a third edition was published, with support from NCCCMA and funding from the International City/County Management Association. Unlike previous hard-copy editions, this third edition brought the text into the digital age and was designed for online viewing. In 2012, a fourth online-only edition was published, again with support from NCCCMA. Shortly after the fourth edition was published, Dr. Whitaker retired after 40 years of service at UNC Chapel Hill.

In 2018 the time had come to do another update to the text, and Dr. Whitaker entrusted his colleague at the School of Government, Dr. Rick Morse to take the lead on the effort. Again, with funding support from NCCCMA, the work to update the text commenced with a focus not only on updating content, but also in modernizing the format even more and expanding the scope of the book’s audience.

In past decade or so, local governments across the United States have become more innovative in their approaches to civic engagement, with many of them investing in civic education programs often called citizens academies. These programs educate residents on virtually all aspects of local government to improve participants’ ability to effectively engage with their local government. Further, many community leadership programs include content on local government, and civic groups often look for informal learning opportunities for their members. This fifth edition of *Local Government in North Carolina* remains a great resource for K-12 education, particularly civics classes that often have very little information on local government. But this edition is also appropriate and useful as a resource for adult education programs of various kinds and has been designed to be adaptable to a variety of different uses.

The fifth edition of *Local Government in North Carolina* is an interactive textbook that can be used at the K-12 level, by informal learners, adult education programs, and as a supplement for civic education programs such as local government citizens academies. The e-book is enhanced with multimedia features, such as augmented reality, videos, podcast and interactive data charts.

The book showcases the role, form, structure and functions of local government through multimedia storytelling and fosters civic engagement in a technology-rich learning environment:

- The podcast channel is intended to house a growing number of episodes that showcase the people behind local government.
- The augmented reality features in this book were developed with Metaverse.
- All data charts for this book have been created with Tableau Public for interactive exploration.
Local Government in North Carolina is published under the creative commons license as an Open Educational Resource (OER). The term Open Educational Resources was coined in 2002 during a forum held by the UNESCO as the open provision of educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes.

Local Government in North Carolina has been updated periodically since 1993. Offering the 2021 edition under a creative commons license makes it easy to contextualize, translate and repurpose the material. We intend the textbook (or versions of it) to be used in a variety of civic education contexts within the state of North Carolina and beyond. Educators can generate versions for different states, specific age groups, educational purposes or settings.

Learn more at: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to the implementation of this vision, but none more so than Stefanie Panke, PhD, instructional analyst at the UNC School of Government. Having worked on the fourth edition with Dr. Whitaker, Dr. Panke has a passion for the book and its mission, and combined with her deep knowledge of emerging learning technologies, she envisioned many of the substantial updates for this edition, including the new publishing platform, interactive features and “augmented reality” content, and the Creative Commons license to expand the book’s reach and impact. Dr. Panke (with Dr. Morse) secured a Lenovo Innovation grant to support the transition to a new platform and new interactive design elements.

Between the Lenovo grant and NCCCMA support, several students were able to work on various aspects of the update, in addition to School of Government staff. We would like to acknowledge Aaron Brown’s work in assisting with some of the content update, including identifying some new case studies and recording the first interviews in the podcast series. Mahnoor Siddiqui, Mistyre Bonds (UX designer at the School of Government) and Ally Fiets developed the textbook design. Oleg Drozdowski and Jacob Szymura implemented the website, PDF and e-pub versions of the textbook. Spencer Stone created the interactive tableau data visualizations and outlined the first season of the podcast. Jennifer Henderson (School of Government editor) provided timely and helpful copy-editing.

We would also like to thank several faculty colleagues at the School of Government who assisted by reviewing sections related to their areas of expertise: Trey Allen, Frayda Bluestein, Mark Botts, Adam Lovelady, David Owens, and Aimee Wall. We also thank the many local governments that graciously contributed images for this book.

We are very grateful for Dr. Panke’s enthusiasm, vision and substantial contributions to this project, as well as her supervision of many talented UNC work study students. We are also grateful for other School of Government staff members who further assisted in various aspects of this update. We also gratefully acknowledge the NCCCMA’s Civic Education Committee, led by Mary Furtado, for their assistance not only in providing financial support, but for reviewing chapters for updating and being cheerleaders for this project.
As you can see, many people have helped make this fifth edition and new format possible. We thank all those contributors, named and unnamed, as well as the many individuals who assisted in the production of earlier editions of the book. Like local government, this book is the product of many people working together.

We hope this book will help you see the many ways local governments support your life and the lives of your family and friends. Perhaps you will be inspired to get more involved in your community. We hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to help make your community a better place. Follow your local government on social media, let public officials know your views, volunteer, or get involved in a local campaign. Local government has a tremendous influence on people’s quality of life. If you choose, you can help make a positive difference in your community.

Gordon P. Whitaker
Ricardo S. Morse
Chapel Hill, N.C.
December, 2020