

NACOLE CANDIDATE ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidates are encouraged to fill out the following questionnaire, to give NACOLE members relevant information when voting for Board members.

Name:

- 1) Position Sought: **Board Member At-Large**
- 2) Geographic Location: **Denver, Colorado**
- 3) Current Oversight Position and Organization: **Office of the Independent Monitor, City and County of Denver**
- 4) Number of Years as a NACOLE Member: **6.5**
- 5) Please list Annual Conferences or training opportunities in which you have attended:

19th Annual NACOLE Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah
21st Annual NACOLE Conference, Riverside, California, Panelist
22nd Annual NACOLE Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Panelist
23rd Annual NACOLE Conference, Spokane, Washington, Panelist
24th Annual NACOLE Conference, St. Petersburg, Florida, Panelist

Oakland Regional Conference, 2016
Denver Regional Conference, 2017
Oakland Regional Conference, 2019
Nashville Regional Conference, 2019, Panelist

Various Webinars, including as a panelist

- 6) Are you currently a member of the NACOLE Board? **Yes**

If so, in what capacity:

President
 Vice President
 Board Member At-Large

For the following questions, please respond in no more than 200 words.

- 1) Why do you want to serve on the NACOLE Board?

I am excited to run for the NACOLE Board in 2019 because I am deeply and personally connected to the work and impact of the organization. I volunteered for my first NACOLE committee in 2014 and was appointed to the Board in 2017. I have gained the skills and expertise to not only contribute to the Board but to drive issues important to members and potential members.

My recent work as the Co-Chair of the Membership Support and Advocacy Committee includes an update to the Mission statement and the recent development of Vision, Goals and Values statements which mirror the landscape of NACOLE and oversight in 2019. I have also supported the development of the Peer to Peer Mentoring Program, worked on oversight standards and written or supported letters for organizations that are attempting to increase their authority or under attack. For three years, I worked on the Annual Conference Committee and also served on the Scholarship Committee.

Finally, I bring a community lens to the Board which was not traditional to NACOLE boards of late. This means that Board focus areas, resources and initiatives have community representation, if not guidance.

2) What skills/experience/qualities do you bring to the NACOLE Board?

I am the child of labor organizers and grew up during the Civil Rights Movement. I protested, was arrested for civil disobedience and marched hundreds of miles and slept on church floors before graduating from high school. As a Student Senator in college during the anti-apartheid movement, we fought the University of California system to divest state resources from South Africa by creating coalitions, organizing student strikes and finally taking over buildings until the UC system divested from South Africa. I took my first paid political organizing job at 17 and have managed campaigns from school board to state legislature and worked on national campaigns for over 15 years.

As the Community Relations Ombudsman for the Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM), I have worked extensively to collaborate with the community and support three legislative enhancements to the OIM's authority in Denver. I also spearheaded the unconventional creation of an evidence-based program which seeks to improve relations between youth and officers in Denver. We convened over thirty-five community organizations and academic institutions to develop a curriculum which addresses disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system. We secured a federal grant and began to pilot curriculum in 2015. Over 25 jurisdictions have asked OIM for assistance instituting this programming in their cities.

I bring passion, political strategy, management and executive skills, and decades of civil rights knowledge and work to the NACOLE Board.

- 3) What challenges does NACOLE face as a rapidly growing membership organization?

NACOLE is a strong and growing organization. Each year, more people from community organizations and small oversight boards participate in NACOLE training opportunities. And with each new year, NACOLE is asked to provide more training to start up and newer oversight entities.

Professionals in our member organizations work hard for the accountability of law enforcement and need NACOLE to support their work. This can mean support starting oversight; supporting oversight entities who are under attack; and supporting members who are reforming or enhancing their authority.

I believe that NACOLE has addressed these needs with more and more training opportunities and great staff. I also believe we need to step back and plan for this growth and stop applying band aids and getting “just a little more done” each year. NACOLE has also consistently tried to grow the organization with hard working Board members and member organization volunteers, which can be inconsistent on actual work product beyond training.

There is a great opportunity for the NACOLE Board to begin working on a plan for increased support of membership that is staffed and driven by membership needs. I believe it is time for NACOLE to hire an Executive Director to drive these initiatives and explore permanent funding. Developing this plan and bringing it to the members for approval is the first step, but I believe we need to acknowledge that at 25 years, NACOLE needs to be doing more policy work, more member advocacy and more member support.

- 4) How have you contributed to NACOLE’s work? Please include all committees you have served on or led, as well as any other NACOLE volunteer efforts.

I served on the Annual Conference Committee for three years, was appointed to the Board of Directors in 2017, was Chair of the Scholarship Committee and have been Co-Chair of the Member Support and Development (Advocacy and Support now) Committee for two years.

Denver’s Office of the Independent Monitor was chosen to host a regional conference in 2017 and I assisted the Director of Training and Education with all aspects of that one-and-a-half-day training. This included developing panels, confirming keynotes, inviting panelists, soliciting sponsorships and doing outreach and logistics.

I also spearheaded the Nashville Regional Training in Nashville in May of 2019. I assisted with engagement of the Nashville community and government liaisons, helped create the panels, secured panelists and helped with funding and outreach.

Finally, I have submitted panel proposals and been invited to be a panelist for approximately ten panels for annual conferences, regional conferences and webinars.

- 5) Please share highlights of your background/experience in law enforcement oversight.

Thinking of highlights, I would mention the good times and great comradery, finding solutions to oversight challenges and celebrating with my peers.

If I think of accomplishments, I would speak to the rewards of working with very diverse and marginalized communities to increase the strength and authority of Denver's Office of the Independent Monitor. As the Community Relations Ombudsman, I have been blessed to build strong relationships with community members who have been affected by police misconduct and used their grief and anger to educate, organize and fight for fair and unbiased policing in their communities.

I would also consider the Bridging the Gap: Kids and Cops program a tremendous accomplishment in my career as an oversight professional. Knowing what needs to be done to teach law enforcement their impact on the community while keeping our youth safe when in contact with law enforcement, was a difficult and daunting task. I worked with OIM staff and a large group of community leaders and stakeholders, and we created a model, tested it for credibility with community and law enforcement, and had it evaluated and proven as a vehicle to keep our youth out of the juvenile justice system and safe during police contacts.

- 6) If elected/re-elected, what would you most like to accomplish as a Board member?

I would like to continue to bring a community lens to the work of the Board. Understanding the power and strength of the communities represented by oversight agencies is a no-brainer and I fill that box.

In terms of actual work, I would like to see NACOLE raise its profile nationally to make policy recommendations and support the creation and development of oversight in every jurisdiction.

I also believe that NACOLE needs to hire an Executive Director who will find ways to raise the funds we need to sustain more staff and provide more services to our members.

7) Additional information for voters to consider:

As a new oversight practitioner in 2013, I was without resources and support in my new role as a community engagement professional. I had 20 years of experience in community outreach and political engagement, but oversight was a different task. My personal and family experience with law enforcement were a challenge and I struggled to articulate our role and impact in non-biased terms.

I contacted many other agencies attempting to gather insight and expertise and could find few with more than tips and tricks to guide the development of my master plan. I wanted to authentically and proactively engage people like myself to care about the work of the office and finding a guide for this work was nearly impossible.

Within six months, I was able to attend a NACOLE conference and was able to reach engagement professionals and learn from them. I met people with passion for engaging community and I saw the empathy and love they poured into this work. We do not always please the community, law enforcement or the jurisdictions we work for, but there is an art and professionalism I learned at that conference and have worked to perfect since.

NACOLE practitioners have become mentors and family. I do not always agree with everyone on an approach or a vote, but I always respect the work and hold our collective impact close to my heart. I appreciate that there is no lack of passion amongst oversight practitioners, including myself.