



Executive Director
North Carolina Justice Center
Raleigh, North Carolina

THE SEARCH

The [North Carolina Justice Center](#) (NCJC), a preeminent voice for economic and social justice in the nation's 9th most populous state, is seeking a dynamic, visionary, driven, and experienced strategic leader to serve as its next Executive Director (ED).

For nearly three decades, the North Carolina Justice Center has fought to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in communities across the state. The NCJC is an important leader in the movement to expand opportunity, well-being, and prosperity for all North Carolinians by addressing root causes of poverty – taking on structural barriers to opportunity and ensuring just and fair treatment for everyone in North Carolina. Through its multi-issue, multi-strategy approach, facilitated by an accomplished and highly effective staff, the NCJC has been successful, many times against the odds, year-over-year in eliminating structural barriers to fairness and opportunity, advocating for policies that foster, protect, and advance economic inclusion, and defeating attempts to constrain justice and fairness and roll back progress. The NCJC has earned its reputation for impact, reliability and track-record of success by working diligently with a broad array of stakeholders, coalition partners, and leaders across the state—and across the political spectrum—in a sustained fashion to advance solutions that are informed by expert research and fueled by multi-pronged litigation, public policy advocacy, community engagement, and communications strategies.

This leadership opportunity calls for an inspiring, progressive, effective, and mission-aligned leader who will join the NCJC's talented and accomplished team of lawyers, community organizers, policy experts, advocates, communications specialists, and operations professionals as the NCJC continues to evolve in a rapidly changing and increasingly fraught political and policy environment. The incoming Executive

Director will join a progressive organization with six vital projects focused on significant issues affecting North Carolinians with low incomes. The leader will collaborate with project directors and other highly skilled staff members to develop strategies, establish priorities, and cultivate a unifying vision for the work of the NCJC while also leveraging the unique capabilities of the individual components to effectively bolster organizational strength and strategic effectiveness in an increasingly complex and challenging environment. The North Carolina Justice Center has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

The next ED must demonstrate deep personal and professional commitment to the NCJC's mission of eliminating root causes of poverty in North Carolina by making opportunity and prosperity for all a reality. They will have a track-record of visionary and strategic leadership, inspiring and managing people, and using highly effective communication skills to cultivate and maintain strong relationships and partnerships at all levels, internally and externally. The successful candidate must have a robust commitment and demonstrated performance history of advancing justice and combating inequities, both on a systemic and policy level and in internal staffing and operations. The NCJC is open to candidates from a variety of backgrounds and lived experience, with preference given to those who have substantive experience in at least one of its five strategies: impact litigation, public policy advocacy, research, communications, and/or community outreach.

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ABOUT NORTH CAROLINA JUSTICE CENTER

The NCJC is relentlessly dedicated to eliminating poverty in North Carolina. For 29 years, the NCJC has fought to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in communities across North Carolina through research and advocacy. As one of the preeminent voices for economic and social justice, the NCJC is leading the fight to expand opportunity and prosperity for all North Carolinians.

NCJC is focused on the state's – and country's — most pressing issues, including fighting for: a living wage; quality, affordable healthcare; safe and affordable housing; and fairness in the state's criminal justice system. NCJC is addressing the root causes of poverty – taking on structural barriers to opportunity and ensuring just and fair treatment for everyone in North Carolina.

NCJC's impact can be seen through: its commitment to acting as a reliable resource for communities; the dozens of cases its experienced attorneys take on to protect and expand rights; their successful advocacy with North Carolina policymakers for economic justice for all North Carolinians: producing publications and articles every year describing the effects of systems and policy on individuals' lives; and amplifying the stories of North Carolinians who represent the strength and diversity of people in the state.

Core Work and Successes

The NCJC works through six projects that provide in-depth expertise in the major policy areas affecting North Carolinians living in poverty. These six projects have all delivered important successes that protect and improve the livelihoods of North Carolinians.

- **Consumer, Housing & Energy:** The team focuses on unfair and deceptive practices targeting North Carolina consumers, fair landlord/tenant laws, affordable housing, and lending abuses. The team has successfully advocated for landmark laws protecting against predatory lending, mortgage servicing abuses, and debt-buyer abuses. They have engaged in successful class action litigation against unscrupulous mortgage brokers and payday lenders and have coordinated statewide foreclosure defense work.
- **Education & Law:** The NCJC team works to improve the state's public education system and ensure that all students – regardless of the color of their skin, disability, national origin, or socio-economic class – have equal and fair access to high-quality education. The Education & Law Project has led successful efforts to prevent the passage of school discipline laws that would have resulted in more students being excluded from public schools, helped pass legislation to support at-risk students, fought harmful resegregation, limit school privatization, and uphold the constitutional right to educational opportunities for all children through the state's landmark *Leandro* litigation.
- **Fair Chance Criminal Justice:** The team partners with impacted people, congregations, concerned community members, advocacy organizations, and decision-makers to change local and state policies and practices to make the criminal justice system fairer from arrest to reentry. The team, in partnership with members of the NC Second Chance Alliance, successfully passed the Second Chance Act.
- **Health Advocacy:** The team works to ensure that all North Carolinians - especially those with low incomes who are uninsured, underinsured, people of color, and those living in rural communities have access to high-quality, affordable, comprehensive, and equitable healthcare for better health outcomes and improved quality of life. Working collaboratively with coalition partners using diverse strategies and keeping people at the center, the team led the successful efforts to expand Medicaid and achieve record enrollment. Additionally, the team works to educate the public and other stakeholders on the changes in different health insurance markets. Currently, they are working to address medical debt and ensure that North Carolinians understand their rights under the new medical debt relief and protection program.

- **Immigrant & Refugee Rights:** The NCJC team works to ensure immigrants with low incomes have legal representation, to advance public policies that improve the well-being of immigrant families, and to promote acceptance and understanding of immigrant and refugee communities in North Carolina. The Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project has worked on behalf of immigrants to collect wages owed for violation of minimum wage and overtime laws, represented thousands of immigrants in obtaining legal status, and fought for immigrants to have fair access to public benefits, educational opportunities, and drivers' licenses.
- **Workers' Rights:** The team is fighting to make sure everyone in North Carolina has a quality job and the support they need when out of a job. They strive to enforce and expand policies that ensure safe workplaces, fair treatment, a living wage, and a strong safety net in times of hardships. Over the years, the Workers' Rights Project has supported passage of legislation increasing the state's minimum wage, played a key role in securing worker protection reforms, and led efforts to reduce barriers to reentry for individuals with criminal records.

Within each of these projects, the NCJC's uses a five-strategy approach, which enables them to attack problems with the most effective tools.

- **Litigation** – Experienced attorneys take on high-impact cases that protect and expand the rights of workers, consumers, immigrants, and families with low incomes.
- **Public Policy Advocacy** – Skilled advocates work with government officials and allies to secure laws and policies that protect and expand economic security.
- **Research** – Experts analyze and assess the social and economic challenges confronting families and communities with low incomes and develop policy recommendations that promote shared prosperity.
- **Community Outreach** – Educators and facilitators partner with community groups and leaders to create and empower movements for change.
- **Communications** – Writers and media specialists generate a wealth of content for both new and traditional media in order to inform the public dialogue and influence state policy.

Leadership and Governance

The NCJC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with approximately 40 employees across its six core projects and an annual budget of \$5 million. Its operations and projects are primarily supported by philanthropic grants and a growing individual and major gifts program. The NCJC currently maintains a six-month operating reserve.

The overall health and fiduciary responsibility of the NCJC is overseen by an 18-member [board of directors](#), comprised of leaders who have a track record and demonstrated commitment, professionally and personally, to the elimination of poverty in North Carolina.

In 2016, staff at the NCJC unionized, joining the National Organization of Legal Service Workers, UAW. Staff positions at the NCJC are part of the NCJC's bargaining unit. Staff with supervisory responsibilities are not union members. A three-year Collective Bargaining Agreement was reached in 2025 and is currently in place.

The Transition

In February 2025, Reggie Shuford stepped down as Executive Director of the NCJC to assume the presidency of the Independence Foundation. During Shuford's tenure, the NCJC secured key policy wins benefiting thousands of North Carolinians, including the expansion of Medicaid eligibility, passage of the Second Chance Act, and ensuring numerous consumer and tenant protections, including the settlement of two consumer class actions for a combined total of over \$6.75 million. Shuford also catalyzed a community of support and established the first-ever endowment for the NCJC.

While the search for Shuford's successor is underway, Dana Magnum is serving as interim executive director. Magnum brings over 15 years of experience leading statewide nonprofits, strategic planning, equity implementation, and healthcare advocacy.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROLE

The Executive Director is the principal spokesperson for the NCJC, and is responsible for the overall strategic direction, growth of resources, and day-to-day management of the organization. The ED reports to the NCJC Board of Directors and serves as an *ex-officio* non-voting member of the Board. Reporting to this role are the Director of Human Resources, a fractional Director of Finance, Director of Litigation, and Director of Gifts, Donations, and Grants and an Interim Director of Legislative Advocacy.

The next leader will bring a proven commitment to ensuring all North Carolinians have access to the resources, services, and fair treatment they need to achieve economic security. The Executive Director will be a visionary leader, a strategic thinker, a strong communicator, an outstanding manager of people and partnerships, a relationship builder, a fundraiser, and an effective organizational leader. The ED will represent the NCJC externally with partners across the state and nationally. The following are some of the primary objectives they will address.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Develop a strategic, collaborative, and inspiring vision for the NCJC's future

The current political climate, coupled with the unprecedented erosion of trust in government, has challenged the effectiveness of conventional approaches to political and civic advocacy. Therefore, the NCJC is at a critical juncture that may require a strategic rethinking of the path forward. The next ED will be a thoughtful leader who will honor the NCJC's history of success, leverage the current context positively, and craft a galvanizing vision to end poverty in North Carolina. They will model strategic thinking in carrying out the NCJC's core work and empower the staff to think and act strategically in their own work. Through collaboration and strategy, the successful ED will lead staff towards achieving the NCJC's mission, rooted in progressive ideals, in an increasingly complex and polarized political environment.

Implement a strategy for long-term, sustainable fund development and be an effective fundraiser

The NCJC has long been successful in securing grant funding for its projects, programs, and general operations. Sustainable long-term funding is needed to complement the evolving landscape of annual and multi-year grant support. Gross funds raised from individual giving has grown almost six-fold over the last decade. The ED will build upon this momentum to bolster individual giving and will lead the staff and Board of Directors in driving significant growth in funding, with special attention to attracting a higher relative percentage of unrestricted support. In June 2025, the North Carolina legislature froze annual funds from Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) that represent \$1.2 annually in grant funding for the NCJC. The once stable pool of funds is no longer a secure source for the NCJC. With a sense of measured urgency, the new ED will serve as a dynamic and unabashed advocate for the value-add of the NCJC for North Carolina and the nation. They will develop a robust and ambitious funding strategy that cultivates and stewards new and existing donors.

Solidify the NCJC's brand, credibility, and continued effectiveness in improving the lives of North Carolinians

Approaching its 30th anniversary in 2026, the NCJC is one of the largest, most established, and successful progressive organizations in North Carolina. Known for its consensus-building approach, the NCJC has established strong relationships across the state and within the North Carolina General Assembly. The NCJC, working with its partners, has persuaded the NC General Assembly to pass legislation that improves the lives of North Carolinians and stop harmful policies from becoming law. Over the past several years, the composition of the General Assembly has changed, and progressive solutions face substantial headwinds in the legislature. Additionally, the NCJC is often looked to by coalition partners for coordination, thought-leadership, and technical assistance. The incoming Executive Director will lead the NCJC in maintaining its progressive values while continuing to find success in a changing political environment. The ED will build upon relationships that have been developed around the state, ensuring that all residents of North Carolina are represented in the NCJC's work.

Champion and codify a progressive workplace culture

The NCJC stands as a powerful progressive force in North Carolina, driving meaningful change for communities that have long been underserved. To fully realize its mission, the ED will play a pivotal role in strengthening internal systems and structures that align with the NCJC's vision for equity and justice. The organization's workplace culture should reflect the progressive future it champions—where core work is carried out with integrity, and staff are treated with respect, accountability, and care. The ED will be instrumental in cultivating an organizational framework that attracts and retains top talent, while fostering a culture of collaboration, transparency, and inclusive decision-making. The incoming ED will take a direct leadership role in ensuring that all staff have access and opportunity to growth and promotion. This work will play out in strategic planning, organizational development, talent management, and human resources, ensuring staff from all demographic backgrounds feel supported, valued, heard, and represented at all levels of the organization. By empowering staff and modeling progressive leadership, the ED will help ensure the NCJC continues to thrive as a beacon for transformative change across the state.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one individual will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional and personal qualifications:

- A deep commitment to ending poverty in North Carolina, with recent experience and knowledge of the state's political, policy, and advocacy landscape.
- Experience working in coalitions to accomplish progressive change; experience with litigation, legislative advocacy, and other forms of policy advocacy.
- A track record of providing exceptional visionary, motivational, and highly effective strategic leadership that connects vision and resources to implementation and drives measurable impact.
- Experience leading and managing an organization or programs in or related to the progressive, economic justice space.
- Lived experience with impacted persons and community level change is highly valuable.
- Extensive experience in fiscal management and resource development for a similarly complex organization, ideally one that operates at the state level.
- Demonstrated fundraising experience, including cultivating and sustaining individual major donors and philanthropic grant funding.
- Highly effective communication skills; the ability to build strong relationships, collaborations, and partnerships across a broad range of progressive constituencies and to communicate and constructively engage with a wide array of the state's policy leaders.

- Experience managing or working in an organization with multiple, matrixed functional teams; experience working effectively with a board of directors; managing a unionized staff or administering an organization with distributed leadership, are all desirable attributes.
- A proven track record of hiring, managing, and mentoring a diverse staff, and motivating, developing, and retaining high-performing staff members and teams.
- A talent for surfacing multiple perspectives within a group, welcoming dissent, and anchoring tension productively toward constructive deliberations and resolutions.
- Success in nurturing and sustaining an organizational culture of learning and innovation, equity and inclusion, collaboration, and mutual accountability.
- An approachable, collaborative, and accessible leadership style with a high degree of emotional intelligence and personal integrity.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The anticipated hiring salary will be in the low 200s. The final offer is determined by a candidate's relevant experience and at the discretion of the board of directors.

The Executive Director position is based at the organization's headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina. The North Carolina Justice Center facilitates a hybrid work setting. The Executive Director is expected to be a visible leader throughout the state and available to work on-site.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. **Applications received by January 2, 2026 will receive priority consideration.** Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/north-carolina-justice-center/executive-director>.

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The NC Justice Center is committed to a policy of equal employment opportunity for all persons without regard to race, color, creed, sex, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, disability, pregnancy, personal appearance, citizenship, military service, genetic information, natural hairstyles, or any protected status. We are a Fair Chance Employer and strive to reduce barriers to employment for individuals with criminal records.

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