

**§ 122C-121. Area director.**

(a) The area director is an employee of the area board, shall serve at the pleasure of the board, and shall be appointed in accordance with G.S. 122C-117(a)(7). As used in this subsection, "employee" means an individual and does not include a corporation, a partnership, a limited liability corporation, or any other business association.

(a1) The area board shall establish the area director's salary under Article 3 of Chapter 126 of the General Statutes. Notwithstanding G.S. 126-9(b), an area director may be paid a salary that is in excess of the salary ranges established by the State Human Resources Commission. Any salary that is higher than the maximum of the applicable salary range shall be supported by documentation of comparable salaries in comparable operations within the region and shall also include the specific amount the board proposes to pay the director. The area board shall not authorize any salary adjustment that is above the normal allowable salary range without obtaining prior approval from the Director of the Office of State Human Resources.

(a2) The area board shall not provide the director with any benefits that are not also provided by the area board to all permanent employees of the area authority, except that the area board may, in its discretion, offer severance benefits, relocation expenses, or both, to an applicant for the position of director as an incentive for the applicant to accept an offer of employment. The director shall be reimbursed only for allowable employment-related expenses at the same rate and in the same manner as other employees of the area authority.

(b) The area board shall evaluate annually the area director for performance based on criteria established by the Secretary and the area board. In conducting the evaluation, the area board shall consider comments from the board of county commissioners.

(c) The area director is the administrative head of the area authority. In addition to the duties under G.S. 122C-111, the area director shall:

- (1) Appoint, supervise, and terminate area authority staff.
- (2) Administer area authority services.
- (3) Develop the budget of the area authority for review by the area board.
- (4) Provide information and advice to the board of county commissioners through the county manager.
- (5) Act as liaison between the area authority and the Department.

(d) Except when specifically waived by the Secretary, the area director shall meet all the following minimum qualifications:

- (1) Holds a master's, or higher, degree in business, healthcare administration, public health, finance, law, medicine, or a related field deemed acceptable by the area board.
- (2) Has related experience.
- (3) Has management experience.
- (4) Meets any other qualifications required by any contracts, as defined in G.S. 122C-124.2(g). (1971, c. 470, s. 1; 1973, c. 476, s. 133; 1977, c. 568, s. 1; c. 679, s. 7; 1979, c. 358, s. 14; 1981, c. 51, s. 3; 1985, c. 589, s. 2; 2001-437, s. 1.12; 2006-142, s. 4(k); 2007-323, s. 6.20(a); 2012-151, s. 11(c); 2013-339, s. 1; 2013-382, s. 9.1(c); 2023-134, s. 9G.7A(d3).)