Jayson Wechter

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: Jayson Wechter

1) Position Sought: Board Member At-Large

2) Geographic Location: San Francisco

3) Current Oversight Position and Organization: Board Member, San Francisco Sheriff’s Department Board

4) Number of Years as a NACOLE Member: 15+

5) Please list Annual Conferences or training opportunities in which you have attended:

NACOLE Annual Conference 2003 – 2017; 2020, 2021; Regional Trainings, Oakland, CA

6) Are you currently a member of the NACOLE Board? No

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

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

NACOLE has been an incredibly important part of my life since I attended my first conference in 2004. I have served continuously since 2005 as a member of multiple committees, as a member of its Board of Directors from 2007 to 2014 and as a volunteer trainer for boards and commissions around the United States. My commitment to NACOLE, and the communities it serves, has never wavered. At this juncture in my life, I think I can best serve NACOLE by again joining its Board of Directors

In addition to my institutional knowledge about NACOLE, and the history of oversight, I have a somewhat unique set of experiences and perspectives that I believe will benefit the Board:

I have worked as an investigator and a supervising investigator at two agencies that investigate complaints against police officers (the San Francisco Department of Police Accountability and the Oakland Community Police Review Agency); I currently serve on the newly established San Francisco Sheriff’s Department Oversight Board, where I am learning about jails; and I have been a community member advocating for effective oversight, working on three separate campaigns to establish or strengthen oversight agencies in San Francisco.
Civilian oversight of law enforcement has been the great passion of my professional life, and I will bring that passion and deep commitment to serving on the NACOLE Board.

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

I have been a professional investigator for forty-three years, almost half of that time investigating complaints against police officers for oversight agencies. I have worked as an investigator at five different public agencies, and as a licensed private investigator employed by law firms and attorneys. I hold the designations of Certified Criminal Defense Investigator, Certified Legal Investigator, Certified Practitioner of Oversight, Force Science Analyst and Association of Workplace Investigators Certificate Holder.

I have done trainings on investigative skills and practices at multiple NACOLE conferences and NACOLE webinars, and as part of NACOLE’s training for communities that are establishing or strengthening oversight entities.

I understand civilian oversight in the United States: its history, needs, and challenges. I am familiar with various oversight models and with specific oversight entities and know many oversight agency leaders. I understand the attributes and factors that make some oversight agencies effective, and that cause others to fail.

I understand NACOLE’s history and operations from my previous Board service and have worked closely with its Training Director and with several current board members. I also create team-building treasure hunt events, where I teach the importance of collaborative communication and problem solving when working in a group towards a common objective.

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

NACOLE faces the challenge of continuing to provide increased requests since 2020 for advice, referral to resources and training, without burning out its dedicated, but limited staff. It needs to balance the need for more staff – especially an Executive Director – with the need for guaranteed, continuous funding for staff expansion.

It is challenged to provide advice and training in oversight practices to communities considering or seeking to establish oversight. One possible solution could be creating an online training program using a curriculum based on NACOLE’s Core Competencies. This could enable NACOLE to offer training not wholly dependent on live presentations by NACOLE staff or volunteers.

NACOLE is also challenged to provide value for paid memberships by making additional resources available to members, such as free or discounted access to past virtual conference presentations. NACOLE could connect more directly with its members (especially staff members of organizational members), possibly enlisting veteran members to act as liaisons to new members.
Information on the Resources section of the NACOLE website should be current and accessible. Many of the links to websites for oversight agencies, (or for oversight agencies’ reports) listed in NACOLE’s Civilian Oversight Agency Directory do not work.

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 NACOLE’s Board of Directors from 2007 – 2014, where I was Chair of the Professional Standards, Conference and Website Committees. In 2007, I drafted NACOLE’s Qualification Standards for Oversight Investigators and Supervisory Investigators, its Recommended Training for Board and Commission Members, and played a major role in drafting NACOLE’s Code of Ethics.

I have been a member of the Training, Education and Standards, Strategic Planning, Conference and Membership Engagement & Outreach Committees. In 2012, I served on the Ad Hoc Committee that established NACOLE’s Scholarship Program. I chaired the 2010-2011 Subcommittee that established NACOLE’s Achievement in Oversight / Contribution to Oversight Award and set criteria for the NACOLE Flame Award.

I have given presentations at NACOLE conferences or webinars on Ethics in Policing and Civilian Oversight, Investigating Use of Force Incidents, Assessing Credibility, and Conducting Effective Interviews, among others.

In 2021 and 2022, I assisted NACOLE’s Director of Training by doing presentations on Effective Practices in Conducting and Reviewing Oversight Investigations for civilian oversight board and commission members in Charlottesville, Virginia, Burlington, Vermont, Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Arlington County, Virginia.

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

I have been involved with civilian oversight of law enforcement since 1982, when I worked on the community-based campaign to create San Francisco’s Office of Citizen Complaints (OCC, now known as the Department of Police Accountability). I began working at the OCC on its first day of operation in 1983 as a supervising investigator.

I left OCC, but returned there in 1998, and over the next 18 years, conducted hundreds of investigations into complaints against San Francisco police officers.

After doing EEO investigations for several years, I retired in 2017, but after George Floyd’s murder, I returned to oversight, working for the Oakland Community Police Review Agency (CPRA) investigating the Oakland Police Department’s handling of the George Floyd protests. After completing that assignment, CPRA Executive Director John Alden asked me to accept a permanent position there as a supervising investigator, which I accepted.
In 2020, I helped draft a ballot initiative to establish civilian oversight of the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department. I worked on the election campaign for this measure, and after it passed, I was appointed to the newly established San Francisco Sheriff’s Department Oversight Board.

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

- Support NACOLE’s continuing efforts to provide advice and training to communities establishing or improving oversight.

- Participate in the Board’s ongoing efforts to hire additional staff to support the increased need for NACOLE’s assistance to communities around the U.S. and to acquire additional funding for NACOLE’s growth.

- Bringing to the Board my perspective as an experienced investigator at two investigative-model oversight agencies, and as a volunteer board member involved in oversight of county jails.

- Increasing incentives for NACOLE membership, such as free or reduced cost access to recordings from NACOLE’s virtual conferences and increasing awareness of and participation in the Peer Support Program.

- Make written materials from different oversight agencies -- such as standard operating procedures, mediation program guidelines, and board and commission bylaws – easily accessible on the NACOLE website.

- Continue the efforts of the CPO sub-committee identifying books, articles, and trainings relevant to specific types of oversight activities and core competencies.

- An aspirational goal: create an ongoing training program in investigative skills (separate from the annual conference), aimed at newly hired oversight investigators and newly appointed board and commission members.

7) Additional information for voters to consider:

I have a deeply rooted and long-standing passion for effective oversight. I have demonstrated this passion in my almost two decades of work with NACOLE, in the hundreds of nights and weekends I have devoted to NACOLE projects and to other work on behalf of oversight practitioners and communities in need of effective oversight.

After my wife and our home (including our cats), oversight is the most important part of who I am. I want to channel my energy and passion for it in the most productive way possible, by serving the oversight community as a member of NACOLE’s Board of Directors.