

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Plan profile

The North Carolina Department of State Treasurer (DST) is dedicated to helping public servants become “retirement ready.” To that end, the state offers a robust pension benefit, along with the Supplemental Retirement Plans (the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans). As of February 28, 2023, the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans have combined assets of \$14.3B, with over 306,000 unique participants. The Plans are administered by DST and overseen by the North Carolina Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees. Empower provides recordkeeping and communications services.

### Background information

DST has supported NAGDCA’s efforts to encourage members to save for retirement since 2006, when NAGDCA launched National Retirement Security Week. Our support continued when NAGDCA expanded its efforts by designating the entire month of October as National Retirement Security Month (NRSM) in 2020. Fast-forward to 2022, when we took the opportunity to drive public servants throughout the state to take their *next best steps* — according to our plan data and our knowledge of common retirement planning hurdles. DST proudly submits the myNCRetirement Journey campaign, which was executed in partnership with Empower.

#### Key to engagement: Meeting 86,109<sup>1</sup> people ‘wherever they are’

**Step 1:** Meet current and future participants wherever they are in their myNCRetirement Journey. At the heart of our initiative was the best practice of *meeting people wherever they are* (by using technology) — whether working from home or in the office — and wherever they are in their career and retirement savings journey.

#### Inspiring engagement

**Step 2:** The myNCRetirement Journey campaign engaged participants to inspire action. Throughout NRSM, the campaign utilized a multi-media approach, encouraging North Carolina’s public servants to take their *next best step*. *The result?* In response to our efforts, we experienced substantially higher levels of *engagements* in October, compared to *all other months* in 2022.

#### Impressive outcomes: 7,578 participant actions taken<sup>2</sup>

**Step 3:** Take action. Once inspired, our audiences took action — and they did so at higher levels, compared to *all other months* in 2022.

### Goals

Through a coordinated effort between Empower and DST, the 2022 NRSM myNCRetirement Journey campaign was developed to drive public servants across the state to take their next best step(s) in their planning journey, using our plan data and knowledge of common hurdles. With that in mind, we encouraged our public servants to:

- Enroll
- Increase contributions
- Complete an undesignated beneficiary election(s)

### In their own words

“These plans are exclusively available to public servants in the State of North Carolina and each current or future participant is at a different stage in their career and saving for retirement. We recognized this and invited our members to join the myNCRetirement Journey campaign directly by participating in an NRSM survey, exclusive events and, most importantly, by taking action to prepare for a better future in retirement. We took the participant-first mentality to a whole new level and *included* our participants first.” – *Treasurer Dale R. Folwell, CPA*

## PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Encouraging enrollments and contribution increases could have proved challenging due to the ravages of inflation and market volatility. Despite these headwinds, we were able to meet our participants “where they are,” and were successful in driving strategic participant actions.

### Challenge #1: The financial market’s environment

Consumer prices for all items rose 6.5% in 2022. Some of the necessities, however, rose at much higher rates. For example, food rose 11.8% and fuel oil rose 41.5% — making the cost of living much more expensive for consumers.<sup>3</sup>

Market volatility was a well-known challenge leading up to NRSM. From January through August, the prevalence of intraday swings of the S&P 500® Index was “extremely elevated,” with over 87% of trading days experiencing swings of 1% or more.<sup>4</sup> Stocks had not been that volatile since 2002 and 2008.<sup>4</sup>

### Challenge #2: Delivering the message in a hybrid environment

The previous two years marked a seismic shift in consumer behavior and DST emerged with a hybrid toolbox after years of searching for the right mix of in-person and virtual communications. 2022 was the first year we officially settled into a new way of reaching individuals.

### Solution: Harness the power of technology to meet participants ‘wherever they are’

We are aware of the transformative power of technology in engaging individuals and driving actions. In fact, our enrollment technology solution won the 2021 NAGDCA Leadership Technology & Interactive Multimedia Award as well as a coveted nomination for the 2021 Art Caple President’s Award.

In 2022 (especially during NRSM), we demonstrated that the use of technology, which inspired and enabled participant actions in a virtual environment, was now ingrained in our DNA and we successfully executed it using a 70/30 hybrid delivery model. And we not only achieved the highest enrollment levels and engagements during NRSM, but we achieved our highest enrollment levels *ever* in 2022.

To underscore our NRSM achievements, the “Our results” section below showcases our impressive outcomes.

### Secret sauce: The myNCRetirement Journey campaign elements successfully leveraged technology

We utilized technology to create a digital-first experience, making it possible to scale our retirement readiness messaging to our participants “wherever they are” physically. And meeting participants “wherever they are” also speaks to where North Carolina public servants are in their savings journey — hence, the myNCRetirement Journey campaign.

We kicked off the month with a digital survey for all members, which allowed us to discover career stage-related savings behaviors. We continued with weekly themes of inspiring messages, an NRSM windfall of social media posts and a robust schedule of educational webinars, group meetings and one-on-one consultations.

70/30 Hybrid Delivery	Digital Experience	Key Digital Messaging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16 statewide events</li><li>• Group meetings</li><li>• One-on-one consultations</li><li>• Employer meetings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Survey of public servants</li><li>• North Carolina Retirement Systems’ social media</li><li>• North Carolina Retirement Systems’ NRSM webpage</li><li>• The Plans’ custom website, <a href="https://myNCPlans.com">myNCPlans.com</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Week 1: #SESO Start Early Save Often</li><li>• Week 2: #FLOSS Fresh Look on Savings &amp; Security</li><li>• Week 3: #PT Planning Transition</li><li>• Week 4: #IHIH It’s Here. It’s Happening</li></ul>

In summary, whether we were leveraging our Empower Retirement Education Counselors, creating a digital experience ([myNCPlans.com](https://myNCPlans.com), [myNCRetirement.com](https://myNCRetirement.com), webinars), or utilizing DST’s social media — scalable technology was at the forefront in all our engagements.

### Our results

One of our main focuses during NRSM was to *reach* as many individuals as possible. And we made this happen! **Our record-setting number of over 86,100 engagements paved the way for participants to take action.**

Engagements	Total engagements in Oct.	% increase over all other months in 2022 <sup>5</sup>
<i>Empower Retirement Education Counselors</i>		
Statewide event, group meeting and one-on-one consultation attendees	9,500	95%
Employer meetings	314	14%
<i>Social media reach &amp; visits</i>		
<i>myNCPlans.com Plan Info/Enroll and Home Page visits (custom website’s actionable pages)</i> <sup>6</sup>	64,968	194%
<b>Total Engagements:</b>	<b>86,109</b>	

*But we didn’t stop there.* We capitalized on these engagements — whether through social media or in a personal interaction with an Empower Retirement Education Counselor — to encourage participants to enroll, increase their contributions, or complete an undesignated beneficiary election(s) with our easy-to-use technology. **And that’s how we achieved a record-setting 7,578 participant actions during NRSM, approximately a 9% take-action rate.**

Participant actions	Total participant actions in Oct.	% increase over all other months in 2022 <sup>7</sup>
<i>Enrollment</i>	2,970	40%
<i>Contribution increase</i>	1,970	201%
<i>First-time beneficiary designation</i>	2,638	34%
<b>Total participant actions:</b>	<b>7,578 (9% take-action rate)</b>	

### Feasibility of use by other governments of all sizes

It is quite feasible to maximize the reach to tens of thousands of people through technology and this can be done by other governmental retirement plans of all sizes. Using a laser-focused approach, in tandem with far-reaching, repeatable and scalable platforms (i.e., webinars, websites, virtual meetings, and social media) is an excellent strategy for other governmental employers to employ as they strive to help their employees prepare for a more secure retirement.

Our aforementioned achievements clearly demonstrate that during NRSM, our public servants were engaged, inspired and empowered “wherever they are” to take their next best step(s) in their retirement planning journey — despite the challenges they faced. Now, we are proud to say that thousands more state and local employees are better positioned for retirement readiness.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Empower Retirement Monthly Field Activity as of 10/31/2022 and DST social media activity, website visits

<sup>2</sup> Includes the number of enrollments, contribution increases, and new beneficiary elections.

<sup>3</sup> Source: [Consumer Price Index: 2022 in review : The Economics Daily: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/consumer/2022/09/20220901.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [Is 2022 One Of The Most Volatile Years Ever For Stocks? | LPL Financial Research \(lplresearch.com\)](https://www.lplresearch.com/insights/is-2022-one-of-the-most-volatile-years-ever-for-stocks/)

<sup>5</sup> Average percentage increase of these engagements in October, compared to the same engagements taken in all other months of 2022 (i.e., January-September, and November-December).

<sup>6</sup> Unique visits to two webpages within the Plans’ website, [myNCPlans.com](https://myNCPlans.com).

<sup>7</sup> Average percentage increase of each of these participant actions taken in October, compared to the average number of the same actions taken in all other months of 2022 (i.e., January-September, and November-December).

# NATIONAL RETIREMENT SECURITY MONTH

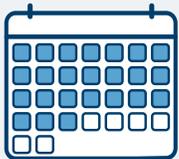
## CHALLENGE #1:

Unfavorable economic conditions



Food prices rose **11.8%<sup>1</sup>** ↑

Heating oil prices rose **41.5%<sup>1</sup>** ↑



**87%<sup>2</sup>** of intraday trading days had swings of 1% or more

## CHALLENGE #2:

Engage as many people as possible across a large state

In 2022, we settled into a digital-first, hybrid engagement model



# CAMPAIGN: myNCRetirement Journey

GOAL: Help drive public servants across the state to take their next best step(s) “wherever they are.”



Enroll



Increase contributions



Complete an undesignated beneficiary

## HIGH ENGAGEMENT:

Meeting **74,500<sup>3</sup>** people ‘wherever they are’



**9,500** individuals in meetings and statewide events

**95%<sup>5</sup>** ↑

## SUCCESSFUL RESULTS:

**7,578** participant actions (9% take-action rate)

**2,970** Enrollments

**40%<sup>6</sup>** ↑  
over all other months in 2022

**1,970** Contribution increases

**201%<sup>6</sup>** ↑  
over all other months in 2022

**2,638** First-time beneficiary designations

**34%<sup>6</sup>** ↑  
over all other months in 2022

**10** out of **10** >

It's feasible that other governmental retirement plans can use scalable technology to engage and inspire tens of thousands of people.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Consumer Price Index: 2022 in review: The Economics Daily: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2023/consumer-price-index-2022-in-review.htm>>

<sup>2</sup> Is 2022 One Of The Most Volatile Years Ever For Stocks? | LPL Financial Research <<https://lplresearch.com/2022/09/01/is-2022-one-of-the-most-volatile-years-ever-for-stocks/>>

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Start Early  
**SESOSaveOffen**  
Save Offen




North Carolina  
Total Retirement Plans

DALE R. FOWELL, CPA

**National Retirement Security Month**

I would tell  
my younger self  
to start saving  
as early as  
you can



Start Early . Save Offen





#SESO



Start Early  
**SESOSaveOffen**  
Save Offen

**Make it a Priority**




#FLOSS



Fresh Look on  
**FLOSS**  
Savings & Security




North Carolina  
Total Retirement Plans

DALE R. FOWELL, CPA

I wish I had  
started earlier,  
but I'm doing  
what I can now



Fresh Look on  
**FLOSS**  
Savings & Security





**Just  
DO IT!**

- Member, North Carolina Retirement Systems






**PT**  
Planning  
Transition

**Reach Your Goals**




North Carolina  
Total Retirement Plans  
401k | 457

DALE R. FOWELL, CPA

I am preparing for  
myNCRetirement  
by making payments  
on everything



**PT**  
Planning  
Transition





**Save money  
and ignore  
the excuses.**

17 - year Member,  
Teachers' & State Employees'  
Retirement System






It's Here  
**IHIIH**  
It's Happening




North Carolina  
Total Retirement Plans

DALE R. FOWELL, CPA

**National Retirement Security Month**

I made it and I am going to  
do exactly what  
I want to do in  
myNCRetirement



It's Here  
**IHIIH**  
It's Happening





I will be doing what I  
Love in  
myNCRetirement



It's Here  
**IHIIH**  
It's Happening




#IHIIH

