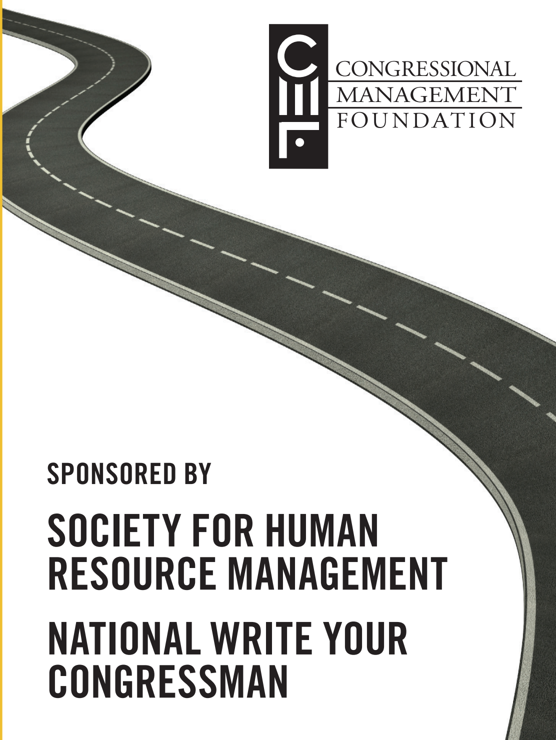
90-DAY ROADMAP

TO SETTING UP A CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE



CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

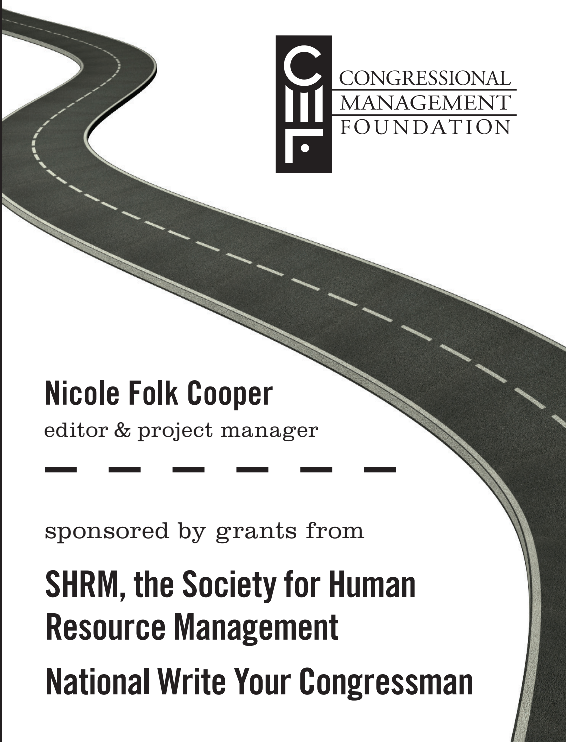
SPONSORED BY

SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

NATIONAL WRITE YOUR CONGRESSMAN

90-DAY ROADMAP

TO SETTING UP A CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE



CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

Nicole Folk Cooper

editor & project manager

sponsored by grants from

SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management

National Write Your Congressman

ISBN: 978-1-930473-25-6

Congressional Management Foundation
216 Seventh Street Southeast, Second Floor
Washington, DC 20003
202-546-0100
www.CongressFoundation.org
www.twitter.com/CongressFdn
www.facebook.com/CongressFoundation
www.linkedin.com/company/Congressional-Management-Foundation/

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Every election year, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) undertakes several initiatives aimed at helping Members-elect transition to Congress.

First, CMF provides every new and returning Member with copies of our signature publication, ***Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide***.

Then, CMF and veteran Chiefs of Staff provide just-in-time training and advice to the aides of Members-elect at their official post-election orientation, organized by the Committee on House Administration.

Now, with the ***90-Day Roadmap to Setting Up A Congressional Office***, CMF is providing new Members and staff with a written blueprint for how they should spend the bulk of their time and resources during this transition.

To prepare these materials in such a compressed timeframe is a significant accomplishment and CMF is indebted to the many people whose support and hard work made it possible.

CMF is thankful to **SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management**, for being the premier sponsor of the *90-Day Roadmap* and providing insightful commentary in its Foreword. We also welcome **National Write Your Congressman (NWYC)** as a sponsor to this guidebook and thank them for their contribution. The long-time support that CMF has received from SHRM and NWYC enables us to provide this critical guidance for Members-elect and staff.

CMF must also thank the numerous congressional staff—particularly Chiefs of Staff—who volunteer their time and advice to help the incoming class of freshmen. It is a testament to their dedication to public service that so many House and Senate staff, despite their own busy schedules, assist in the transition in various ways.

CMF is fortunate to rely on the expertise of staff from several institutional offices as well, including: Chief Administrative Officer of the House; Committee on House Administration; Congressional Research Service; Secretary of the Senate; Senate Committee on Rules and Administration; and the Senate Sergeant at Arms.

Finally, special thanks to my CMF colleagues for their support and contributions, especially Brad Fitch, George Hadijski, Ian Harris, and William Mioduszewski.

CMF is committed to providing accurate and relevant guidance and resources to new Members and staff. We welcome any feedback, corrections, or suggestions to improve our products, and are available to answer any questions you might have as you transition to Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional assistance.

Nicole Folk Cooper
Director of Research & Publications
Congressional Management Foundation

Foreword

by
SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management

Congratulations and welcome to our Nation's Capital.

SHRM believes that better workplaces can create a better world. Nowhere is this truer than in the halls of Congress, where you and your staffs shape policies that affect the lives of millions of people.

We are here to help. As the foremost expert, convener and thought leader on today's rapidly changing world of work, SHRM's mission is to empower people and workplaces. We aim to advance HR practices that maximize human potential, creating the kinds of workplaces where employers and employees thrive together.

And we want your legislative workplace to work for everyone, including a diverse workforce. We know that to build a workplace that works for all, you'll need to build a culture where everyone feels valued and heard.

So, we are proud to provide you with the ***90-Day Roadmap to Setting up a Congressional Office***. This unique tool will guide you through one of your first transition activities—establishing an effective and productive congressional office.

SHRM is privileged to partner with the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) to provide this guide to you. For more than 40 years, CMF has been the premier resource for Members of Congress in their often-overlooked role as CEOs to 541 of the nation's leading public service organizations—their own congressional offices.

Managing your team effectively will be one of the most important tasks you undertake while in office. Your staffers are the conduits to your constituency and the face of your offices here in Washington, D.C. and in your district and state. Developing the appropriate employment policies and practices, and ensuring a productive, inclusive, harassment-free workplace culture, will enable your office to run smoothly and maximize your ability to serve your constituents.

On behalf of our 300,000+ HR professionals and the more than 115 million employees they impact across the globe, I wish you success, satisfaction and strength as you help lead our country.

We look forward to working with you and your staff throughout your term.

Sincerely,

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP
President & Chief Executive Officer
SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management

Preface

Welcome to the best rollercoaster ride of your life! Whether you're a veteran chief of staff starting up a freshman office for the first time, or new to Washington, joining a newly elected Member of the 117th Congress, you're in for a wild ride.

This ride will have its exhilarations, pitfalls, unexpected turns, and occasionally will feel like the wheels are coming off the tracks. Don't worry … everyone feels like that. As an office leader, your job is to manage this chaotic 90-day trip with all the passengers (your staff) feeling the joy and exhaustion of accomplishing something truly important: setting up a congressional office.

And, if that isn't enough to challenge you … in the 117th Congress you're doing all of this in the middle of one of the greatest economic and health care crises in a generation. The coronavirus pandemic will create new obstacles that you will need to overcome: creating remote working capabilities; rapidly assessing legislative proposals to address the crisis; and managing unprecedented stress in employees and constituents.

The good news is that you're going to have some help, including this booklet. This guide will walk you through the nuts-and-bolts of creating a new office in the House and Senate. The assignment includes all the challenges of starting a small business with all the red tape of a bureaucracy. You have to buy furniture and computers, hire staff, set broad goals and create personnel policies—all while complying with a dizzying array of rules established by the legislative branch of government.

Additionally, the House and Senate have a vast team of experts and support staff who are eager to answer every question, solve almost any problem, and address your most difficult concerns. The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is an independent, nonpartisan nonprofit with more than 40 years of service to the Congress providing management advice, publications, and training. Our mission is to help Members and staff realize their potential, making them more effective in the service to constituents. Finally, in the next few months you will bring on a staff with more enthusiasm, ideas, and optimism than any other group of people you've ever worked with.

Mario Cuomo once said, "You campaign in poetry; you govern in prose." This guide is a blueprint of how you write the first chapter for your freshman congressional office. It offers a structure and plan, chapter and verse, and dots the 'i's and crosses the 't's.

On a closing note, it is important to not forget that the *management* of Congress is in the support of the *purpose* of Congress. Whether public servants identify as conservative, moderate, or liberal, they all seek public office for the same reason: to improve the human condition of their constituents and the nation. To achieve that immensely laudable goal, one must create the operational means to do so. This book will show you how.

Bradford Fitch
President and CEO
Congressional Management Foundation

Section 1:

Guiding Principles for the Transition

To help you make more informed decisions and maintain your focus during the transition, three principles should guide you during this timeframe:

1. Make Decisions Strategically
2. Learn to Delegate
3. Recognize "Less is More"

1.1 Make Decisions Strategically

The most successful Members set clear goals and develop a workable plan for achieving them.

Without this clarity, offices quickly become overwhelmed with the pressures of work and events. Members become crisis managers with little time to actually decide upon, or pursue, their priorities.

Unfortunately, many Members do not engage in planning, or make the mistake of putting it off until later in the year when they have more time.

More often than not, they end up making many critical decisions in November and December with too little strategic thought about their long-term effects.

This is not to suggest you should conduct a complete two-day planning session prior to January. Rather, a 2-3 hour session will provide the strategic framework for immediate tasks and future planning.

This preliminary planning should precede or accompany decisions such as:

- Which committee assignments to seek;
- Who you should hire for your key staff positions; and
- How many district/state offices you should open and where you should locate each one.

Consider three primary factors when developing goals for your first term:

1. your personal interests;
2. the interests or needs of your district/state; and
3. the electoral environment within which you are operating.

Your goals should be targeted to achieve *your* strategic ends, such as becoming a national leader on medical fraud or being seen in the district as the champion for addressing a sewage treatment problem.

You should have no more than six goals. Any more means that you have failed to make trade-offs, leaving you with too many priorities to pursue effectively.

With clear goals established early in your transition, you will be in a much better position to make wise decisions about setting up your offices and positioning yourself for a successful first term.

Preliminary planning will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.

For a complete discussion on planning, including a step-by-step process for setting and evaluating goals, consult Chapter 11, “Strategic Planning in Your Office” in CMF’s signature publication, *Setting Course*.

1.2 Learn to Delegate

As you think about what needs to be done, consider who should get it done. New Members are often reluctant to delegate, but being effective requires it.

Delegating involves identifying which tasks should be performed by the Member and which can be entrusted to staff. It also entails creating a reporting or communications structure that allows the Member to oversee and direct the transition staff without actually having to do the work.

Certain activities should only be done by the Member or by the Member with staff input. These include:

- Setting first-term strategic goals;
- Hiring a Chief of Staff;
- Determining which committee assignments to seek and lobbying for them;
- Attending Member orientations and party caucuses;
- Deciding how many district/state offices to open and where to locate them; and
- Selecting on an office management structure.

In contrast, many other tasks can easily be delegated to competent staff, such as:

- Working with House and Senate support offices to negotiate a district/state office lease;

- Sorting resumes, invitations and casework;
- Evaluating your equipment and determining whether to upgrade; and
- Coordinating your swearing-in activities and DC office suite selection.

You'll need a transition team for the first two months—two to four aides should be enough.

The single most valuable aide would be someone whom you trust and who can be the transition team leader. This person can attend some orientation programs, contribute to strategic planning, assist with media requests, and manage the details of setting up your office. Ideally, you would pick someone who would eventually become your Chief of Staff.

The second most useful person on the team would be someone with administrative skills to manage requests and the schedule—you will be inundated with invitations, resumes, and messages—and provide personal assistance to you and the team leader.

You'll have to decide how to compensate transition staffers. Senators may put only two staffers on the payroll, while the House is currently exploring the option of paying designated aides for November 2020. You can either recruit volunteers or pay your transition staff out of campaign funds.

Volunteers are free, but they may have competing demands and loyalties that limit their ability to give you their complete attention.

On the other hand, using campaign funds enables you to quickly assemble a team exclusively dedicated to serving your needs. However, you may have to defend your choice to spend these funds for something other than their original purpose.

Finally, as you delegate during the transition, you'll need a system that ensures that decisions are being made in accordance with your wishes.

No single system will work for everyone. One Member-elect had his transition team leader draft daily memos. Others relied on oral briefings every few days.

The key factor is your level of comfort and confidence that tasks are being carried out pursuant to your goals and priorities.

Develop a simple reporting or communications structure that meets your need for information without bogging down the decision-making process.

It can be difficult for Members—especially freshmen—to transition from being a manager to being a leader of the office.

Learn how in Chapter 10, "The Member's Role as Leader of the Office," in *Setting Course*.

1.3 Recognize “Less is More”

Finally, you will quickly discover that the critical activities mentioned earlier do not come close to encompassing the potential tasks to which you could be devoting time and energy during the first 90 days.

In fact, the last section of this guide outlines more than 60 possible tasks new Members and their aides can undertake during the transition.

All seem urgent and important, and that’s where you get tripped up.

Based on our decades of experience with congressional offices, CMF has identified **six critical activities** (and some related tasks) that need to receive the bulk of your attention in November and December.

You shouldn’t ignore the other tasks, but should keep a sense of perspective.

You will be much more effective in the long-run by thoughtfully and strategically completing the critical tasks outlined in the next section because they are essential to your first term success.

Section 2:

Critical Transition Activities & Tasks

Members-elect should focus on **six major activities** during the transition to Congress.

These activities are critical to overall first-term effectiveness and should receive the bulk of your attention and resources:

1. Make decisions about personal circumstances
2. Consider the Member's role in Congress
3. Draft a mission statement
4. Conduct preliminary planning
5. Select committee assignments
6. Set up office operations

2.1 Make Decisions about Personal Circumstances

Becoming a Member of Congress means ending one career and lifestyle and establishing a new one.

One crucial decision that each new Member faces is whether to relocate to DC. Members may want to keep a primary residence in the district or state and commute to DC during the weeks that Congress is in session.

Alternatively, they may move their families to DC and travel home on weekends and during district/state work periods.

Personal circumstances qualify as a vital transition activity primarily because they will contribute to, or distract from, the Member's emotional and physical well-being, which could significantly influence job performance.

Personal decisions also have the potential of consuming a large quantity of time and attention, so it's worth choosing which decisions to make during the transition, and which can be postponed.

2.2 Consider the Member's Role in Congress

Successful Members recognize early on that there are many diverging paths to power and figure out which path they should take.

Members who do not understand that they cannot do it all, that they cannot pursue all the paths, tend to fail and grow frustrated with their jobs.

Representatives or Senators can play **five primary roles** in Congress:

1. Legislative Insider
2. Party Insider
3. Ombudsman
4. Statesman
5. Outsider

Generally, Members can "major" in one and "minor" in another (provided the "minor" role is not incompatible with the "major" role). Members who are able to clearly define their roles in the institution can guide their careers with the aid of this insight.

Not all Members will be able to define the right role in Congress early on. Some experience and experimentation may be needed. Members should take the time they need to figure this out while still setting annual goals for themselves and their office.

2.2.1 Summary of the Five Roles

Legislative Insider

Goals:

- Advocating ideological interests and/or making the legislative process work
- Accumulating more legislative power; rising up the committee ladder

Personal Attributes:

- Enjoys working the legislative process
- Interested in developing legislative expertise
- Excellent people skills
- Effective negotiator and alliance builder

Party Insider

Goals:

- Promoting the interests and ideology of their party
- Attaining more power by moving up through the party structure

Personal Attributes:

- Interested in big picture, rather than details of legislation
- Skilled at organizing and strategizing
- Interested, skilled in electoral politics
- Excellent media/ communications skills

Ombudsman

Goals:

- Promoting the interests of the district/state and providing outstanding constituent services
- Receiving high visibility back home

Personal Attributes:

- More service-minded than ideologically-minded
- Interested in tangible outcomes rather than broad policy questions

Statesman

Goals:	**Personal Attributes:**
• Advocating good public policy, doing "what is right" vs. politically expedient • Being viewed as rising above the political fray when appropriate • Exercising both internal and external power	• More interested in big picture ideas than the details of legislation • Doesn't enjoy courting colleagues and engaging in insider politics • Excellent media/ communications skills • Enjoys playing with and framing ideas

Outsider

Goals:	**Personal Attributes:**
• Influencing the process by influencing debate through rhetoric and criticism • Advocating change or new approaches • Being viewed as bold and honest, willing to do "what is right" or challenging the status quo	• Comfortable operating independently, rather than as part of a team • Doesn't enjoy courting colleagues and engaging in insider politics • Outspoken and sometimes risk-taking • Excellent media/ communications skills

2.2.2 Four Factors to Consider When Selecting a Role

The process of consciously choosing a role or a “fit” in Congress requires analyzing and balancing four factors:

1. An understanding of the Member’s personal strengths and weaknesses and how they match the activities of Congress.
2. Clarity about the mission or, broadly speaking, what the Member hopes to accomplish through their tenure in Congress.
3. Clarity about the needs of the district or state.
4. Clarity about political circumstances (i.e., electoral strength, constituent expectations, future political plans, and the general political climate).

Coming to grips with how the Member’s personal attributes match the congressional workplace is the most difficult step in this process. It may require detailed self-analysis.

It may also require confronting some painful realities, such as:

- The Member may not have the intellectual bent to play the statesman role;
- The Member may not have the people skills to succeed in the legislative insider role;

- The Member may not have the political acumen or organizing skills necessary to become an effective party insider; or
- The Member doesn't have the media skills to succeed in the outsider role.

To conduct an honest assessment of strengths and weaknesses, the Member should not rely solely on their own judgment. Instead, seek feedback from those who know the Member well.

Finally, finding the right fit in such a complex institution as Congress may take some experimentation and fine-tuning. Assumptions about skills, interests, or what the Member finds rewarding, may prove to be incorrect.

The costliest and most common mistake is not selecting the wrong role, but selecting none at all.

A more thorough discussion of the five roles, and examples of Members who fit them, are in Chapter 9, "Defining Your Role In Congress," in *Setting Course*.

2.3 Draft a Mission Statement

Articulating the Member's values, political ambitions and personal interests in a broad, but concrete mission statement also leads to more effective decision making during the transition.

An effective mission statement will provide clarity for many of the major decisions that must be made, such as pursuing committee assignments, hiring staff, and opening offices.

It also maximizes the chances of making significant long-term accomplishments.

If the Member has no clear sense of mission, short-term objectives are less likely to contribute to any long-term accomplishments. Productivity in diverse areas over many years doesn't necessarily add up to solid achievement.

The themes addressed in a mission statement can focus on broad legislative goals, constituent service goals, or political goals.

Unfortunately, many Members, when pushed to draft a mission statement, respond with vague statements, such as "to make a difference." While noble, this statement offers little guidance to staff as to what vision drives the Member (and should drive the staff), or how this mission differs from those of virtually every other Member of Congress.

Poor examples	*Good examples*
To make a difference.	To become a leading advocate of educational reform in Congress.
To get re-elected.	To play a lead role in my state's economic development.
To give my constituents the best representation possible.	To get elected to the Senate in this decade.

Posing the following questions to the Member should help provide some clarity:

- Why did you run for Congress? What specifically did you hope to achieve if elected?
- What would you like to be remembered for at the end of your tenure in Congress?
- Which Members of Congress do you most respect and why?
- What is your vision of America's future?
- What values or characteristics should define the way your staff works and the office operates?

The more focused the mission statement, the more direction it provides the entire staff. It should embody no more than four main themes, but preferably just one or two. Too many themes means the Member has yet to make the hard choices the process demands. An office can't successfully pursue more than a few long-term goals at any one time without spreading its resources too thinly.

A quick review of the most effective Members of Congress should demonstrate that they developed early in their careers a clear, long-term focus—and adhered to it steadfastly.

Members without clear missions and goals usually evolve into one of two types of legislators: an ineffective Member of Congress, or a *former* Member of Congress.

CMF also produced an additional resource for new Members: the *Job Description for a Member of Congress*, much like those that exist for staff positions.

We grouped Members' current duties into seven main functions and vetted our findings with former Members of Congress, and current and former congressional staffers.

We encourage Members and staff to review this resource as well, available at CongressFoundation.org.

2.4 Conduct Preliminary Planning

To give the office an initial focus, the Member should convene a short two- to three-hour planning session, preferably in December.

Attendees should include the incoming Chief of Staff, District/State Director, Legislative Director (if one has been selected), and perhaps one or two trusted advisors.

The goal of the meeting is to begin developing a strategic framework or narrative which will guide the Member activities and the office.

This session is different than a two-day planning meeting, which CMF strongly recommends every office conduct during the first four to six months in office. Rather, the short session provides an initial roadmap to guide decision-making.

Questions to ask during this session include:

1. What issues is the Member best known for or most closely associated with (based on the campaign or previous public service)?
2. What issues or needs are of greatest concern to constituents today?
3. What other issues, if any, are likely to emerge over the next two years that would be of significant importance to constituents?

4. What issues is Congress likely to address over the next two years that are of significant interest to either constituents or to the Member?

5. What political problems or threats must the Member (and your staff) address over the next two years?

6. What campaign promises or statements did the Member make that constituents now expect to see fulfilled?

7. What policy issues does the Member care most about or feel most passionate about?

8. What other constituent expectations, if any, exist (e.g., predecessor practices, political practices in the state) that must be addressed?

9. What kind of image should the Member project to your constituents?

10. Based on the above analysis, what should be the top priorities for the office (political, policy, administrative) during the first term in office?

For a complete discussion about how and when to conduct a planning session, consult Chapter 11, "Strategic Planning in Your Office" in *Setting Course* or visit CongressFoundation.org for more information.

2.5 Select Committee Assignments

This is a critical activity for November and December because:

1. Committees can play a significant role in a Member's success; and

2. The entire assignment process is almost always over by swearing-in day.

The formal committee assignment process begins during the orientation and party organizational meetings held during the first week Members-elect are in Washington, DC.

The informal lobbying, however, often starts the day after the election, as new and returning Members jockey for position for open committee seats. In December and January, the party's decisions are usually finalized.

It is common for Members to try to switch panels mid-career, and sometimes even mid-Congress as others leave, so while choosing and lobbying for committee seats are critical decisions, they are not irreversible. Still, it is preferable to get on the choice committees as a freshman.

However, the Member's ability to do so will be affected by how clearly the Member and staff have defined the Member's role in Congress, the mission statement, and strategic framework.

2.5.1 How the Committee Assignment Process Works

Once party leaders finalize committee sizes and party ratios, the process for a Member receiving a committee assignment has three formal steps:

1. Party recommendation (through the Steering Committees or the "Committee on Committees")—by far the most important step;

2. Approval by the party caucus/conference; and

3. A House or Senate floor vote on the entire roster of assignments created by each party's leadership, for pro forma acceptance.

In making their recommendations, the "party committees" consider a number of factors, including:

- The number of vacancies on each committee;

- The number of Members competing for those vacancies;

- The chamber and party rules governing the number and types of committees on which a Member may serve; and

- Each Member's seniority, background, ideology, election margin, leadership support, and sometimes geography.

Finally, an increasing trend in recent years has been to provide the better committee assignments to freshmen who are seen most vulnerable electorally.

Chamber and party rules govern how many, and what types, of committees a Member may serve on. For convenience, committees are grouped into categories. The process is different in each chamber.

2.5.2 House Committee Categories

Each party committee in the House determines its own categories and which committees it wants to place in those categories (see page 24).

House Members can serve on no more than two standing committees and four subcommittees of those committees.

Both parties limit service to one exclusive committee, although a Democratic Member can serve on the Budget or House Administration panels while on an exclusive committee.

A Republican Member may take a leave of absence from a standing committee allowing Members to serve on the Rules Committee without losing seniority on the standing committee.

Both parties allow service on two nonexclusive committees.

However, waivers are often granted by the respective party to serve on additional committees and subcommittees.

For both Democrats and Republicans, service on the Ethics Committee is exempt from limitations.

House Committee Categories

Democrats	**Republicans**
Exclusive	
Appropriations	Appropriations
Energy & Commerce*	Energy & Commerce
Financial Services**	Financial Services
Rules	Rules
Ways & Means	Ways & Means
Nonexclusive	
Agriculture	Agriculture
Armed Services	Armed Services
Budget	Budget
Education and Labor	Education and Labor
Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs
Homeland Security	Homeland Security
House Administration	
Judiciary	Judiciary
Natural Resources	Natural Resources
Oversight & Reform	Oversight & Reform
Science, Space, and Technology	Science, Space, and Technology
Small Business	Small Business
Transportation & Infrastructure	Transportation & Infrastructure
Veterans' Affairs	Veterans' Affairs
Exempt	
Ethics	Ethics
	House Administration
Select Intelligence	Select Intelligence
Joint Economic	Joint Economic
Joint Library	Joint Library
Joint Printing	Joint Printing
Joint Taxation	Joint Taxation

**Applies to Democratic Members named in or after the 104th Congress.*
***Applies to Democratic Members named in or after the 109th Congress.*
Note: Other temporary committees that do not count against assignment limitations are not shown.

2.5.3 Senate Committee Categories

Senate committees are categorized according to Senate rules as either “A,” “B,” or “C” (see p. 26). Each Senator may serve on two “A” committees, one “B,” and one or more “C” committees. However, waivers are often granted to permit service on additional panels.

In addition, each party designates certain committees as “Super A,” and prohibits Senators under party rules from serving on more than one of these committees.

The list of “Super A” committees is typically the same for both parties: Appropriations, Armed Services, Finance, and Foreign Relations (though as of the 115th Congress, Democrats do not consider Foreign Relations as “Super A,” which could change if/when they are in the majority).

Senators from the same state are generally prohibited from serving on the same committee by Republican Conference rule and Democratic tradition (not by rule).

2.5.4 Advice for Choosing and Pursuing Committee Assignments

There is no single right way to decide which committees to pursue or how to lobby for them. Members have different needs and strengths, which should govern your choices and strategies for gaining leadership support.

Veteran observers of the process offer the following time-tested advice to Members-elect:

- **Begin strategizing immediately after the election.** Identify where the openings are and learn the jurisdiction of each committee. Talk with other Members about the working atmosphere of each committee and the

Senate Committee Categories

"A" Committees	"B" Committees	"C" Committees
Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry	Budget	Select Ethics
Appropriations	Rules & Administration	Indian Affairs
Armed Services	Small Business & Entrepreneurship	Joint Library
Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs	Veterans' Affairs	Joint Printing
Commerce, Science, & Transportation	Special Aging	Joint Taxation
Energy & Natural Resources	Joint Economic	
Environment & Public Works		
Finance		
Foreign Relations		
Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions		
Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs		
Judiciary		
Select Intelligence		

operating style of the committee chair. Plot a strategy for obtaining the best assignment.

- **Seek advice from several sources.** Talk with “your” representatives on the party committee (i.e., those who represent your region, class or other grouping) about your choices. Talk to other Members from your district, state, or region about strategy. Consult Members from the same group, such as women, conservatives or progressives, for advice and support.

- **Pursue committees that will help achieve the Member’s goals.** If the Member and staff have done the strategic thinking outlined earlier (i.e., Member’s role, mission statement, preliminary planning), that knowledge can help narrow choices. If you know precisely where you want to go, or if your district or state has a few dominant interests, your best choices may be easy to identify.

- **Make your case to colleagues.** Explain why a particular assignment is important to you and why you are qualified to serve. Also demonstrate why it should be important to your colleagues; in other words, why it is in their best interest to grant the Member a seat. Use your time wisely at the orientation programs and early organizational meeting to form relationships and coalitions and shape other Members’ perceptions.

- **Consider leadership requests.** Leadership may recommend to a Member where to seek assignment. The composition of committees is important to party leaders who organize the chamber. Doing what the leadership wants early in a career often pays great dividends later.

- **Assess your chances.** Many Members seek assignment to the most prestigious committees, but appointments for freshmen and junior Members on these panels are rare, especially in the House. Only when an extraordinary number of new Members are elected is leadership willing to appoint freshmen to these committees. Furthermore, only when their numbers are large are freshmen emboldened to demand their share of top assignments.

  This does not mean you shouldn't try for a top committee, but you should consider your chances of obtaining a top spot, and perhaps have a second choice in mind.

The process of choosing and lobbying for committees is explained in further detail in Chapter 2, "Selecting Committee Assignments," in *Setting Course*.

2.6 Set Up Office Operations

Finally, the sixth critical task is setting up office operations. Because of the detail associated with this task it merits a separate section which follows.

Section 3:

Setting Up Your Office Operations

An incredible number of decisions encompass the setting up of a congressional office, but some decisions are clearly more important than others.

Your goal for the first 90 days should be to determine your staffing and equipment needs, and office management policies, for at least two offices (DC and district/state). This will allow you to:

1. Take care of routine business from opening day;
2. Create a foundation that will provide a smooth transition to a fully functioning operation that reflects your values and priorities, and is capable of accomplishing the strategic objectives you've set for your first term.

Setting up a congressional office is comprised of five critical tasks, discussed in the following section:

1. Create a first-year budget;
2. Create a management structure & communication methods;
3. Hire core staff;
4. Evaluate technology needs; and
5. Establish district/state offices.

3.1 Create a First-Year Budget

Crafting a draft budget in November or December, even if it's only a rough estimate, has clear advantages over developing a budget after swearing-in. It will:

- Help you avoid making financial commitments which you may later regret (i.e., staff hires and salary decisions, district/state office decisions, computer purchases).
- Force you to address the difficult trade-offs that are inherent in budgeting rather than operating on the optimistic assumption that you can fund all of your operational needs.
- Let you know if your goals are feasible or serve as a useful check on your plans.
- Give you confidence that major financial commitments you do make will fit into a larger budgeting plan that reflects your priorities.

3.1.1 How to Develop a First-Year Budget

Your first-year budget will be the hardest to put together, with so little staff support, relevant information, or time.

Veterans advise that it is nearly impossible to develop an accurate, detailed budget until at least three months into your first term. Still, it is important to start putting figures down on paper as soon as possible. Here's how:

Step 1: Collect expense information. (Section 3.1.3.)

Step 2: Budget for your major allocations.

Step 3: Compare major allocations to your office goals to make sure they reflect your priorities.

Step 4: Gradually build toward developing a month-by-month budget (primarily a first-year task).

3.1.2 Overview of House and Senate Allowances

While each chamber sets its own spending levels and regulations on the use of funds, they share some budgeting characteristics.

1. **Allocations are fixed.** Unlike campaign funds, you cannot raise more.

2. **Members are personally responsible for finances.** If an office overspends its allocation on official expenses, the Member, personally, must pay the difference.

3. **Funds are not actually given to you.** You will submit payment requests (called "vouchers") to the House Finance Office or the Senate Disbursing Office, which remits payments and reimbursements that draw down on your allocated funds.

4. **Funds are authorized annually.** They must be obligated by the end of their authorized year or are lost to your use. But if you obligate within the year, the payment can come up to two years later. Many offices use unexpended funds at the end of the year to stock up on supplies, upgrade or pay off equipment, and give staff performance bonuses.

   Note that the House uses a *legislative year* (January 3 to January 2) and the Senate uses a *fiscal year* (October 1 to September 30).

5. **Funds have limited uses.** They can only be used for categories of expenses sanctioned as "allowable" (i.e., "reimbursable").

6. **You don't pay for employer taxes and some employee benefits.** Staff salaries are deducted from your account, but your office is not charged for the government's share of payroll taxes, pension/retirement plans, or health, life, disability and unemployment insurance.

7. **Your office is provided separate allocations for student loan repayment and paid interns.** Each chamber authorizes specific amounts for their Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP), and for paid interns through the House Paid Internship Program and the Senate Intern Compensation Fund. Offices may still pay interns out of their official resources (the MRA or the Senator's Account). Interns paid through the House Paid Internship Program do not count against the Member's employee staff ceiling.

8. **You are not charged for DC office space, standard furniture, limited parking spaces and many support services.** Each Member gets one office suite in a House or Senate building. These offices, along with furnishings and support services, are provided at no cost to you.

Additional Information for House Offices

- **There is a single account (called the Members' Representational Allowance or MRA) from which all expenses are paid.** Having a single account makes budgeting an extremely versatile tool for achieving a Member's strategic goals.
- **All Members do not have the same MRA.** Three variables affect the MRA amount:
    a. Distance from DC to the Member's district;
    b. Cost of office space in the district; and
    c. Number of postal drops (i.e., households, post office boxes, etc.) in the district.

The Committee on House Administration does the calculations and will inform you of your MRA. In 2020, MRAs typically ranged from $1.35 million to $1.56 million, with an average of $1.45 million.

For more information, review the *Member's Handbook* (cha.house.gov), and consult with the House Finance Office (202-225-7474) and the Committee on House Administration (Democrats: 202-225-2061; Republicans: 202-225-8281).

Additional Information for Senate Offices

- **Senators have many accounts, each with a different sum of money and spending limitations.** In most cases, allocations are determined by state population.

  1. **Senator's Official Personnel and Office Expense Account ("the Senator's Account").** This main account ranges from \$3.4 million to \$5.4 million, with an average of \$3.7 million, depending on:

     a. State population;

     b. Distance from Washington, DC; and

     c. Number of postal addresses in the state.

     This account is for staff salaries and all other "official office expenses," including travel, subscriptions, franked mail, and office supplies. It includes \$50,000 for mass mailings (which cannot be exceeded, but can be used for other expenses).

  2. **Economic Allocation Fund (EAF).** The EAF can be used anytime during your six-year term for the purchase of IT and office equipment in your DC and state offices. It is given in two three-year allotments. Unspent balances from the first allotment may be carried over into the remainder of the term.

  3. **Constituent Services Systems (CSS) funds.** This funding is for the six-year term and is

for CSS hardware, software purchases and maintenance.

4. **Home State Furniture and Furnishings.** Your office will receive a lifetime allowance—ranging from $52,000 to $73,000—for furniture, drapes, carpeting and other furnishings for all your state offices.

5. **Senator's Allowance.** For each six-year term, $5,000 is allotted for the purpose of furnishing a personal office, reception room and conference room with nonstandard items in the DC office. It cannot be rolled over to future terms.

6. **Other accounts allot things rather than money.** Samples include state office rent, long distance telephone service, paper and envelopes, and printing/folding services.

- **Senate offices may pay for "officially related expenses" with excess campaign funds.** Generally, this category includes expenses incurred in connection with official duties that are not reimbursable under Senate rules, such as refreshments provided at official events. Contact the Senate Ethics Committee for guidance. (Note: this option is not available for House offices.)

- **Senate budgets are prorated for partial years.** New Senators do not take office until three months into the fiscal year, so they receive three-quarters of their usual allotments (January through September). Check with the Senate Disbursing Office to confirm your allocations.

For more information, consult the *Senate Handbook*, the more extensive *Senate Manual*, the Senate Disbursing Office (202-224-3205) and the Senate Rules and Administration Committee (202-224-6352).

3.1.3 Sources for Collecting Useful Budget Data

- **Your predecessor's budget(s).** If you can obtain it, this is the best possible source of information tailored to *your* district/state. Review more than one year since election year and retiree budgets can differ significantly from regular years. Also understand how your priorities differ from your predecessor's.
- **The budget(s) from an adjoining district or similar state.** If you cannot obtain your predecessor's budget(s) easily, a district or state with similar demographic and geographic characteristics will help.
- ***Statement of Disbursements of the House* and *Report of the Secretary of the Senate*.** As required by law, these massive reports publicly disclose every office expenditure. The House publishes quarterly (disbursements.house.gov) while the Senate report comes out twice a year (www.senate.gov). If you can't get your

predecessor's budget, you can still review their expenses.

- **Combined Airlines Ticket Office (CATO) or Airline Congressional Desks.** These offices can help in estimating travel expenses, if you know how often you plan to travel to the district/state.
- **House Information Resources (HIR) and Senate Sergeant at Arms (SAA) Office Support Services.** Computer equipment may be a big ticket purchase during your first year or two. HIR (202-225-6002) and the SAA (202-224-0821) can help you estimate upgrade costs.
- **Congressional Management Foundation (CMF).** As the producer of this guide, S*etting Course*, and several reports on House and Senate employment practices, CMF is an expert on congressional budgets, compensation, benefits, and personnel policies. CMF can answer your questions on a range of operational and management issues, and has numerous resources and guidance on our website: CongressFoundation.org.
- **Average spending by freshman House offices.** As shown in Section 3.1.4, CMF analyzed the spending of the House freshmen in 2019. Understanding how other offices spent their budgets in their first year is a helpful exercise.
- **Compensation Studies.** These studies list the salary averages and ranges for positions in personal offices. The Congressional Research

Service has analyzed common House and Senate positions. Average salaries from these studies are in Sections 3.1.5 and 3.1.6.

- **Outside third parties.** Several off-the-Hill groups analyze official expenditures, which bring additional scrutiny on your expenses.

3.1.4 Average Spending by House Freshmen in Their First Year

Category	Spending	% of MRA
Franked Mail	$21,990	1.57%
Personnel Compensation	$900,963	65.41%
Travel	$47,792	3.46%
Rent, Communication & Utilities	$78,582	5.70%
Printing and Reproduction	$44,297	3.20%
Other Services	$45,251	3.29%
Supplies & Materials	$30,472	2.21%
Equipment	$16,471	1.20%
Average Expenditures	**$1,185,559**	**86%**
Unspent Funds	$192,145	14%
Average Allocated Funds (MRA)	**$1,377,704**	

Note: Figures represent an analysis of the 85 full-year freshman offices' spending in 2019 as reported in the Statement of Disbursements of the House. Expenditures in the "Transportation of Things" category were uncommon and not included this analysis.

3.1.5 Average Salaries of House Staff

Washington Office	
Chief of Staff	$153,302
Communications Director	$77,817
Executive Assistant	$59,981
Legislative Assistant	$56,741
Legislative Correspondent	$45,457
Legislative Director	$85,596
Office Manager	$55,829
Press Secretary	$62,515
Scheduler	$56,270
Staff Assistant	$41,961
District Offices	
Caseworker	$52,187
Constituent Services Representative	$48,308
District Director	$94,771
Field Representative	$50,824

Source: *CRS Report R44323, "Staff Pay Levels for Selected Positions in House Member Offices, 2001-2019,"* Congressional Research Service, accessible at https://crsreports.congress.gov. Average salaries shown are for 2019.

3.1.6 Average Salaries of Senate Staff

Washington Office	
Administrative Director	$113,389
Chief of Staff	$166,646
Communications Director	$117,207
Counsel	$90,265
Executive Assistant	$78,477
Legislative Assistant	$76,770
Legislative Correspondent	$42,409
Legislative Director	$141,493
Press Secretary	$74,966
Scheduler	$84,916
Staff Assistant	$43,898
State Offices	
Casework Supervisor	$84,682
Caseworker	$51,829
Constituent Services Representative	$49,749
Field Representative	$60,296
State Director	$137,312

Source: *CRS Report R44324, "Staff Pay Levels for Selected Positions in Senators' Offices, FY2001-FY2018,"* Congressional Research Service, accessible at https://crsreports.congress.gov. Average salaries shown are for FY2018.

3.1.7 Key First-Year Budget Questions

1. What is the fundamental orientation of your office?
    - How much emphasis will be on legislation vs. casework vs. constituent mail?
    - How often does the Member want/need to be in the district/state?
    - Political realities: is the district/state electorally safe or marginal?
    - If your plan calls for all the action to be in the district/state, are you allocating the appropriate staff and resources there?
2. What commitments and campaign promises have you made?
    - Have you promised anyone a specific salary?
    - Have you promised to open several district/state offices?
    - Have you promised a high level of communication with constituents?
    - Have you promised not to spend your entire budget each year?
3. Do your constituents have expectations based on your predecessor?
    - Can you close an existing district/state office without causing an outcry?
    - Are certain practices worth retaining (e.g., quarterly town hall meetings, etc.)?

4. What expectations do you have?
   - Do you expect to be in constant contact with staff and will this mean purchasing an increased number of handheld devices?
   - Are you accustomed to a high level of media attention and do you wish to maintain high visibility in office?
5. To what extent do you intend to use outreach mail as a means of communicating with your constituents?
6. Do you intend to spend your entire allowance on office expenses or do you want to report that you returned a substantial amount of unspent funds at the end of the year?

3.1.8 Advice from Veterans on Your First-Year Budget

- **Learn the rules and regulations and ask for help.** Sometimes the rules are counterintuitive. Seek assistance from the House Finance Office, the House Administration Committee, the Senate Disbursing Office, the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, and the respective Ethics Committees for each chamber.
- **Keep your options open when it comes to spending leftover funds.** Many offices have a multi-purpose cushion fund for contingencies, to pay off computer equipment, to stock up on supplies at year-end, to give staff bonuses, or simply be left unspent.

- **Get to know the staff in the House Finance Office and the Senate Disbursing Office, especially the ones assigned to work with your office.** They know the tricks of the trade.
- **Use the buddy system.** Most Chiefs of Staff recommend that a new office team up with a veteran office for the first year. The House and Senate Chiefs of Staff Associations can also help.
- **Estimate your transportation costs as soon as possible.** Distance from DC does not always correlate with transportation costs. For example, roundtrip airfare from DC to a hub such as Los Angeles is generally less expensive than from DC to a smaller market such as Mobile, Alabama.
- **Budget at the highest level of detail that still allows you to keep sight of the big picture.** For instance, a single category called "subscriptions" may not provide enough information to decide whether to subscribe to a news service online or in hard copy.

Additional Advice for House Offices

- **District offices are expensive.** You will pay for virtually everything associated with a district office out of your MRA, and once you open it, closing it may be politically and contractually difficult.
- **Pay attention to specials that won't last.** When introductory offers expire, the increased costs can drastically alter your budget.

Additional Advice for Senate Offices

- **Learn about the "things" allocated to your office.** For example, don't buy copier paper if the paper allotment gives you plenty.
- **Purchase computer equipment out of the Senator's Account in the first year**, when an office surplus is likely, rather than deplete your Economic Allocation Fund, which has to last several years.
- **Decide early if you're going to send out mass mailings and whether you'll spend up to the $50,000 franking limit.** This money can be used for other priorities, such as salaries, so management must agree on how it should be spent.
- **Pay close attention to budgeting in August.** It's near the fiscal year-end and a time when a lot of staff travel to the state takes place. Don't let surprise travel expenses upset your budget.
- **Know that changes in allocations can influence the rest of your budget.** If the Senate decides to pay for a popular service through the institution, office budgets might be cut that amount the following year. These changes are tough to predict, but be aware they can occur.

> **Detailed information about congressional budgeting is in Chapter 3, "Creating a First-Year Budget" in *Setting Course*.**

3.2 Create a Management Structure & Communication Methods

3.2.1 Selecting a Management Structure

While few congressional managers may draft written management structures outlining their office operations and hierarchy, the questions of authority, responsibility, and accountability are central to your operations.

Specifically, freshman offices need to address basic structural questions, and the answers to these questions should influence early hiring decisions and how your office operates.

- How will office priorities influence office structure?
- What role will the Member play in office management?
- Who will report directly to the Member?
- Who will report directly to the Chief of Staff (CoS)?
- How does the experience, management style (hands-on or delegates) and role of the Chief of Staff (managerial, political, legislative, press) affect what kind of staff are needed?

- Who will report directly to the District/State Director (DD/SD)?
- Will the DD/SD report directly to the Member or to the CoS?
- Which other staff will have supervisory responsibilities?
- Which, if any, staff will report directly to more than one person? (e.g., Member and CoS)
- Will the district/state offices be managed by region or by function (e.g., casework vs. outreach vs. Member schedule and travel)?

3.2.2 Common Management Structures

No single best organizational structure exists. The key is to select one that best suits the mission, goals and personnel of the office, considering:

- The management styles and management skills of the Member, the Chief of Staff, and the District/State Director;
- The demands on the Member's time;
- The experience of the staff; and
- The amount of supervisory attention and oversight needed.

Congressional offices tend to use three basic models, though many create hybrids from these. Senate offices have more options and flexibility when defining their management structure, due to their larger staff sizes and greater number of state offices they manage.

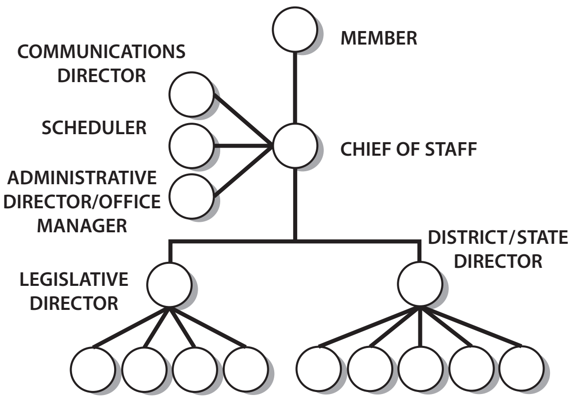
The following sections describe these structures from most to least centralized, and most to least common.

3.2.3 Centralized Structure

Basic Characteristics:

- Senior staff report to the Chief of Staff;
- Chief of Staff reports to the Member;
- Chief of Staff has a great deal of responsibility for managing the office.

Offices Utilizing this Model: Vast majority of House and Senate offices.

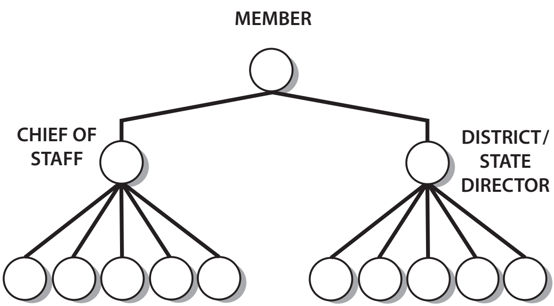


3.2.4 Washington–District/State Parity Structure

Basic Characteristics:

- Chief of Staff and District/State Director share responsibility for managing the office and each reports directly to the Member;
- DC staff report to the Chief of Staff;
- District/state staff report to the District/State Director.

Offices Utilizing this Model: Several House and Senate offices.

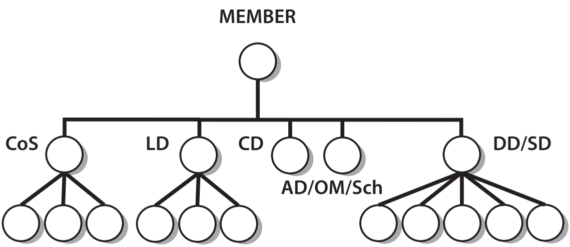


3.2.5 Functional Structure

Basic Characteristics:

- Senior Staff (functional heads) report to the Member;
- Chief of Staff usually maintains office management responsibility.

Offices Utilizing this Model: Several House and Senate offices.



Learn more about the advantages and disadvantages of the basic management structures in Chapter 4 of *Setting Course*.

3.2.6 Designing a System for Member–Staff Communications

One of the most important issues facing all personal offices is how to effectively manage Member–staff communications. Areas to address include:

- What should be communicated orally and what in writing?
- Which matters should be brought to the Member's attention and which can be handled by the Chief of Staff (CoS) or Legislative Director?
- Should the CoS or Scheduler play the role of gatekeeper and screen staff requests for time with the Member, or should your office maximize staff access to the Member?
- Should the Member meet with staff individually or in small groups (which could affect the total number of meetings the Member will attend)?
- Who should initiate most meetings?
- Should the purpose of Member-staff meetings be to convey information, engage in analysis, or both?

These issues are vitally important because information is the lifeblood of a Member of Congress, and most of it comes from the staff—the Member's eyes and ears.

The methods that evolve for managing Member–staff communications will significantly shape the way the office functions and its organizational culture.

Learn how to create a positive office culture in Chapter 10, "The Member's Role as Leader of the Office" in *Setting Course*.

3.2.7 Methods of Communication

Six primary communication methods are used in congressional personal offices:

1. Open-door or unscheduled meetings initiated by staff;
2. One-on-one meetings initiated by the Member;
3. One-on-one appointments scheduled by staff;
4. Group meetings;
5. Written communications (primarily memos, notes, and briefing materials); and
6. Email.

Freshman Members and Chiefs of Staff should devise a communication system that uses a full range of these methods and addresses the following 10 objectives. Each method has strengths when used in moderation but shows weaknesses when overused.

3.2.8 Communication Objectives

1. Essential information deserving of Member attention gets to the Member.

2. Information that doesn't require the Member's attention is handled by others.
3. Staff have sufficient access to the Member to effectively represent the Member.
4. Staff convey simple, factual information to the Member quickly and concisely.
5. Opportunities exist for creative and analytic thinking (e.g., problem-solving, brainstorming, strategizing—not just exchanging information).
6. Meetings between the Member and staff efficiently utilize the Member's time.
7. Rapport, trust, and good working relations are built between the Member and the staff.
8. The Member responds to staff requests for input and decisions promptly and effectively.
9. Relevant decisions or important information discussed with the Member reaches other staff when appropriate.
10. The Member and Chief of Staff have opportunities to clarify expectations and provide feedback to staff about their performances.

Ensure your meetings are well-run by following the 10 tips on "Conducting Effective Meetings" in Chapter 4 of *Setting Course*.

3.2.9 Summary—Designing a Communications System

In designing a communication system for your office, keep four key points in mind:

1. Employ a full range of methods to create more effective communications.
2. Draft a memo that specifies how the office intends to manage Member–staff communications.
3. Evenly enforce the agreed-upon ground rules and practices.
4. Conduct regular office-wide discussions about your communications to identify problems and consider ways of fine-tuning the system to address them.

3.3 Hire Core Staff

New Members are under enormous pressure to hire a full staff as soon as possible, so they frequently try to assemble that staff in the two months between the election and swearing-in day.

The results are often poor hiring choices that do not contribute to the Member's success, and time spent neglecting other critical tasks that must be accomplished before swearing-in day.

The long-term effects can be low morale, talent that does not match office needs and priorities, high staff turnover, and wasted resources in hiring and training new staff.

CMF strongly recommends an alternative: new Members hire *only* a core staff in November and December to perform the essential functions outlined in Section 3.3.1.

The remainder of your staff should then be hired when you have finalized your goals and have the time and resources necessary to hire the right candidates.

3.3.1 Core Staff Functions for the Transition

CMF has identified the vital functions that must be performed from opening day:

- **Answering the phones/greeting visitors.** This person will be the first contact constituents and others will have with your office. Staff who handle this function should be helpful and convey professionalism.

- **Beginning to manage the mail.** You may not have the capacity to keep up with (or dig out from) the tons of constituent mail and email you will receive. You may not have established all of your correspondence policies. Still, you should start organizing/categorizing your mail and developing basic responses to constituent letters, even if it is a general acknowledgment of their concerns and opinions.
- **Conducting basic legislative research.** January tends to be slow legislatively, so you'll only need someone who can generate talking points or explain your positions on key issues. You also need some legislative support for the few floor votes that do take place.
- **Maintaining the computer system.** You want someone who can keep your current computer systems functioning. You also want someone who can help decide if the office should upgrade, and if so, what to purchase.
- **Handling scheduling requests.** Someone has to organize, help prioritize and respond to the many requests you'll receive for appointments with the Member, as well as invitations to attend events in DC and in the district/state.
- **Providing the Member with personal assistance.** A variety of administrative tasks

should be delegated to staff, such as making travel arrangements, staffing the Member at district/state events, drafting a thank you note, etc. How much assistance you will require is a matter of personal preference and style.

- **Handling casework.** You will most likely inherit cases from your predecessor, and many constituents will inquire about the status of their cases. You need to respond professionally and knowledgeably to these constituents, though you might not immediately work on their cases. You will also need to handle intake on new cases.
- **Handling press inquiries.** Even if you don't actively seek press, they will be looking for comments on various issues and doing profiles of the "new faces." Someone needs to be able to speak on your behalf, assist you in managing these requests, and draft basic press releases.
- **Day-to-day management.** This function includes tasks like advising the Member, coordinating activities of the DC *and* district/state offices and staff, as well as coordinating hiring, spending and other office decisions.
- **Handling finances.** Someone needs to track and submit vouchers for purchases, and begin setting up a process for managing office finances and record-keeping. This person can also help develop a first-year budget.
- **Coordinating Office Move (Senate only).** You will first have a temporary DC office before

moving to a permanent suite. Depending on the number of offices changing suites, you can expect to be in your temporary space from three to six months. Somebody, preferably with experience, needs to manage this transition while the daily work continues.

How many core staff people do you need for these functions? Hire as few staff as possible, especially if you are as yet undecided about your office goals.

Remember that you are looking for people who will fit an overall office strategy. It is useful, however, to have staff who are flexible and capable of performing many roles, as shown in Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3.

Keep in mind that hiring part-time or shared employees, or contracting out services, can be more cost-effective than hiring a permanent staffer. These employees (or contractors) require virtually no training and can provide more expertise in specific areas.

Based on our research with freshmen Chiefs of Staff, CMF recommends that you strongly consider this option for your financial and systems administration functions, at least for the first six months of your term.

3.3.2 Sample House Core Staff

COMMON TITLE	FUNCTIONS
Chief of Staff	day-to-day management, press, finances*
Scheduler	scheduling, personal assistance, finances*
Legislative Assistant	legislative research, mail
Systems Administrator	computer maintenance*, mail
Staff Assistant (DC)	answering phone, greeting visitors, mail
Staff Assistant (district)	answering phone, greeting visitors
Constituent Services Rep (district)	answering phone, casework, personal assistance at district events (*optional* — may not be needed depending upon Member's style)
District Director (district)	day-to-day management, press (*optional* — may not be needed if DC Chief of Staff handles these duties)
Scheduler (district)	scheduling, personal assistance (*optional* — may not be needed if DC Scheduler handles these duties)
Field Rep (district)	personal assistance at district events (*optional* — may not be needed depending upon Member's style)

**Note: Shared employees and contractors are an effective way to handle financial administration and systems administration, especially in the first six months, and free up core staff to handle other duties.*

3.3.3 Sample Senate Core Staff

COMMON TITLE	FUNCTIONS
Chief of Staff	day-to-day management
Scheduler	scheduling, personal assistance
Communications Director	press
Administrative Director/ Office Manager	coordinating office move, assisting day-to-day management, finances
Legislative Assistant	legislative research, mail
Systems Administrator	computer maintenance, mail
Legislative Correspondents (2)	mail
Staff Assistant (DC)	answering phone, greeting visitors
State Director (state)	day-to-day management
Staff Assistant (state)	answering phone, greeting visitors
Constituent Services Reps (2) (state)	answering phone, casework, personal assistance at state events (*optional* — may not be needed depending upon Senator's style)
Field Rep (state)	personal assistance at state events (*optional* — may not be needed depending upon Senator's style)

3.3.4 Recruiting the Best Candidates

1. **Design a standard application that solicits basic information and job experience.** Include questions to help you assess a person's "fit" with the office's mission.

2. **Develop a customized job posting with the unique attributes of the vacant position and your office.** Clearly state your requirements to eliminate candidates you would not consider.

3. **Utilize district/state-based job boards to attract candidates.** For example, contact local universities in your district/state to find exceptional students interested in Congress.

4. **Create a balance in your office between staff from your district/state and Hill professionals.** The combination of local understanding and Capitol Hill know-how will give you the perspectives and knowledge needed for a more successful term.

5. **Seek out applicants with a broad range of backgrounds, skills, and personalities.** Both the House and Senate have diversity offices or initiatives to assist in recruiting and placement.

6. **Take advantage of Capitol Hill resources.** Both chambers maintain resume banks and post job vacancy announcements. Due to high volume, a separate "resume drop-off" location for new Members is usually set up during the transition period.

Check with the Senate Placement Office (202-224-9167; www.senate.gov/employment) and the House's First Call Customer Service Center (202-225-8000; B-227 Longworth HOB).

3.3.5 Six-Step Process for Hiring Staff

Your limited time and resources during the transition will make it difficult to complete the entire multi-step process when hiring each core staffer.

However, the more you can incorporate these steps, or at least their underlying principles, the better off you'll be. Then, starting in January, you can be much more thorough in hiring the remainder of your staff.

1. **Draft a written job analysis by determining the skills, capabilities, and outcomes required for each position.**
    - Consider your office's goals and priorities.
    - Differentiate between critical and non-critical job skills. Expertise about the district/state is not required for every position, nor is previous Capitol Hill experience.
2. **Develop interview questions and other tests that assess the candidate's skills as identified in each of the job analyses.**
    - Assess technical and interpersonal skills, judgment, issue compatibility, and attitude.

- Use a combination of open-ended and problem-solving questions, and skills-based tests.

3. **Present the same key questions and test to each candidate.**
    - Use a rating system and tally the scores based on a pre-determined scoring system to reduce subjectivity and bias by the interviewer.
    - Do not rely on memory or “gut feelings.”

4. **Involve other staff in interviews and testing processes.**
    - Additional perspectives are helpful to process and demonstrate that the candidate is joining a team, not just filling a position.

5. **Conduct further interviews or tests as needed.**
    - Don’t feel obligated to rush to a decision. Poor hiring choices will take more time in the long run.

6. **Check candidate references.**
    - Prioritize speaking with immediate supervisor(s).
    - Ask open-ended questions.
    - Ask whether they would hire the person again.

For a more thorough description of the six-step hiring process, see Chapter 5, "Hiring Your Core Staff," in *Setting Course*.

3.4 Evaluate Technology Needs

Like any small business, each congressional office is responsible for making most of its own IT decisions, which can feel like a daunting task.

Before you can determine the appropriate technology for your office, you must have a clear sense of exactly what you want it to do for you.

Evaluate your needs by answering the following critical questions:

- **Do you have a strong foundation on which to build?** The most important components of your system are your servers, PCs, printers, and networks.
- **What are your goals and priorities?** Choose the technology and functionality that allows you to achieve your goals and priorities more easily and effectively.
- **What is your staff's—and your own—level of technical comfort and skill?** State-of-the-art equipment is a waste of money if no one uses it.

Consider staff abilities and the complexity of the hardware and software that you are thinking of purchasing.

- **What are the unique district/state issues with which your office will be contending?** Each district and state has challenges that will affect technology priorities and should be factored into your decision-making.
- **How much money should you budget for your system?** Your system will be important to staff productivity, but the costs—which can be expensive—should be weighed against other budget priorities.
- **Where do you want to spend the money you've earmarked for technology?** Conduct a thorough needs assessment and get input from all staff to help you decide what your technology budget should best be spent on.

3.4.1 Key Considerations

Technology plays a critically important role in supporting the effective functioning of House and Senate offices.

The following key factors should be considered as you plan and budget for new technology:

- **Remote access and telecommuting.** Enabling staff to access office information from other locations is critical for the continuity of operations and potential emergency situations.

It also gives staff the ability to work from home or on the road.

- **Mobile and handheld devices.** Smartphones help busy Members keep in touch with their staffs on Capitol Hill and in the district/state. Learn House or Senate policies before you invest.
- **Online communications management.** A user-friendly and informative website is essential. You'll also want to consider which social media tools will help you best achieve your goals. You can find information about, and examples of, the best congressional websites and social media practices at CongressFoundation.org.
- **Data security.** As the number of portable devices on Capitol Hill grows, so does the need to protect their data and the networks they use. Offices should ensure that their information is well protected if they are lost or stolen.
- **Email management.** Email is one of the more difficult technological issues on Capitol Hill, as both the incoming volume and constituent expectations continually increase. Due to limited resources and slow technological adoption, however, congressional offices have had difficulty implementing solutions for more efficient and effective handling of email.
- **Rapidly changing IT environment.** The House and Senate are investigating and implementing many new technological capabilities and processes to help offices fulfill their duties.

Your office should build a solid foundation that can support new capabilities as they become available.

> **For guidance on developing an effective constituent mail operation, consult Chapter 14, "Managing Constituent Communications," in *Setting Course*.**

3.4.2 Six Steps to Making Wise Technology Purchases

Once you have identified your goals, needs and resources, you will be ready to make your purchases.

The six steps that follow can help you evaluate the products and choices available and select those that best suit your needs.

Step 1: Conduct an inventory of your current hardware, software, and functionality.

To determine what you need, first figure out what you have. Conduct a physical inventory of the hardware and software in your office, rather than relying on the inventory provided during orientation.

You may be surprised to learn what you already own or what equipment is listed on your inventory but missing in your office. Also consider the services already provided by the House and Senate.

Step 2: Talk to the people who can help.

Abundant resources are available on the House and Senate intranets and the Internet. In addition, talk to the following people:

- **House and Senate Customer Support.** House Members are assigned a Technical Support Representative (TSR) by the Chief Administrative Officer (202-225-6002) and Senators a Technology Representative (TR) by the Senate Sergeant at Arms (202-224-0821).
- **The Committee on House Administration and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration.** These committees oversee information technology in their chamber and set policies regarding its purchase and use.
- **Congressional Staff Associations.** The members and leadership of the various congressional staff associations can provide insight into what other offices are doing.
- **Vendor Representatives.** Software vendors (and, in the House, maintenance vendors) will be among the first people you meet on the Hill.
- **Other Personal Offices.** Staff are good sources of subjective information about hardware and software.
- **Leadership Offices.** House and Senate leadership staff are very involved in helping offices use technology to be more effective and can provide additional assistance and resources.

- **House Office Coordinators and Senate Technology Representatives.** They can help you with the purchase of equipment, maintenance plans (in the House), web development (in the Senate) and the development of inventories of your equipment and software.

Step 3: Shop around.

House offices are encouraged to contract with a maintenance provider to help install and support their systems, but they do not have to purchase only from their maintenance vendors. House offices can request bids for products from other vendors or comparison shop online or at discount stores.

Senate offices that use their Economic Allocation Fund (EAF) for purchases are required to order items from the Senate's Technology Catalog. If they do, the installation and support is provided by the Senate's support vendor for these items.

Step 4: Try before you buy.

When possible, test hardware and software in an environment as close as possible to the one in which it will be operating.

For example, try out a potential constituent software package in both the DC and district/state offices of a veteran Member if you can. Be sure to check the vendor's congressional references.

Step 5: Be sure your planned purchase is compatible with your existing system.

Be attentive to the technical requirements of any hardware and software you are going to purchase. You must have at least the minimum technical standards required to run it, though having the minimum does not guarantee optimal performance.

You should also discuss compatibility, not only with the vendor of the hardware/software you are considering, but also with your assigned support staff, and, in the House, your maintenance provider.

Step 6: Pay close attention to the installation and maintenance details.

Don't forget to work out the specifics of installation, testing, follow-up, maintenance, support, and all associated fees and timeframes before you commit to the final purchase.

Installation of new hardware and software in a congressional office often takes time, and it will cause some degree of inconvenience. Work out the general schedules and details before you commit to the purchase, and be sure to flesh them out and monitor them afterwards. The better planned and managed the process is, the easier it will be on everyone.

For more information, see Chapter 6, "Selecting and Utilizing Technology," in *Setting Course.*

3.5 Establish District/State Offices

3.5.1 Criteria for Selecting the Number of District/State Offices

So how many district/state offices should you establish? ***Only as many as you need!***

This seems obvious, but many Chiefs of Staff report that one of the biggest mistakes they made was setting up offices in areas "without a demonstrated constituent need."

Criteria to consider when determining how many district/state offices you should establish:

- **Size of your district/state.** A physically smaller House district usually will enable you to operate fewer offices.

  In the Senate, your state's population will determine your "aggregate square footage allowance"—open as many state offices as you wish as long as they total less than this allowance. This means Senators—especially those from vast but sparsely populated states—need to consider carefully not just how many offices to open, but *how big they will be*.

- **Accessibility to constituents.** If you want as many constituents as possible to have quick and easy access to your services, you don't want them to spend several hours traveling to your office. Or maybe you can satisfy this need with a toll-free 1-800 line or a high-quality website.

- **Constituent expectations.** Whether or not you created certain expectations, constituents have them. Generally they derive from two sources:

    1. **Number of offices your predecessor had.** While not impossible, it can be difficult to reduce the number of district/state offices you operate. Cuts can sometimes reflect poorly on the new Member, so make sure you have a plan to address potentially angered constituents.

    2. **Campaign promises.** If you promised offices on the campaign trail, you will be expected to—and will want to—keep your promise once elected.

- **Competing budget priorities.** Ask, “What else can I do with my allotted resources to accomplish my goals most effectively?” It may mean opening another district/state office, or it might mean having a Communications Director based in the district/state.

    This is more of a House limitation because you must pay for everything the office needs (rent, furniture, supplies, equipment, staff, etc.).

    For Senators, this may be of less concern because much of what it takes to run a Senate office is allocated to you and does not compete with other priorities (notable exceptions are staff and office supplies).

- **Urban/rural differences.** Rural districts/states generally operate more offices, but it is still important to assess the need before opening them.

- **Strategic importance of constituent services.** Again, how important are constituent services in your overall plan? If you made specific campaign promises or are facing a tough re-election, you may need to open that extra office.

- **Staff hiring limitations.** In the DC and district offices, a House Member may employ a total of 18 permanent staff and 4 additional staff, designated as paid interns, part-time employees, shared employees, temporary employees, or employees on leave without pay (note that interns paid from the House Paid Internship Program rather than from your MRA are not counted against this limit). If you open another district office, can you staff it? The Senate has no staff limit, but budgetary restrictions might still be a concern.

3.5.2 District/State Offices Maintained by Members

Recent calculations show that the number of state offices maintained by Senators varies, while House Members tend to operate one to three district offices.

For opening day, your major goal is to have one office that can handle the immediate onslaught of work and simply demonstrate that you're open for business.

Number of District or State Offices	Percent of Representatives	Percent of Senators
1	25%	6%
2	31%	14%
3	25%	10%
4	13%	17%
5	3%	17%
6	2%	23%
7	1%	8%
8+	0%	5%

3.5.3 Criteria for Office Space and Location

Deciding on office locations and the type of space can be very challenging, especially in the rush between Election Day and the new year. It's not necessary to have secured all your district/state offices by then, but the decision process should be well underway. Use the following criteria to help shape your deliberation.

Location Criteria

- **Proximity to:**

  1. **Constituents most in need of casework.** If casework is a priority, locate at least one office near the segments of your constituency that most frequently seek assistance.

  2. **Federal agencies.** Frequently, offices are located within walking distance of federal agency offices, which may help district/

state staff develop a rapport with agency officials and facilitate casework operation.

3. **Targeted groups.** If your strategic plan calls for building or strengthening ties to a certain group, an office located in its community can be crucial to that effort.

4. **Airport or train station.** Trips between DC and the district/state might be easier if one of your offices is near a major transportation facility.

5. **Staff.** Recruiting and keeping a first-rate staff is always a challenge, and is made even tougher if your office locations create difficult commutes for your employees.

- **Visibility.** How important is it that your office itself be visible? If a "presence" is important, a storefront office might win out over a high-rise.

- **Campaign promises.** Think twice before reneging on a campaign pledge concerning where you would locate an office.

- **Rental cost (House only).** The more offices you open, the more important it is to get "the best bang for your buck." Be sure to have the cost of renovations included in the rent.

- **Quality of the space.** The work environment may be important in retaining good staff. Assess potential renovation needs early and determine what can be accomplished.

- **Number of staff and interns.** Crowding your staff or turning away interns for lack of space can be prevented. Include the Member and interns in your space calculations.
- **Parking.** This is crucial for both staff and constituents, especially if there is a “walk-in” tradition in your district/state.
- **Safety of location.** To the extent possible, set up offices where staff and constituents feel safe. If safety is marginal, work with local law enforcement and the appropriate House and Senate offices to address the issue.
- **Length of the lease.** Before you negotiate, make sure the building will accept a two-year (House) or a three- to six-year (Senate) renewable lease. <u>All leases must be reviewed and approved before signing by the House Administrative Counsel or the Senate Sergeant at Arms’ State Office Operations.</u>
- **Cleaning and maintenance.** These arrangements are frequently overlooked, yet are very important to a professional office environment and appearance.

Office Space Criteria

Once you have decided on the number and general location of your district/state offices, you still need a specific site. You have four options, each with their own advantages and disadvantages.

Occupying Your Predecessor's Offices. Staff have mixed opinions about taking over the offices established by the preceding Member. If this is a possibility, consider the following questions:

- How does your strategic plan differ from your predecessor's?
- What did constituents think of the preceding Member's offices?
- Were the offices adequate for constituent services?
- Are renovations needed? Are they possible?
- Can renovations commence between the election and the first of the year?

Using Government Space. A majority of Senators, and many Representatives, have one or more of their offices in a federal building. In fact, Senators <u>must</u> use federal space if it is available and suitable to their needs. Federal buildings can offer several advantages:

- GSA can tell you what space is available in the areas of interest to you.
- Federal buildings typically already have security countermeasures in place to provide for staff and constituents' safety.
- The other tenants in a federal building are federal agencies, which might facilitate casework and increase constituents' use of your office.
- Seeking private space may subject you to pressure from people you know to locate in their buildings. Be very cautious about renting from

anyone you know—both for ethical reasons and for preventing any disputes from harming relations with friends and other associates.

- For Senators, it might be simpler because they cannot pay more per square foot for private space than the current maximum GSA rate in that city. And, any non-rent charges (parking, maintenance, etc.) must be built into the rent—not paid separately. Federal landlords are used to this while private landlords may not be. This also means that with private space, the lease should not commit you up to the full GSA rate at the very beginning. You will want to have some room under the cap to pay for unanticipated costs associated with extra parking space, repairs or renovations.

Renting Private Facilities. Leasing private space also has its advantages:

- Private space might be more accessible during evenings and weekends if businesses are open beyond a 9-to-5 weekday schedule. By contrast, a federal building may be closed during those times.

- Federal office buildings exist primarily for executive agencies, reducing the availability of space for Members of Congress. Your choices of privately-owned office space may be greater.

- Sometimes the only spaces GSA has available are more square footage than you need at a higher cost than you want.

Using Mobile Offices. A few Members use this alternative to traditional offices effectively. These Members say a mobile office:

- increases visibility;
- provides a personal atmosphere for one-on-one meetings;
- demonstrates a commitment to "staying in touch;"
- enables the Member to serve remote areas and reach constituents who may be unable to travel; and
- facilitates initiating casework.

Other considerations, however, may make this option less attractive:

- maintenance and operational costs;
- extreme weather that may discourage constituents from waiting to be served;
- unpredictable constituent turnout; and
- unproductive travel time.

Each Senator may lease one mobile office, with operating costs (excluding the cost of staff) calculated by and paid for by the Senate Sergeant at Arms.

House Members pay for mobile offices out of their Members' Representational Allowance (MRA).

3.5.4 Five-Step Process for Outfitting District/State Offices

District and state offices must also be outfitted with furnishings and equipment, such as desks, chairs, tables, computers, staplers, telephones, garbage cans, and other essentials.

Freshman Chiefs of Staff tell many stories of learning about rules only by breaking them, so always check *before* making commitments.

In the House, contact the Committee on House Administration (Democrats: 202-225-2061; Republicans: 202-225-8281) and CAO First Call (202-225-3994); in the Senate, consult the Sergeant at Arms' State Office Operations (202-228-STAT).

Help is also available from the General Services Administration (GSA), whose regional liaisons work closely with new offices by helping selecting GSA furniture or finding local private discount dealers.

Step 1: Assess your needs.

How many staff and interns will be using each office? How many desks and chairs do you need? How many rooms will be available for meeting with constituents? Will the Member have a private office?

Step 2: Conduct an inventory.

After the election, you'll get an inventory of your inherited furniture and equipment. Compare this inventory with what is actually on hand.

Step 3: Decide what you're going to keep and what you're going to return.

Once you know what you have and what you think you need, you can make some decisions. Give this matter careful consideration. While stories of battered furniture and worn-out equipment are common (particularly in the House), serviceable secondhand furniture is much cheaper than buying new, and is available for immediate use. A few minutes of examination can save substantial expense.

Step 4: Consult the appropriate institutional staff.

Always check before making commitments. In the House, call the Committee on House Administration and CAO First Call; in the Senate, contact the Sergeant at Arms' State Office Operations and GSA.

Step 5: Place your orders.

Senate offices *must* purchase through GSA, while House offices can buy from a local vendor or GSA.

For additional information, CMF has several resources available:

- **Chapter 7, "Establishing District and State Offices" in *Setting Course.***
- ***Keeping It Local: A Guide for Managing Congressional District & State Offices*, a publication to help offices create an equal partnership between the district/state and DC offices and improve district/state operations.**
- **Guidance on www.CongressFoundation.org**

Section 4: Transition Task Lists

This is an important time for a new Member of Congress, and the administrative performance of both the Member and the staff will reflect on the legislator's credibility and effectiveness.

To assist senior aides and office managers in setting up congressional offices, CMF has developed this list of important decisions and tasks.

Please note: this list is not exhaustive and should augment the advice and checklists provided to you by the House and Senate, who will give you much more detail and information on some of these items.

Rather, it is meant to help you *prioritize* the decisions you must make and the tasks you must complete, so that your attention is focused on what is most important during this transition, especially what is most important for you to focus on in November and December.

This list is broken down into sections organized by priority (from most to least critical for a successful transition), then sorted chronologically by when the task should be completed.

Disclaimer: These tasks include many in-person events and activities, which will be impacted by policies related to the opening/closing of public buildings due to the coronavirus.

4.1 Most Critical Tasks and Decisions for a Successful First Term

	TASKS/DECISIONS	WHEN
1.	Establish priorities for the first term through a preliminary planning session.	Nov-Dec
2.	Decide which committee assignments to pursue based on priorities of Member and district/state and likely availability; file formal request with steering committee and lobby for desired slots.	Nov-Dec
3.	Set general budget targets for major office expenditures (e.g., salaries, franking, communications, district offices) to guide transition decisions.	Nov-Dec
4.	Decide office management structure.	Nov-Dec
5.	Hire core staff to begin work on swearing-in day.	Nov-Dec
6.	Evaluate technology needs by reviewing inventory and discussing options with institutional staff and assigned technical/customer support staff. Make preliminary equipment decisions.	Nov-Dec
7.	Decide what district/state office(s) to open on swearing-in day and its location.	Nov-Dec
8.	Meet with spouse/partner to discuss living arrangements, the schedule, and how the office and spouse/partner will share information.	Nov-Dec

4.2 Time-Sensitive Tasks and Decisions Needed by Opening Day

	TASKS/DECISIONS	WHEN
9.	Choose room and decide layout of office.	Nov
10.	Meet with assigned support staff about interim office website.	Nov
11.	Make arrangements for office space, basic equipment and furniture for first district/state office to be opened.	Nov-Dec
12.	Meet with predecessor's staff to discuss possible transition assistance, process for casework transfer, and request necessary documents.	Nov-Dec
13.	Decide whether you want to ask for part or all of your predecessor's computer database. NOTE: The departing Member must provide written authorization for it to be shared with you.	Nov-Dec
14.	Meet with experienced staff to review options for office operations (budget, hiring, etc.).	Nov-Dec
15.	Decide which, if any, of your predecessor's staff or Member's campaign to hire.	Nov-Dec

16.	Develop basic procedures for answering telephones (including call forwarding and schedule options for working remotely) and meeting with visitors (in-person and virtually).	Dec
17.	Discuss with Member how they want to interact with staff. Develop internal communications systems to reflect remote work (how often you will meet, what technology/software you will use, etc.).	Dec
18.	Determine who will handle press calls and develop general communications plan for the transition.	Dec
19.	Determine interim process for handling rush of scheduling requests in January.	Dec
20.	Plan or delegate the swearing-in activities/party.	Dec

4.3 Tasks and Decisions for December–January

TASKS/DECISIONS		WHEN
21.	Decide in which office to locate the Chief of Staff, Scheduler, and Communications Director.	Dec-Jan
22.	Familiarize yourself with federal hiring laws, as well as House and Senate benefits to aid in recruiting staff.	Dec-Jan

23.	Define staff positions and prepare job descriptions.	Dec-Jan
24.	Decide whether financial administration is handled internally by a full-time staffer or by a part-time, shared employee.	Dec-Jan
25.	Decide whether to keep predecessor's Correspondence Management System or choose a new vendor (House only). (Check with your chamber on deadlines and options.)	Dec-Jan
26.	Set up a meeting with assigned staff from House Finance Office or Senate Disbursing Office (i.e., payroll and financial management).	Dec-Jan
27.	Call/meet with reporters in DC who will cover Member.	Dec-Jan

4.4 Tasks and Decisions for January

TASKS/DECISIONS		WHEN
28.	Get office keys, Member voting card (House), and permanent staff ID cards.	Opening day
29.	Communicate basic office policies to staff on answering the telephone, greeting visitors, and communicating with the Member.	Opening day

30.	Decide who is allowed to talk to the press and make sure everyone on staff knows the rules.	Opening day
31.	Host swearing-in events.	Swearing-in day
32.	Issue first press release on swearing-in. Post on website and other social media platforms if you decide to set them up immediately.	Swearing-in day
33.	Order stationery, franked envelopes, business cards, and other supplies. Remember to include the district/state office's needs.	Jan
34.	Establish interim procedures for how to begin addressing immediate backlog in constituent mail.	Jan
35.	Set up a process for how your office will handle constituent communications, outlining staff responsibilities and roles and how to respond to constituent email.	Jan
36.	Develop form letters for primary legislative issues generating the greatest mail volume.	Jan
37.	Set up interim system for handling casework.	Jan
38.	Design data collection system to gather information about the Member's activities to be used in proactive communications.	Jan

39.	Designate Office Emergency Coordinator.	Jan
40.	Designate staff person to serve as office ethics advisor (usually Chief of Staff).	Jan
41.	Schedule mandatory ethics training for staff (within 60 days of hiring).	Jan
42.	Develop basic office ethics policies and procedures (e.g., Member/staff travel, acceptance of gifts, political activities).	Jan
43.	Schedule mandatory workplace rights and responsibilities training (anti-discrimination and anti-harassment) for Member and staff (within 90 days after session or service begins).	Jan

4.5 Tasks and Decisions That Can Wait

TASKS/DECISIONS		WHEN
44.	Decide procedures for White House tours, Capitol tours, and flag requests.	Jan-Feb
45.	Decide process and staff to handle grants & appropriations requests.	Jan-Feb
46.	Order new voter/cosntituent list, if necessary.	Jan-Feb
47.	Develop/code media lists and procedures to update list.	Jan-Feb
48.	Finalize processes for casework system.	Jan-Feb

49.	Assess the need for mobile offices and/or locally-held "office hours" in the district/ state.	Jan-Feb
50.	Ensure that Member has a valid passport.	Jan-Mar
51.	Identify training opportunities available/ needed for DC and district/state staff.	Jan-Mar
52.	Decide which positions are exempt from FLSA and develop overtime policies. (Tip: Offices can get free legal consultations from your chamber's employment counsel on issues related to the Congressional Accountability Act.)	Jan-Mar
53.	Develop long-term scheduling system for both DC and district/state offices.	Jan-Mar
54.	Develop district/state outreach plan.	Jan-Mar
55.	Draft month-to-month budget.	Jan-Mar
56.	Conduct full office planning session (Member and all staff).	Jan-April
57.	Evaluate which social media tools (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) will help you communicate most effectively and develop policies and procedures on how to use them to meet your goals.	Jan-April
58.	Review franking guidelines for outreach/ proactive mail.	Jan-April

59.	Develop outreach/proactive communications plan, including how to collect email addresses and build e-newsletter subscriber lists.	Jan-April
60.	Determine long-term plan for website (i.e., development and maintenance options).	Jan-June
61.	Reassess office equipment needs and order if necessary.	Jan-June
62.	Hold district/state office Open House(s).	Jan-June
63.	Decide which, if any, additional district/state offices to open. Get leases reviewed and approved by the House Administrative Counsel or the Senate Sergeant at Arms' State Office Operations and arrange delivery of inventory from GSA.	Jan-June
64.	Hire additional staff.	Jan-June
65.	Create and convey performance metrics for staff. Set process for informal feedback and schedule for regular performance reviews.	Jan-June

Section 5:
CMF Resources

5.1 About CMF

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit whose mission is to build trust and effectiveness in Congress.

We do this by enhancing the performance of the institution, legislators and their staffs through research-based education and training, and by strengthening the bridge and understanding between Congress and the People it serves.

5.1.1 Quick Facts

- Founded in 1977 by a congressional staffer/son of a Member of Congress and an organizational development consultant to help Members address management challenges in their offices.
- Has published *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide*, its signature publication, for more than 30 years.
- In 1990, offered its first orientation for the designated aides of House Members-elect, focusing on the critical transition time between November and January.

- Since 2000, CMF has conducted more than 500 strategic planning or other consulting projects with Members of Congress and their staffs.
- More than 1,100 staff from more than 300 congressional offices participate in the training programs CMF conducts annually.
- Since 2014, CMF has trained more than 90,000 citizens through more than 1,100 presentations, webinars, and videos on effectively communicating with Congress.

5.2 Improving Congressional Operations

CMF works internally with Member offices, committees, leadership, and institutional offices in the House and Senate to foster improved management practices. From interns to Chiefs of Staff to Members themselves, CMF provides services, training, and publications adapted to the unique congressional environment.

5.2.1 Management Books & Guidance

Only CMF produces publications adapted to the unique congressional environment, including:

- *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide*
- *Keeping It Local: A Guide for Managing Congressional District & State Offices*
- *Life in Congress: Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate*

- *Life in Congress: The Member Perspective*
- *Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff*
- *Workflex Toolkit for Congress*
- *Congressional Benefits and Personnel Practices*

These books and others are provided to congressional offices free of charge.

5.2.2 Staff Training & Professional Development

CMF conducts in-person programs and webinars for senior managers in the House and Senate on a range of topics. These programs are open to DC and district/state staff. We also offer orientation programming for the aides of Members-elect.

5.2.3 Democracy Awards

CMF created this distinctive honors program to recognize non-legislative achievement and performance in congressional offices and by Members of Congress. Democracy Awards honor achievements in Constituent Service, Innovation and Modernization, “Life in Congress” Workplace Environment, Transparency and Accountability, and Lifetime Achievement.

5.2.4 Office Management Services

CMF provides customized management services to congressional offices, such as office retreats that typically focus on strategic planning, office operations, team building, and DC–district/state office relations. We work with individual offices on a strictly confidential basis to examine and improve internal operations, communications, and teamwork.

5.2.5 Manuals, Forms, Worksheets, and Checklists

CMF offers many resources and templates that congressional staff can download and adapt for office use, such as: sample job descriptions; sample performance review forms; an event planning checklist; scheduling request form; and several casework and constituent service manuals.

5.3 Enhancing Citizen Engagement

5.3.1 The Partnership for a More Perfect Union

CMF's ***Partnership for a More Perfect Union*** is dedicated to enhancing citizen engagement and improving communication between citizens and Congress.

Based on CMF's research with House and Senate staff, the *Partnership* provides guidance to constituents and advocacy groups on how to best communicate with Capitol Hill.

5.3.2 Related Projects

- **Communicating with Congress Project** — This project addresses the challenges and frustration felt by both citizens and congressional offices due to the changes brought about by online communications. Through this project, CMF has conducted multiple surveys of congressional staff and published several reports.

- **Congress 3.0** — Through a grant from Democracy Fund, CMF facilitated innovative experiments with House and Senate offices to improve their operational effectiveness and enhance their citizen engagement practices. The resulting research-based guidance was published in an "Office Toolkit," available on our website.

- **21st Century Town Hall Meetings** — CMF's research on the effects of online town halls showed that a more deliberative and civil dialogue is possible between citizens and elected officials. The Congress 3.0 Project continued this work by conducting research on telephone town halls, which resulted in guidance on how to improve these sessions for constituents. In 2020, CMF collaborated with elected officials, public health experts, and academics to hold bipartisan virtual town halls on the coronavirus.

For more information, contact CMF at 202-546-0100 or visit www.CongressFoundation.org.

CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

CongressFoundation.org

Follow us on social media:

https://twitter.com/CongressFdn

https://www.facebook.com/CongressFoundation

https://www.linkedin.com/company/Congressional-Management-Foundation

90-DAY ROADMAP TO SETTING UP A CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE is a blueprint for Members-elect in making the transition to Congress. It outlines the critical activities and tasks that a new Representative or Senator must focus on during the November–January timeframe for a successful first term.

SPONSORED BY

SHRM®
BETTER WORKPLACES
BETTER WORLD™

NWYC National Write Your Congressman

THE CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION (CMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit whose mission is to build trust and effectiveness in Congress. We do this by enhancing the performance of the institution, legislators and their staffs through research-based education and training, and by strengthening the bridge between Congress and the People it serves.

www.CongressFoundation.org

CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION