



CAO
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Feasibility of Establishing a Congressional Staff Academy Needs Assessment

This document proposes a course of action to complete the required report pursuant to H.Res.756, Section 203

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Table of Contents

Background.....	1
Proposed Action	3
Survey Development	3
Audience and End Users	4
Timeline.....	4

Background

Committee Hearing – July 11, 2019

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress held a hearing on July 11, 2019, titled “Fostering the Next Generation of Leaders: Setting Members up for Success,” during which Members of the Committee expressed opinions and asked questions on the following topics:

- 1) Improving training approach and content for new Members of Congress
- 2) Opportunities to create bipartisan relationships
- 3) Creating training for Members of Congress on parliamentary procedure and committee procedure
- 4) Creating professional development for Members of Congress related to executive leadership, management, public speaking, negotiation, and other “soft skills”.

The witnesses at this hearing were as follows:

Philip G. Kiko, Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives

Stacey Householder, Director of Leaders’ Services and Legislative Training, National Conference of State Legislators

Richard Shapiro, former Executive Director, Congressional Management Foundation

Committee Report 116-407

The Select Committee on Modernization of Congress issued Committee Report 116-407 on February 25, 2020. The report details twenty-four “background issues” and twenty-four corresponding recommendations for the House.

Background issue number 10 states,

“Members currently lack professional development and institutional training opportunities. Newly-elected Members receive initial training through new Member orientation, but after orientation there are few – if any—opportunities for Members to continue learning. Members who are interested in learning more about House procedures and rules, leadership and negotiation skills, or even computer software and systems should have easy access to online and in-person training. Members should be surveyed to help determine which courses they would find most useful.”

Correspondingly, recommendation number 10 states,

“Recommendation: Create a pilot Congressional Leadership Academy for Members which offers professional development and institutional training. Specifically...alongside in-person training opportunities, HouseNet should provide one-click access to seminars on the legislative process and procedural matters, such as how to chair a hearing, the budget and appropriations process, and rules of the House and committee procedures, and on professional development topics like managing an office and developing better negotiation and bargaining skills.”

Legislation

House Resolution 756 was introduced in the House on December 10, 2019, and passed on March 10, 2020. Section 203, “Exploring the feasibility of establishing a Congressional Leadership Academy,” states the following

(a) Survey of Members.—The Chief Administrative Officer shall conduct a survey of Members, in writing and electronically, to determine the level of interest in establishing a Congressional Leadership Academy to provide online and in-person continuing education opportunities that will promote professional development and institutional training, including the feasibility of setting up a pilot program to establish such an Academy.

(b) Report.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the adoption of this resolution, the Chief Administrative Officer shall submit a report to the Committee on House Administration on the results of the survey conducted under subsection (a), and shall include in the estimates of costs of establishing and operating a Congressional Leadership Academy as well as any impediments to establishing such an Academy, including impediments relating to technology, security, or content.

The 120-day deadline established by this legislation is July 8, 2020.

Proposed Action

In response to the legislative mandate in H.R. 756, the CAO has developed the following preliminary needs assessment approach to build a well-rounded, high level picture of Member of Congress professional development needs. This approach consists of three activities:

- 1) Survey
- 2) Focus group with current Members of Congress
- 3) Focus group with former Members of Congress
- 4) Additional discussions with educational organizations with similar mission

The results of the Member survey will be rounded out by the feedback gathered in focus groups. Additional research will draw on relevant industry knowledge on executive education programs, capabilities, best practices, and costs. Together the information will be used to draft the report required by H.R. 756, section 203.

- What is the scope of professional development required for Members of Congress?
- What is the preferred medium for professional development education for Members of Congress?
- What is the preferred frequency for professional development education for Members of Congress?
- What topics are most relevant to Members (new and returning)?
- What is the level of interest in House developed professional development for Members?

Survey

Development

To develop the attached survey, the CAO conducted preliminary research by reviewing current offerings, and meeting with peers and industry leaders that provide executive coaching, and organizations that routinely provide training to state and federal elected officials. This included discussions with Stacy Householder, Director, Leadership and International Programs at National Conference of State Legislatures, Eric Petersen, Congressional Research Service, Suzanne G Logan and Bernhard Kluger at the Federal Executive Institute, Center for Leadership Development.

This information was used to develop the attached survey. While the results of is survey will provide initial feedback necessary to inform the development of a leadership program for Members, we recommend that this should be followed by additional, in-depth needs assessment that will take much longer than is permitted by this legislative mandate. Further needs assessment will be critical to inform the detailed requirements for Member-level professional

development. Any development efforts without this necessary step will risk producing training that misses the mark.

Audience

The audience for this assessment is Members of Congress.

Timeline

- 10 April – Submit survey for approval
- 15 April – Finalize Communication Plan
- 22 April – Receive approved survey with final edits
- 27 April – Send out survey to Members
- 4 May – 29 May – Conduct Member focus groups and industry meetings
- 18 May – Close Survey
- 22 June – Submit DRAFT report to CHA for review
- 8 July – Submit Final report due

Revised Timeline

- 15 June – Submit survey for approval
- 19 June – Finalize Communication Plan
- 18 June – Receive approved survey with final edits
- 23 June – Send out survey to Members
- 29–17 July – Conduct Member focus groups and industry meetings
- 17 July - Close Survey
- 24 – Submit DRAFT report to CHA for review
- 30 July – Submit Final report due