

Organizing, Staffing and Operating the Governor's Office

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INTRODUCTION

Before inauguration, the governor-elect must assemble a staff to help lead and manage his or her administration. Staff also will be responsible for providing personal support for the governor and managing a number of operating functions internal to governors' offices.

Although most governors face political and budgetary constraints on the size of their offices, generally they have significant latitude in establishing the office structure and operating procedures as well as selecting individuals who will staff the office.

In general, the governor-elect should address the following immediate and continuing challenges:

- Defining the major functions of the governor's office;
- Choosing an administrative structure for the governor's office consistent with his or her style that also provides focal points for managing and coordinating major functions;
- Selecting staff members with skills and experience that will equip them to perform the functions they will be expected to perform;
- Creating or continuing procedures and information systems that will support the governor and his or her staff and address a variety of critical tasks such as scheduling, correspondence, constituent relations and appointments;
- Orienting and training staff responsible for delivering results; and
- Converting disparate individuals into a true team with senior and support staff who will work together effectively and with department and agency heads to advance the governor's agenda.

In the summer of 2014, the National Governors Association (NGA) conducted a survey of governors' chiefs of staff to obtain data and information about how governors organize, operate and staff their offices. The information provided by the survey helped shape this management brief.

Defining the Functions of the Governor's Office

It may be helpful for a governor to think of the office as his or her Swiss Army knife, a combination of several tools with a variety of different functions and purposes. In general, each governor's office will be expected to:

- Provide personal and administrative support to the governor;
- Assist the governor in developing, communicating and enacting policy changes;
- Assist the governor in the management and oversight of state departments and agencies;
- Manage a complex system of constituent relations; and
- Carry out other operational functions assigned to the governor's office.

Generally, the functions assigned to a governor's office include:

- Chief of staff;
- Deputy chief(s) of staff;
- Press and communications;
- Legal counsel;
- Agency liaison/oversight of government operations;
- Policy development;
- Legislative relations;
- Scheduling;
- Appointments;
- Federal relations;
- Constituent services and correspondence;
- Governor's personal secretary/executive assistant; and
- Office manager and administrative support.

Other common functions in the governor's office may include:

- Advance staff;
- Management of the executive residence;
- Staff support for the governor's spouse;
- Budgeting and planning;
- Intergovernmental relations; and
- Homeland security.

In considering the functions to be performed in the governor's office, a new governor should become familiar with both state law and tradition. State law often will charge the governor with specific responsibilities related to issues like pardons and parole, judicial appointments and emergency response. These functions will need to be identified and staffed. In addition, some functions are performed by the governor's office as a matter of tradition. Examples include proclamations and congratulatory letters, personalized responses to correspondence, town hall visits and appearances at key events. Traditions can affect office operations and staffing requirements. While a governor is free to change traditions, he or she should be made aware of the traditions and understand the possible consequences.

Because governors' offices across the states vary greatly in size, the relative weight given to each of these functions also will vary. As a result, the governor-elect will need to make decisions regarding his or her management approach and the priority that he or she wants to give to individual functions.

The Governor's Office and Department and Agency Heads

One of the most significant decisions a governor-elect will make concerns how he or she will interact with department and agency heads. While there is no single right approach, the chosen approach will have a significant effect on how the governor's office will be organized and staffed. Governors typically retain close control over the development of new policy initiatives; however, there are many different approaches to interacting with department and agency heads. Some governors prefer to rely almost exclusively on cabinet agency appointees to implement new policy initiatives and the ongoing operations of their departments and agencies. Other governors rely heavily on their own staff to ensure agency activities are coordinated and consistent with the priorities. Still other governors will expect staff to be actively engaged in the regular oversight of agency operations. In still other states, the interaction will vary depending on the critical nature of an issue or the degree of trust that the governor has in an individual appointee.

The Governor's Office and the Schedule

A second significant decision relates to the importance of the governor's schedule. It is critical to view the scheduling process in a strategic manner rather than simply blocking time on a daily planner. The schedule enables an administration to balance a variety of competing interests and helps the governor maintain focus on key issues and balance personal needs. The scheduler plays the fundamental role of guardian, protecting the governor's time and determining, in large part, who has access to him or her. For this reason, the scheduler is an important member of the governor's team, and the schedule is one of its most valuable tools. There is no one organizational structure or style to manage the scheduling function. The governor's management style, vision and agenda, as well as the size of the state and the number of players involved in the scheduling function, should be considered when deciding how to staff, organize and operate the scheduling function.

The Governor's Office and the Legislature

A third decision relates to the governor's approach to legislative relations. Generally, governors will identify a limited set of legislative priorities for their administrations. In addition, many departments and agencies also will identify legislative priorities. Both governors and department and agency heads will often be asked to take positions on pending legislation. Governors also will be expected to sign or veto numerous pieces of legislation sponsored by legislators. Some governors rely on their chiefs of staff or other senior staff for this function while others may see this as a full-time function to be assigned to a specialist in legislative relations.

The Governor's Office and Constituent Relations

A fourth decision relates to the priority assigned to constituent relations. Every day, the governor's office will receive walk-in visitors, telephone calls, emails and letters. Handling the volume of contacts can be extremely time-consuming, and the governor may want to decide early about the types of requests that his or her staff will respond to, as well as which types of requests will be referred to departments and agencies. There are similar decisions to be made related to almost any activity in the governor's office.

Choosing an Administrative Structure

The greatest determining factor in the structure of the governor's office usually is the governor's own management style. Not unexpectedly, styles among governors vary considerably. Some factors include:

- **Management approach:** hierarchical or decentralized; command-and-control or broad delegation;
- **Focus:** big picture or details;
- **Information sources:** multiple sources or staff-driven;
- **Communication styles:** written or oral; inclusive meetings or one-on-one discussions; and
- **Decision-making styles:** reflective or reactive; private or public.

The governor's preferences can have a major effect on the organization and operation of his or her office. Some things to consider include:

- Will all staff report to the governor through a chief of staff, or will numerous senior staff members report independently to the governor?
- Will the governor's policy advisors focus on defining goals and objectives, or will they also become actively involved in the design of programs and policies to achieve those priorities?
- Will agency heads be expected to seek guidance from the governor's office on numerous operational issues, or will they be expected to make necessary decisions on their own?
- Will the governor manage by exception— reacting to problems or issues as they emerge — or will staff be expected to actively monitor agency performance against stated goals and objectives?
- Who will be responsible for ensuring that the governor has completed staff work?
- Who will ensure that the various components of the governor's office are consistent in their dealings with the legislature, the media, state agencies and stakeholders?

Many governors prefer a hierarchical structure with clear lines of authority in which most staff report to the governor through the chief of staff. The chief of staff is expected to oversee the operations of the governor's office and review and coordinate issues that are being presented to the governor for decision.

Other governors prefer to assign major functional responsibilities to a number of senior staff members and interact with those senior staff members individually regarding their areas of responsibility. In this structure, there is a tendency for the governor to act as his or her own chief of staff, relying on the chief more for policy and political advice and less for staff management.

Still other governors will combine the two models, with a limited number of senior advisors reporting directly to the governor and the majority of the staff reporting to the chief of staff. The states responding to the survey suggested support for each approach.

The preferred structure is not necessarily what a management textbook recommends but what best serves the governor.

Creating the Boxes on an Organization Chart

Governors have considerable flexibility in combining related functions and assigning organizational oversight. It is clear from survey responses and staffing rosters that governors organize functional assignments many different ways. As a result, there is no single best practice related to creating an organizational structure. It is a choice that should be driven largely by the priority given to individual functions and the strengths of the staff who will be involved. Examples of organizational issues that the governor or chief of staff may be asked to consider include:

- Should the same staff units be responsible for policy development and overseeing state operations?
- Will the correspondence and constituent relations be combined or separated?
- Should the legal counsel also oversee legislative relations?

As in the case of reporting relationships to the governor, all office functions not reporting to the governor may report directly to the chief of staff, or they may be combined in a variety of forms and report to a deputy chief of staff or other senior staff member who reports to the chief.

Staffing the Governor’s Office

Office Size

With few notable exceptions, the size of the governor’s office staff generally corresponds to the population of the state. However, the size of the governor’s office also may be affected by a number of other factors. Governors’ offices with a large staff typically house the state’s budget and planning functions. Offices also generally are larger when they house high-priority operations or special task forces and commissions. Precedent is likely the greatest constraint on the size of the governor’s office in any particular state. Historically, staffing levels remain fairly stable as governors are often reluctant to request additional funding, even as the functions and responsibilities assumed increase. One might expect a reasonably direct correlation between workload and staff size in the business sector. However, because of the various factors described above, it is much more difficult to draw any meaningful correlation between the states and the average or appropriate size of the governor’s staff. Nonetheless, there are some general and useful conclusions to be drawn about trends in staffing.

TABLE 1. Governor’s Office Organizational Models

State Population	Number of States	States With Completed Surveys	Organizational Model			
			Hierarchical	Semi Hierarchical	Decentralized	Other
> 10 Million	7	1	-	1	-	-
8.0 – 9.9	5	2	-	1	-	1
6.0 – 7.9	6	5	1	2	2	-
4.0 – 5.9	8	4	1	3	-	-
2.0 – 3.9	10	7	2	5	-	-
1.0 – 1.9	8	6	4	1	1	-
< 1 Million	6	5	-	4	1	-

TABLE 2. Governor’s Office Staffing Levels

State Population	Number of States	States With Completed Surveys	Full-Time Equivalent Staff					
			Avg.	>75	50 - 74	25 - 49	<25	Range
> 10 Million	7	1	151	1	-	-	-	151
8.0 – 9.9	5	1	79	1	-	=	-	79
6.0 – 7.9	6	4	57	1	-	3	-	29-118
4.0 – 5.9	8	4	52	-	3	1	-	37-61
2.0 – 3.9	10	6	31	-	1	2	3	21-53
1.0 – 1.9	8	6	30	-	1	2	3	8-54
< 1 Million	6	5	30	-	1	1	3	10-71

As shown in Table 2 above, the size of gubernatorial staffs varies greatly, with 8 staff members in the smallest office and more than 150 in the largest office.

Although there may be a tendency to reduce the size of the governors' staffs in response to states' current financial situation, governors-elect should resist this temptation if possible. There are numerous reasons, but three may be of particular importance:

- Governors' offices generally are conservatively staffed for their workload;
- Governors' offices may be called upon to plan and manage significant new state responsibilities; and
- Restoration of staff levels after a staff reduction often requires the governor to expend political capital that might better be used for other priorities.

Of the 28 states responding to the question regarding changes in the size of the governor's staff since assuming office:

- Eleven states reported no change;
- Thirteen states reported staff reductions ranging from 2 to 30 staff members; and
- Four states reported staff increases ranging from 2 to 13 staff members.

Of the 10 states that provided specific information on the size of the staff reduction, the average reduction was 15 percent.

The following table draws upon data reported by the Council of State Government's (CSG) 2013 *Book of States*. The average size of a governor's office is 53 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members. Excluding the six states with more than 100 staff members, the average size is 39.

(The same 2010 CSG chart reported the average size of the governor's office was 63; excluding the six states with more than 100 staff members, the average size was 44.)

A majority of states supplement budgeted governor’s office staff with staff loaned from departments and agencies. In some cases, those assignments are long-term in nature and the person assigned is integrated to the ongoing operation of the governor’s office. In other cases, the assignments are time-limited, with the assigned individual working on a special project.

The delegation of agency staff to a governor’s office generally is an accepted practice, but it can become a political issue if perceived as a deliberate attempt to hide the actual size of the governor’s staff. Of the 23 states responding to the survey question concerning loaned staff, 15 indicated the governor’s staff included positions detailed from other agencies. In three states, more than half of the governor’s office staff was detailed.

**TABLE 3
GOVERNOR’S OFFICE STAFF SIZE**

Size of Office (in FTEs)	Number of Offices
9-20	6
21-30	11
31-40	10
41-60	9
61-80	10
81-100	3
101-325	6

Building a Team

The governor must be prepared to build and manage a number of teams. They include, at minimum, the members of the governor’s office staff plus department and agency heads appointed by the governor. The governor plays a number of critical roles in developing a team approach. First, the governor needs to define an organizational culture that values teamwork and expects individuals and organizations to work together toward a common set of objectives. Second, the governor needs to define a clear set of goals and priorities to guide individuals and organization as they work together. Third, the governor needs to communicate his or her preferences regarding a management style.

If the governor is the team owner, the governor’s chief of staff likely will combine the roles of general manager, coach and quarterback for the staff and department and agency heads. He or she will need to translate the governor’s goals and objectives into more actionable tasks, determine the composition of the team and assign management responsibilities. Moreover, the chief will be critical in enforcing expectations regarding the way team members will interact.

Management Style: A Second Bite of the Apple

Governors’ offices vary not only in size and organization, but also in the way the staff works with the governor and works together as a team to develop and implement the governor’s priorities.

The governor’s staff is in place to assist the governor in the leadership and management of the executive branch of state government. At its core, the governor’s office primarily is a provider and processor of information to support the governor as chief executive officer. For this reason, governors are urged to consider one basic question: What are your personal preferences regarding how you want to receive and process information for decision-making purposes? While this seemingly simple question will not eliminate debates about organizational charts, titles and power, it focuses a discussion of those issues where it belongs: on how information is provided to the governor; the ease with which the governor can make decisions based on that information; and the communication, implementation and enforcement of those decisions. The governor’s management style also will influence a number of other factors, including:

- Flow of information for the governor’s decision or signature;
- Staff from whom the governor will seek advice;
- Management of core functions and processes;
- Mechanisms to shape and steer the governor’s agenda;
- Frequency and format of senior staff meetings;
- Policy development and implementation processes; and
- Working relationships between the governor, his or her senior staff, the governor’s cabinet and other state agencies.

Governor’s Senior Staff

The governor’s senior staff generally is the team of senior managers within the governor’s office responsible for the core functions of the governor’s office. This team of senior managers also may be joined by other senior staff members with individual policy expertise. Whether or not senior staff members receive their assignments and provide information directly from the governor or through the chief of staff, the chief of staff is expected to be aware of their work and to see the necessary communication and coordination takes place. The survey responses below provide some insight on the composition of governors’ senior staffs.

The average size of a governor’s senior staff is eight staff members, ranging in size from 4 to 15. As shown in Table 4, all responding states indicated that the senior staff includes a:

- Chief of staff;
- Legal counsel;
- Communications director; and
- Policy director.

TABLE 4. Governor’s Senior Staff

Position	Number of States		
	Part of Senior Staff	Reports Directly to the Governor	Has Direct Access to the Governor
Chief of Staff	25	25	25
Legal Counsel	25	11	21
Communications Director	25	9	21
Policy Director	25	5	18
Legislative Director	19	6	17
Deputy Chief of Staff	17	9	18
Washington Office Director	12	1	7
Press Secretary	10	4	9
Appointments Director	8	5	7
Scheduler	8	5	18
Correspondence/Constituent	6	1	4
Cabinet Affairs	6	1	3
Chief Operating Officer	6	1	3

The legislative director and the deputy chief of staff also are common members of the senior staff.

Depending on the basic organizational structure, various members of the senior staff either report directly to the governor or to the governor through the chief of staff. Most senior staff have direct access to the governor even if they report through the chief of staff. Not surprisingly, even if the scheduler is not a member of the senior staff, he or she has direct access to the governor. Some survey questions provide the opportunity to identify the roles and functions assigned to a deputy chief of staff. This position is being identified on an increasing basis.

Organizing the Governor’s Office

Through years of analyzing surveys and consulting with governors’ offices, NGA has identified 10 functions common to most governors’ offices. As shown in Table 5, these functions may be assigned to a separate organizational unit or two or more functions may be combined.

TABLE 5. Organizing Governor’s Office Functions

Function	Number of States	
	Separate Unit	Combined with Other Function
Agency Liaison/Government Operations Oversight	3	22
Appointments to Boards and Commissions	21	6
Communications	23	4
Correspondence/Constituent Services	22	5
External Affairs/Intergovernmental Relations	6	20
Federal Relations	12	14
Legal Counsel	21	6
Legislative Relations	10	17
Policy Development	12	15
Scheduling	22	5
Correspondence/Constituent	6	1

Just as the internal structure of governors’ offices varies from state to state, so does the responsibility for overseeing these functions. As shown in Table 6, most functions in the governors’ offices report to the chief of staff either directly or through a deputy chief of staff.

As shown in Table 7, on average, the number of staff members assigned to any individual function is fairly small.

If housed in the governor’s office, the planning and budgeting function appears to have the largest staff. Policy development, communications and agency liaison also tend to be among the larger units in the governor’s office. However, in all cases the variation in size among offices is significant. For example, reported policy staffs range from a single person in one office to a unit with more than 30 members in another office. (Appendix A on pages 14 and 15 provides a more detailed table concerning the allocation of staff on a state-by-state basis, as well as a better sense of how the allocation of staff among functions may vary by the overall size of the governor’s staff.)

TABLE 6. Governor’s Office Reporting Relationships

Function	Reports To			
	Governor	Chief of Staff	Deputy	Other
Agency Liaison/Government Operations Oversight	5	16	6	7
Appointments to Boards and Commissions	8	18	12	3
Communications	14	22	5	2
Correspondence/Constituent Services	3	15	9	9
External Affairs	3	16	3	2
Washington Office/Federal Relations	5	19	4	5
Legal Counsel	20	22	3	1
Legislative Relations	12	21	5	2
Policy Development	13	22	6	3
Scheduling	12	19	4	5

TABLE 7. Staffing Levels by Function

Function	Number of States	Average Number of Staff	Staffing Range
Agency Liaison	18	4.7	1 - 10
Appointments	28	2.4	1 - 5
Budget and Planning	12	9.7	1 - 47
Chief of Staff/Deputy Chief	28	2.5	1 - 12
Communications	28	4.5	1 - 15
Correspondence/Constituent Service	27	3.9	1 - 13
External/Intergovernmental Affairs	19	2.4	1 - 5
Advance/Body Person	18	2.4	1 - 6
Homeland Security	6	2.9	1 - 14
Legal Counsel	27	2.7	1 - 12
Legislative relations	23	3.1	1 - 12
Policy Development	24	6.4	1 - 34
Scheduling	29	1.8	1 - 6
Governor’s Residence	17	1.9	1 - 5
Governor’s Spouse	15	1.7	1 - 5
Other Units	8	13.4	1 - 66

Internal Communications

The efficient operation of any governor’s office depends on the ability of staff to keep each other informed of their individual activities and of the governor’s immediate and long-term priorities. It is useful to ask two separate but related questions. First, how does the governor prefer to be kept informed of the activities of his or her staff? Second, what tools are used in the governor’s office to facilitate communication and teamwork among the members of the governor’s staff? Again, survey responses indicate a variety of approaches in use. Like most organizations, governors’ offices rely heavily on meetings to facilitate regular information sharing.

As shown in Table 8, all responding states hold regular meetings of the governor’s senior staff.

With two exceptions, senior staff meetings occur at least once a week. Eight senior staffs meet daily, and five senior staffs meet more than once a week. At times, these meetings may include telephone conference calls or video conferencing. Most states supplement regular senior staff meetings with ad hoc briefings, and the majority also use regular written updates as a tool to facilitate communications.

All-staff meetings also are held regularly in a number of states. Ten states hold all-staff meetings on a monthly basis, and one state holds them biweekly. Five states hold all-staff meetings on a weekly basis, and one state holds a daily all-staff meeting.

Most of the responding governors’ offices also use meetings to coordinate and communicate regarding specific functions. As shown in Table 9, these meetings cover issues such as scheduling, policy operations, appointments to boards and commissions and legislative relations. The responses suggest that the more time-sensitive functions require more frequent meetings.

Type of Communications Tool	Number of States Using
Senior Staff Meetings	29
Ad Hoc Meetings	25
All-Staff Meetings	17
Written Updates (email or memo) on major activities or issues	15
Staff Retreats	10

TABLE 9. Special Purpose Meetings

Type of Meeting	Frequency of Meeting				
	Monthly	Biweekly	Weekly	More Than Once a Week	Daily
Scheduling	0	3	16	5	6
Policy Operations	0	3	8	7	2
Appointments	5	9	8	2	0
Legislative Relations	1	1	10	5	8

Managing Access to the Governor

Relatively few positions within the governor’s office are granted direct access to the governor. In every state, the chief of staff has direct access as well as the communications director and legal counsel. Most states have established formal procedures for controlling staff access to the governor. The reality, however, is that access to the governor is often on an ad hoc basis. For example, opportunities for access may occur while a staff member accompanies the governor on trips outside the office or at the end of a meeting scheduled for another other purpose. Survey responses demonstrate that, with the exception of senior staff, most access to the governor is expected to flow through a variety

of checkpoints. Of the states that responded to the survey, only four reported that their governor has an open-door policy for all staff. In the vast majority of states, the chief of staff will coordinate these meetings along with either the governor’s scheduler or the governor’s personal assistant.

The various approaches and the frequency with which staff are granted access to the governor are shown in Table 10.

Stakeholder Access to the Governor

All governors meet regularly with appointees, legislators and a variety of stakeholders. Table 11 describes the procedures in place to schedule such access. The chief of staff plays a critical role in managing access by non-staff members seeking access to the governor. In 24 states, department and agency heads generally approach the governor through the chief of staff. Of the states that responded to the survey, only four reported their governor has an open-door policy for cabinet members. The scheduler plays a primary role in determining access for other major stakeholders, although the chief of staff also will be involved in determining who will have access, either independently or as a part of the scheduling team. In addition to the overlapping policies below, several states indicated a process that involves the chief of staff in consultation with the governor’s scheduler or personal assistant.

As in the case of staff access, the formal procedures for stakeholder access only control a certain number of opportunities for access to the governor. Other less controlled interactions between a governor and stakeholders is likely when the governor is attending official and political functions as well as in a variety of social settings. In many cases, staff members accompanying the governor are expected to document and follow up on these contacts.

TABLE 10
Gubernatorial Staff Access to Governor

Type of Access	Number of States
Meetings Scheduled Through Scheduler	21
Open-Door Policy for Senior Staff	17
Meetings Coordinated Through Chief of Staff	16
Meetings Scheduled Through Personal Assistant	12
Open-Door Policy for All Staff	4

TABLE 11. Access to Stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Chief of Staff	Scheduler	Governor’s Assistant	Senior Staff	Open Door
Department/Agency Head	22	13	4	6	1
Major Constituencies	21	14	2	7	0
Legislative Leaders	19	15	2	13	2
Legislators	21	14	2	13	1

Informing the Governor of Staff Activities and Actions

Work performed by governor’s staff often does not directly involve the governor. However, the governor needs to be kept informed of activities and actions and have the opportunity to weigh in on issues as he or she desires. Table 12 demonstrates the main tools for supplying governors with information about staff activity.

The other responses indicate that one governor relies on email for information and another relies on informal meetings and ad hoc discussions.

Sources of Information	Number of Governors
Regular meetings with chief of staff	25
Regular senior staff meetings	22
Regular individual meetings with senior staff members	14
Regular written briefings/reports	13
Other	2

Informing the Governor’s Decision-Making Process

Governors vary considerably in how they prefer to receive and process information. Their preferences also may vary depending on the type of decision to be made. The responses shown in Table 13 indicate most governors rely on a combination of tools to obtain the information they need to make decisions. Governors appear to particularly value the opportunity to supplement more structured tools with discussions with the chief of staff or other members of the senior staff concerning policy, legislative and government operations decisions.

Table 13. Decision-Making Briefing Models

Type of Decision	Number of States Using Each Briefing Model				
	Formal Briefing	Formal Briefing Meeting	Discussions at Regularly Scheduled Meetings	Informal Meetings and Ad Hoc Discussions	Discussions with Chief of Staff/Other Senior Staff
Program and Policy Decisions	24	22	21	22	26
Appointment Decisions	10	11	17	12	19
Scheduling Decisions	4	6	19	16	17
Legislative Decisions	19	23	21	20	27
Agency Operation Decisions	17	18	18	20	28

Coordination of Briefing Materials

One of the challenges confronting gubernatorial staff is to make certain that briefing materials presented to the governor are complete and reflect input from all relevant stakeholders. As shown in Table 14, initial responsibility for ensuring completed staff work often will rest with the lead or assigned staff member. However, the chief of staff or deputy chief of staff also is responsible for reviewing briefing materials for completeness before they are submitted to the governor. The four states that responded “other” indicated this responsibility rests with the governor’s scheduler.

Responsible Individual	Number of States
Lead/Assigned Staff Member	21
Chief of Staff	19
Deputy Chief of Staff	13
No Formal Process	4
Other	4

Information Technology

Information technology plays a significant role in the operations of the governor’s office. Traditionally, systems have been designed to accomplish specific functions such as scheduling, appointments and correspondence. New technology offers important opportunities to integrate these functions, both to minimize duplicative effort and to maximize the use of the available data. Document management is more effective with digital record keeping facilitating the flow of information between the governor’s office and departments and agencies. Technology also facilitates informed policymaking and can help governors monitor performance and to compare performance across jurisdictions and programs. Each new governor will inherit a set of systems and procedures from the departing governor. In addition, he or she also may have access to similar systems used for the campaign. The new governor should arrange for an evaluation of available systems and explore the pros and cons of maintaining, modifying or replacing existing systems.

Electronic Communications

The growing use of smartphones and email by governors is illustrated by the survey responses below. The survey responses suggest that staff access to the governor via email is becoming more readily available. Governors rely heavily on email for their interactions with department and agency heads.

As shown in Table 15, in less than one-quarter of the responding states, direct access to the governor via electronic means is not available or strictly limited. In the remaining states, direct access generally is available to the governor’s senior staff and in 11 states, to department and agency heads.

Availability	Type of Device	
	Email	Text
Governor Is Not Available	4	4
Strictly Limited Access	4	5
Generally Available to Senior Staff	7	8
Generally Available to Senior Staff and Department and Agency Heads	11	10

Table 16 suggests many governors rely on the use of email or mobile devices for a variety of purposes. The most frequent use relates to the governor’s schedule and the materials needed by the governor as he or she travels.

TABLE 16. Governors’ Use of Email and Mobile Devices

Type of Use	Number of Governors
Relies heavily on mobile devices to receive schedule, talking points, briefing materials, etc.	15
Uses email to request information from staff and/or agency heads	11
Relies heavily on email to receive critical information, including reports from staff and/or agency heads	10
Uses email to communicate directions and/or decisions to staff and/or agency heads	8
Uses email infrequently; prefers to receive information in person or by hard copy	8

While electronic communication is essential and beneficial to the work of a governor’s office, electronic communication poses a number of operational challenges. In most governors’ offices, there is a relatively well-defined process for staffing important policy decisions. Electronic communications may foster deviations from process and may exclude important stakeholders from the decision-making process. Electronic communication also may facilitate the upward delegation of decisions, resulting in departments involving the governor’s office in decisions that should be handled at the departmental level. This adds a further burden on an already overworked gubernatorial staff and may undercut the authority of the department or agency head with his or her staff.

Electronic communications also pose questions regarding transparency and public records. The treatment of electronic communications under public record or freedom-of-information laws is still being defined, even litigated, in a number of states. The issue becomes more complex when staff use private accounts to conduct state business. Improper use of email resulting in a violation of public records law can have serious legal, political and public relations effects.

Of the 29 responding states, 28 indicated the governor’s office maintained a formal policy for the governor’s staff regarding the appropriate use of electronic communications to conduct state business. In all cases, this policy was shared with new staff. While more than half of responding states provided staff with annual or semiannual reminders of the policy, a significant number did not provide periodic reminders. In 24 states, the policy addressed both the use of government supplied devices and email accounts and guidelines about conducting state business on personal electronic devices or using non-governmental email accounts.

When asked whether the use of electronic communications enhanced or impaired the effective decision-making process that had been established for their offices, 13 states responded that it had enhanced the process while 15 suggested that it was a mixed blessing and provided both benefits and challenges. Only one state indicated that use of electronic communications created more challenges than benefits.

Orientation and Training

NGA emphasizes the importance of matching skills and experience with the requirements of the positions within the governor’s office. While this is an absolutely critical first step, it is equally important that the staff in a governor’s office receive orientation and training in a number of areas, including but not limited to:

- The functions of their positions;
- Ethics and conflict of interest requirements and expectations;

- State personnel and procurement policies and requirements;
- State rulemaking and administrative adjudication;
- Limitations on political activity;
- Privacy and freedom-of-information requirements; and
- Internal procedures

A governor or chief of staff should not assume that staff members will come to their positions well informed about the legal and ethical environment in which they are expected to operate. The limitations and expectations need to be clearly defined and communicated often to new and veteran staff.

Conclusion

There is little evidence to suggest there is any collection of best practices to guide the governor in structuring his or her office. Available data indicates that states use a variety of approaches and each has its own adherents and advocates. A governor should understand the functions that must be performed by his or her office and the priorities given to those functions. A governor also needs to articulate his or her management style and establish preferences regarding the flow and processing of information. In many states, this will be an ongoing process, subject to change as an administration ages and the players and circumstances change. The governor's office should be staffed with individuals who will combine a commitment to the governor and his or her priorities with the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

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Appendix

The table provides each state response (not identified by name, but by letter) demonstrating the total size of the governor's office staff and how staff is allocated among the functions assigned to that office. In some cases the detail may exceed the total. This is most likely because individuals in some states may play more than one role and have been counted twice.

Governor's Office Staffing Levels by Function

	Total Staff Size	Agency Liaison	Appoint-ments	Budget and Planning	Chief of Staff/ Deputy Chief	Communi-cations	Correspondence/ Constituent Services	Intergov-ernmental Affairs	Advance/ Body Person
A	150	-	4	47	12	6	2	2	1
B	118	-	4	10	2	3	6	-	2
C	79	4	5	-	4	11	9	1	1
D	71	-	3	-	2	6	5	4	6
E	61	1	4	6	4	9	7	4	1
F	60	2	3	-	3	6	7	1	2
G	54	-	2	4	4	4	4	2	3
H	53	9	4	2	2	6	13	4	1
I	50	5	2	16	2	4	1	3	1
J	48	-	2	-	2	5	3	5	-
K	42	7	2	2	2	4	2	2	1
L	40	1	1	16	3	2	4	-	4
M	40	5	2	-	2	4	3	2	-
N	37	1	2	2	2	5	4	2	5
O	35	5	3	3	1	5	5	3	3
P	33	5	2	-	2	3	5	-	4
Q	31	4	3	-	5	3	4	2	-
R	30	-	1	1	1	3	2	-	-
S	29	7	-	-	2	3	-	-	1
T	27	2	3	-	2	5	4	3	1
U	23	-	2	-	1	1.5	3	1	-
V	23	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	6
W	22	10	1	-	1	3	2	-	-
X	22	-	2	-	2	2	2	-	-
Y	21	4	1	-	2	2	2	2	-
Z	18	7	1	1	1	1.5	3	1	1
AA	16	-	5	-	1	2	-	-	-
BB	12	-	1	-	2	1	2	1	-
CC	8	-	1	-	1	2	1	-	-

Governor's Office Staffing Levels by Function

	Total Staff Size	Home-land Security	Legal Counsel	Legislative Relations	Policy Development	Scheduling	Governor's Residence	Governor's Spouse	Other Units
A	150	-	12	12	34	6	4	-	15
B	118	14	3	2	9	2	0	0	69
C	79	-	5	5	9	4	2	2	17
D	71	-	1	3	8	2	4	1	27
E	61	2	4	7	1	2	-	1	3
F	60	-	3	2	2	3	-	3	-
G	54	-	-	2	4	2	-	1	-
H	53	-	2	3	2	3	3	1	-
I	50	-	3	2	-	1	-	-	-
J	48	-	1	1	17	1	-	1	-
K	42	1	3	3	8	2	3	3	-
L	40	-	2	1	5	1	2	1	5
M	40	-	4	5	5	3	-	-	8
N	37	1	1	2	5	1	1	2	2
O	35	-	3	2	4	1	-	1	8
P	33	-	2	2	-	2	3	-	-
Q	31	-	4	1	4	1	-	-	-
R	30	-	2	-	1	1	2	-	-
S	29	-	2	2	3	2	-	1	1
T	27	-	4	3	3	2	1	-	-
U	23	1	2	0.5	4.5	1.5	2	-	2
V	23	-	4	-	3	3	-	-	-
W	22	-	1	-	4	1	1	-	-
X	22	-	2	1	8	1	5	1	-
Y	21	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	4
Z	18	1	1	4	4	1	-	5	-
AA	16	-	1	-	5	1	1	1	-
BB	12	-	1	2	Multiple	1	-	-	-
CC	8	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-