Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Welcoming new parliamentarians

Good practices for onboarding and offboarding MPs

A toolkit for parliamentarians

Acknowledgements

This publication has been edited in accordance with the IPU's editorial house style and naming conventions.

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Design and layout: René Berzia, Inkdrop

Content

Foreword

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) are delighted to present *Welcoming new parliamentarians*, a resource designed to offer insights and inspiration to parliamentary administrations worldwide as they carry out the important task of onboarding and orienting both first-time and re-elected members.

Moving into parliamentary life is a pivotal moment for any MP. The way in which institutions prepare, welcome and support their new members can have a lasting impact on parliamentarians' experience. For parliamentary administrations, the onboarding process is not just about guiding new members through the mechanics of parliamentary procedure. It is also about fostering relationships, building capacity and creating an environment in which parliamentarians can thrive from the very beginning of their term.

This publication is not intended to be prescriptive; rather, it serves as a toolkit on good practices from diverse parliamentary institutions across the globe. By drawing on the experiences of parliaments that have developed robust onboarding and orientation processes, it seeks to inspire others to tailor solutions to their unique contexts and challenges.

Ultimately, this toolkit aims to make parliaments more effective institutions and to foster democratic representation around the world. It also encourages parliaments to adopt inclusive onboarding practices that are gender-sensitive and responsive to the needs of all MPs, including those with disabilities, ensuring equitable access to resources and participation from the outset.

The examples provided in this publication demonstrate that there is no one-size-fits-all approach that works for every legislature. Parliaments differ in size, structure, tradition and resources, and their methods of welcoming new members must reflect these distinctions. As you, officials in parliamentary administrations, explore these examples, we therefore encourage you to consider the diverse practices that could be adapted and implemented within your own parliamentary setting.

We believe that by sharing the variety of approaches and lessons learned, this publication can provide parliamentary administrations with practical and adaptable recommendations for strengthening the management of renewals and changeovers, ensuring that new parliamentarians are prepared to fulfil their roles effectively and that departing members transition to civilian life successfully.

We hope you find this publication both useful and inspirational, and that it serves as a tool for enhancing your own strategies for welcoming new MPs.

Martin Chungong,
Secretary General
Inter-Parliamentary Union

José Pedro Montero
President
Association of Secretaries
General of Parliaments

Introduction

Parliaments are constantly evolving institutions, shaped by electoral cycles and midterm vacancies that bring new members into office while others depart. This situation presents both challenges and opportunities. For all new members,[1] an effective onboarding programme allows them to gain the critical knowledge and tools they need to be effective representatives from the outset. For departing members, a well-structured offboarding process ensures a smooth handover and a respectful conclusion to their parliamentary service. The way incoming and outgoing parliamentarians experience these moments can significantly shape their perceptions of the institution, its staff and its values, as well as their attitude during and after their tenure.

A robust onboarding process begins long before a new member sets foot in parliament. Internal planning plays a fundamental role in ensuring that parliaments are well prepared to receive new members and support their integration into the institution. Effective internal coordination across parliamentary services, leadership offices, research departments and administrative units helps streamline the onboarding process, ensuring it is well organized, relevant and responsive to members' different needs. Thoughtful preparation can also help mitigate common challenges such as information overload, logistical bottlenecks and information gaps. At the same time, the often-overlooked task of managing the departure of outgoing members requires careful consideration to maintain continuity and preserve institutional knowledge.

Despite the importance of onboarding and offboarding programmes, there is limited comparative research available on how parliaments prepare for these critical phases. Yet most parliaments have some form of onboarding provision in place for new members (also called "orientation" or "induction" in some parliaments), as well as an offboarding process for departing MPs. These can take the shape of formalized programmes or involve more informal practices rooted in tradition, where continuity relies on the institutional memory of parliamentary staff. Such approaches vary widely from country to country, reflecting different political systems, resources and institutional cultures.

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1 Throughout this publication, the terms "new members", "new parliamentarians" and "new MPs" refer to all incoming parliamentarians at the start of a parliamentary term, whether they are elected for the first time or re-elected, recognizing that onboarding programmes must cater to this diversity of profiles.

In 2021, a study was commissioned to facilitate the integration of new MPs in Chad, looking at how parliaments plan internally for the arrival of new members. Following its success, the study was presented at an ASGP meeting, sparking interest from other parliaments. However, the scope of the initial study was limited because it was based on responses from 13 parliamentary chambers and mostly focused on French-speaking Africa. In 2024, the IPU and the ASGP expanded the scope of the questionnaire, receiving responses from more than 70 chambers. The data was then analysed by a team of researchers from the National Assembly of Botswana. The resulting comparative study served as a solid and documented basis for the development of this publication.

This toolkit seeks to fill an existing knowledge gap by documenting diverse practices from parliaments around the world. It offers insights into how parliamentary administrations prepare for large-scale membership changes – particularly following elections – as well as how they design and govern onboarding programmes. It is intended as a practical resource for parliaments looking to refine or expand their own approaches, whether by introducing new activities or adapting proven methods to their unique contexts – including accounting for diversity and inclusion, incorporating gender-sensitive approaches, and making onboarding materials and processes accessible for all MPs.

Response rates per region to the 2024 IPU–ASGP questionnaire

7%
19%
11%
18%
45%

■ Africa ■ Americas ■ Asia Oceania
■ Europe ■ Middle East North Africa
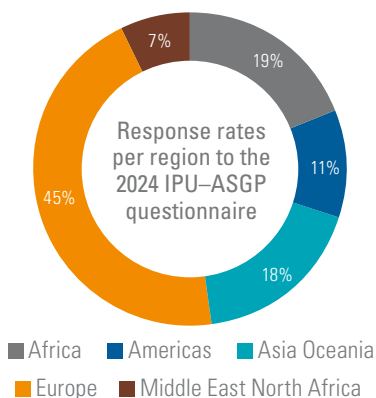
By documenting experiences and good practices, this publication aims to strengthen parliamentary institutions worldwide, helping them better plan for changeovers, equip new members for success, and ensure continuity in governance and institutional memory.

Setting the stage: Preparing for onboarding and offboarding

1. Strategic planning for onboarding and offboarding

Establishing a governance structure

A well-defined governance structure is essential for the effective management of onboarding and offboarding programmes. Many parliaments establish a dedicated committee to lead and oversee the onboarding process. The complexity and scale of these bodies often vary depending on the size of the parliament and its available resources. Likewise, the underlying governance structure can range from a minimal framework involving a few key decision makers to a more complex system led by senior executives and supported by steering committees and subcommittees, with staff from across the institution available to provide expert input.

One of the most critical resources in any onboarding programme is the expertise of parliamentary staff. Assigning or seconding employees such as administrative officers, committee clerks, protocol specialists and security teams to orientation planning – sometimes in addition to their regular duties – helps parliament prepare internally for the arrival of new members. Human-resources specialists may also assist in developing training materials using modern learning methodologies, and ensuring a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment is in place to help all MPs succeed from the start.

Example of a coordinating structure

A structured approach to onboarding often involves multiple teams working in coordination:
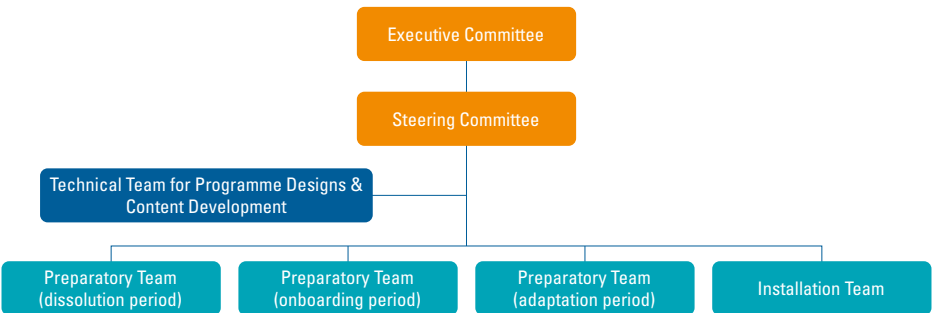
Source: Adapted from the Parliament of Canada

- **Executive Committee**: Sets strategic direction
- **Steering Committee:** Pre-approves recommendations, monitors deadlines, manages resources and oversees internal communication
- **Preparatory Team (onboarding period)**: Organizes orientation and ceremonial events for new members
- **Preparatory Team (dissolution period)**: Handles terminal benefits and farewell arrangements for outgoing members
- **Preparatory Team (adaptation period)**: Manages logistics, maintenance, inventory and supply-chain needs
- **Installation Team**: Addresses legal, communication and structural needs
- **Technical Team**: Develops learning materials, ensures quality, analyses data and facilitates training

The onboarding process in Iceland

In contrast to more bureaucratic structures, the Parliament of Iceland – a 63-member unicameral legislature – adopts a unique approach by appointing a committee of newly elected members to oversee the onboarding of their peers. This process ensures that new MPs are onboarded efficiently during a two-day pre-opening session, with support from permanent parliamentary staff.

When should planning start?

The timing of the onboarding process depends on the size and complexity of the parliament in question. Some legislatures, such as the Federal Parliament of Belgium and the Parliament of Fiji, maintain a permanent planning committee, while others establish temporary committees closer to elections. The timeline varies widely: in the United Republic of Tanzania, planning begins immediately after elections; in Bahrain, it starts 6 months beforehand; and in Cambodia, preparations can begin up to 18 months in advance. Establishing a planning committee well before an election allows for comprehensive programme development, resource allocation and stakeholder coordination, ensuring all logistical aspects are in place.

For parliaments operating in unpredictable electoral environments, having a preparatory framework in place prevents delays and ensures continuity. Some legislatures address this challenge by maintaining standing adaptation committees that periodically review onboarding strategies. Others establish multidisciplinary adaptation groups – involving finance, human-resources and operations teams – to manage changes beyond scheduled elections and ensure smooth handovers.

Stakeholder engagement

The onboarding of new parliamentarians is not solely an internal parliamentary process. It also involves collaborating with multiple external bodies and organizations. Many parliaments rely on electoral commissions to provide official lists of elected and defeated members, as is the case in Trinidad and Tobago. Others, such as the Parliament of Bhutan, coordinate with political party leadership and government officials to schedule major onboarding activities. In some cases, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, media organizations are engaged to cover onboarding activities and facilitate transparency.

Working within the regulatory framework

Onboarding and offboarding programmes may be subject to legal and procedural regulations, in some cases guiding and structuring the entire process. For instance, the *Standing Orders of the National Assembly of Botswana* empower the Speaker "to develop Parliament through reform and transformative changes in order to enable Parliament to play its institutional role by promoting the principle of checks and balances",[2] which includes the power to organize skills development activities for MPs.

These regulatory frameworks often define the rights and obligations of new members from the moment they are elected, setting out clear expectations and the legal parameters within which they must operate. In the House of Commons of Canada, for instance, the *Members' Allowances and Services Manual* codifies MPs' rights and entitlements, including access to resources and benefits, ensuring that all onboarding steps comply with pre-established regulations.[3] Similarly, in Mozambique, new MPs receive a structured manual outlining their roles, responsibilities and ethical obligations from their first day in office.

There may also be codified guidelines or policies that set out gender-equality objectives, dictate codes of conduct or provide for the prevention of harassment in the workplace. For instance, both chambers of the Parliament of Malaysia promote gender equality and have tools in place to combat abusive language. The onboarding process includes specific gender-sensitive guidelines, ensuring that documents and procedures are evaluated through a gender-equality lens.

2   Republic of Botswana, *Standing Orders of the National Assembly of Botswana* (Gaborone, Republic of Botswana: 2017), 5.1(g): www.parliament.gov.bw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=235&Itemid=650.

3   House of Commons of Canada, *Members' Allowances and Services Manual* (Ottawa, House of Commons of Canada: 2025): www.ourcommons.ca/Content/MAS/mas-e.pdf.

Some parliaments and chambers have rules governing how and by whom parliament is to be administered both during a parliamentary term and between two terms. In Morocco, for example, the Secretary General of each house manages operations between parliamentary terms. Conversely, at the Parliament of Côte d'Ivoire, which does not have a transitional administration period, the Speaker and the quaestors manage the chamber until the day before the inaugural session or until an interim bureau is installed.

Finally, there may be budgetary provisions in the regulatory framework that establish funding mechanisms for onboarding and offboarding programmes and activities. Indeed, financial planning is a key factor in the success of such programmes. In many jurisdictions, such as in Ecuador, financial and human resources for onboarding are incorporated into existing budgets. In parliaments that do not have such provisions in place, such as in Madagascar, parliamentary officials may need to request a special budgetary allocation, as provided for by the regulatory framework.

> **Key insight:**
> 67% of parliaments report having a specific budget for onboarding new MPs

Good practices

- **Establish a governance structure:** Create a dedicated onboarding committee and assign staff roles to ensure that the process is effectively and properly organized.

- **Plan early and maintain continuity:** Start onboarding preparations well in advance and establish a standing framework to handle both scheduled and unexpected changeovers.

- **Adopt a structured approach:** Establish specialized onboarding teams covering orientation, logistics and training. Consider a peer-led approach where experienced members support new MPs, and provide clear onboarding documentation outlining members' responsibilities.

- **Engage key stakeholders:** Coordinate with electoral commissions, political parties and government bodies for smooth logistics. Work with media to enhance transparency and public engagement.

- **Secure resources:** Plan financial and human costs to sustain long-term onboarding efforts. Where possible, identify potential partners and explore cooperation options, including funding.

2. Key principles for an effective onboarding programme

An effective onboarding programme for new parliamentarians requires careful planning and strategic alignment with the institution's governance structures and operational needs. Whatever format or design a parliament adopts, establishing clear guiding principles at the outset helps to ensure a structured and coherent approach. These principles should consider both logistical constraints and the need to provide a welcoming and rich capacity-building experience for new members.

> **Key insight:**
> 45% of parliaments report that new MPs have previously held political roles, meaning onboarding programmes must be adaptable to both newcomers and seasoned politicians

Parliaments may wish to consider the following principles when designing and developing onboarding programmes for new members:

- **Flexibility and adaptability**: Given the diverse backgrounds, experiences and learning preferences of new parliamentarians, onboarding programmes should be designed and delivered with flexibility in mind. This includes offering, where possible, multiple formats such as in-person sessions, digital resources and self-paced learning modules to accommodate different capacities and scheduling constraints. Parliaments should also be prepared to adapt their approaches as circumstances evolve and political landscapes shift.

- **Focus on individual needs**: Onboarding programmes also need to be centred on the needs of each individual parliamentarian, reflecting both their unique skills and experiences and their knowledge gaps. The content of the programme should therefore be relevant and directly applicable to MPs' roles and responsibilities, allowing them to engage effectively with parliamentary processes from the outset.

- **Inclusion**: Both the content of the programme and its delivery should be designed in a way that is inclusive of different genders, backgrounds and abilities. This entails using gender-sensitive language and real-life examples, ensuring that training venues are physically accessible, and offering alternative formats – such as Braille, captions, sign-language interpretation or easy-to-read versions – to accommodate MPs with disabilities.

- **Consistency**: All new MPs should receive the same core information and training on parliamentary procedures, ethical standards and institutional expectations. Such consistency fosters a cohesive and well-informed parliamentary body.

- **Alignment with codes and regulations**: The programme should align with parliamentary codes of conduct, ethical frameworks and legal regulations, ensuring that training reflects current policies, budgetary provisions and institutional mandates. Regulatory alignment guarantees that new members are informed of their obligations and responsibilities from the start of their term of office.

- **Appropriate timing**: Parliaments may wish to consider the importance of progressively delivering materials, sessions and other learning activities at an appropriate time, i.e. when the new member is ready to receive them. The topics should be scheduled in a structured, progressive and logical way, starting with foundational knowledge before moving on to more complex subjects.

- **Holistic approach**: It is important for parliaments to think holistically when designing and delivering onboarding programmes, sequencing content in such a way that new members are not flooded with too much information at once, which risks them becoming overwhelmed.

- **Ongoing evaluation**: Conducting surveys or strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) analyses can help parliaments develop a more targeted, responsive and comprehensive onboarding plan that not only includes clear learning objectives and expected outcomes, but also incorporates lessons learned from previous onboarding cycles.

Good practices

- **Offer flexible and inclusive learning formats:** Provide a mix of in-person sessions, digital resources and self-paced modules to accommodate different learning preferences and scheduling constraints.

- **Adapt content to different experience levels:** Tailor onboarding to both seasoned politicians and newcomers by addressing their specific skills, knowledge gaps and parliamentary roles.

- **Balance standardization with personalization:** Ensure all MPs receive consistent core training on parliamentary procedures, ethical frameworks, budgetary provisions and legal obligations, while tailoring content to individual members' needs.

- **Structure learning progressively:** Deliver onboarding holistically in a logical sequence, starting with foundational knowledge and gradually introducing more complex topics to prevent information overload.

- **Continuously adapt to changing needs:** Regularly review, assess and update onboarding programmes and documents in response to political shifts, feedback and lessons learned from previous cycles.

3. Understanding the MP experience: Onboarding and offboarding

An essential first step in designing onboarding and offboarding programmes is to consider the process from the perspective of parliamentarians themselves – both those entering parliament for the first time and those returning for a new mandate – in order to better understand their needs.

New members are often towards the younger end of the age spectrum and bring varying expectations of the resources available to them. Increasingly, in many parliaments around the world, including the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, new members expect technology and tools that at least match what is available in the private sector and in their personal lives – including user-friendly digital tools, concise and relevant information, and modern training formats that cater to different learning preferences. They also expect high levels of technical and institutional support to help them navigate their new role.

Addressing the needs of new parliamentarians

New MPs arrive with different backgrounds. Some are entirely new to politics, while others are re-elected for a new mandate, have served in local or regional assemblies, or have worked as political staffers. Others still may arrive with considerable experience in their chosen sector or profession, such as law, business, agriculture, education or the labour movement. Despite their varied backgrounds, all new MPs must quickly adapt to their new responsibilities and legislative duties. Just days after their election, they must be ready for debates, committee work and constituency engagement. Onboarding programmes should therefore introduce MPs to their upcoming service in context and cover each aspect of their new role in turn:

- **Legislator**: New MPs will participate in plenary debates, engage in committee work, allocate funds, oversee government action, contribute to parliamentary diplomacy and collaborate with political groups.

- **Representative**: Incoming members will interact with constituents, provide casework support and take part in local events to address community concerns.

- **Manager**: Newly elected parliamentarians will oversee office administration, manage finances, hire staff and handle procurement processes.

A well-structured onboarding programme should clearly outline these responsibilities and provide tailored guidance to help MPs manage their new workload effectively. Some parliaments, such as the National Assembly of Thailand, extend onboarding to include tailored, personalized training and specific materials for key figures such as Speakers, presiding officers and political group leaders, as well as their staff.

Planning effective onboarding programmes

For many new MPs, the first few days after their election are both exciting and stressful, as they must adjust to their new public status, navigate unfamiliar procedures, and prepare for the significant workload and responsibilities ahead.

As mentioned previously, it is therefore important to structure the content of an onboarding programme in phases to prevent new MPs from becoming overwhelmed. For example, it might be appropriate to start with administrative basics such as pay, travel and accommodation, followed by training and support to help new members organize their parliamentary and constituency offices, before the focus shifts to their legislative role.

The exact schedule will, of course, depend entirely on how much time elapses between election day and the opening of parliament, with onboarding activities necessarily being compressed into a much tighter time frame if parliament reconvenes within days after elections.

Planning for a wide variety of possible circumstances and learning preferences can be very challenging. For this reason, several parliaments – such as those of Finland and India – find it useful to adopt a blended approach that includes individual meetings and group sessions (in-person or virtual), in-person expo-style kiosks, and online self-learning modules.

Some parliaments also provide onboarding programmes, learning sessions and briefing materials – especially on casework and government structure – for political staffers to help them better support new members, who rely on these staff to fulfil their managerial, legislative and representative duties.

Supporting outgoing members

While effective onboarding is crucial, parliaments should not underestimate the challenges facing outgoing MPs. Although some choose not to seek re-election, a great many parliamentarians cease to be members because they have been defeated in an election. This transition back to life as an ordinary citizen can be tough, requiring carefully planned support from parliament.

To ensure a smooth and proper offboarding process, parliaments may wish to consider offering certain services to departing MPs, as is the case in Canada and New Zealand. Such measures could range from assigning specially designated offboarding officers to provide personalized support, to offering career transition allowances, counselling, legal assistance and professional development. Recognizing the service of departing MPs through formal farewell ceremonies or expressions of appreciation can also help them transition with dignity.

Good practices

- **Design relevant onboarding provision:** Tailor the programme in line with MPs' diverse backgrounds, experiences and expectations, and provide clear guidance on the various roles they are expected to perform.

- **Deliver onboarding in phases:** To avoid overwhelming new MPs, start with administrative essentials, then move to office set-up, before shifting the focus to legislative responsibilities.

- **Consider using a blended learning approach:** Combine individual meetings, group sessions, online self-learning and peer mentoring to suit different learning styles and ensure accessibility.

- **Support MPs' staff:** Provide targeted training and resources to equip political staffers with the knowledge and skills they need to support MPs effectively.

- **Support outgoing MPs:** Offer structured career transition assistance and consider farewell ceremonies to provide a smooth departure from parliament.

Welcoming in action: Delivering effective onboarding and offboarding programmes

Phase 1 – Early days: Meeting the immediate needs of new MPs

First encounter with the institution and its staff

The immediate priority for most new parliamentarians is to address their personal and administrative needs. Parliaments could take a proactive approach by initiating contact with new members – be they first-time-elected or returning MPs – soon after the election and inviting them to the parliamentary building.

> **Key insight:**
> 52% of parliaments report welcoming members before the inaugural session

In most cases, as in Nicaragua, new members' first encounter with the institution and its staff occurs during pre-opening sessions, which take place prior to the official inaugural session. However, in some parliaments, such as in Japan, new members enter the parliamentary premises only on the day the legislature resumes.

A small number of chambers, such as the Senate of Canada, offer personalized concierge-style services, assigning a dedicated parliamentary official to guide new members through the onboarding process.

Priority activities are typically rolled out in the first few weeks post-election. In these early days, most parliaments provide new members with some sort of information and equipment package containing materials such as guides, rules of procedure, a code of conduct, the constitution, individual fact sheets, other publications, notepads and pens, business cards, and a floor plan of the parliamentary building or complex. Increasingly, this welcome package also includes ICT tools such as laptops and tablets. Several legislatures, such as the Parliament of Burundi, provide all documentation in hard copy, while others, like the National Assembly of Guyana, offer both hard and soft formats. Some institutions, such as the Parliament of Lithuania, have transitioned entirely to digital formats via mobile applications or intranet platforms, with help-desk support available.

Logistical challenges

Elections trigger the start of cyclical property management activities. In the Netherlands, these activities include refurbishing offices and upgrading office furniture and equipment, while in Chad, they include ordering new official cars.

In many parliaments, office allocation is perhaps the hardest aspect of the welcoming process to manage, given the scarcity of space, the need to give outgoing members time to vacate their offices, and the natural desire of first-time-elected and returning members to have their offices allocated as soon as possible. Some parliaments have no offices for members at all, while some only allocate office space to the most senior members. Approaches to office allocation vary widely: some parliaments use a lottery system, others allow political groups to assign offices, and some base allocation on seniority or minimize moves for economic reasons.

Most parliaments provide information and in-person assistance to new members upon arrival, or shortly before, to help them acclimatize to their surroundings and meet parliamentary officials, and to ensure a smooth and organized transition into their new role. In Cyprus, for instance, a protocol team is assigned at the entrance to parliament. In Algeria, the Council of the Nation sets up an information desk to help new members find their way around and obtain information during the first few days. And in Libya, the progress of the inaugural session is displayed on screens on the opening day.

From a logistical planning standpoint, the relevant departments and teams within the parliamentary administration will need to have designed and prepared materials in advance, ordered the necessary supplies and equipment, held practice sessions and regular rehearsals, reserved the necessary space for the planned activities, and taken care of a myriad of other details ranging from food and beverage services to local transport and logistical support. Unless meticulously planned, these tasks can quickly overwhelm an administration faced with a high turnover of members.

Personal needs and accreditation

Many parliaments report that, when new members arrive for their first visit, they will focus on several basic administrative tasks. These can include registering for salary and allowances purposes, filling out paperwork for accreditation and security clearances, acquiring electronic devices and related credentials, and obtaining travel and accommodation entitlements. In a handful of countries, such as Madagascar and Senegal, new MPs also seek to arrange accommodation in the dedicated members' hotel.

Group and individual orientation sessions

To support the onboarding process, many parliaments hold structured administrative orientation sessions for new MPs across parties. These sessions sometimes take place over a meal and are often led by presiding officers. For instance, in India, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the House of the People hosted a two-day orientation session for new members in August 2024.

In some cases, new MPs' spouses may also be invited to attend and provided with a separate orientation programme. This can even extend to talks where an experienced member and their spouse speak about practical matters including the challenges associated with parliamentary life, such as living and working in the capital city, balancing family and work obligations, and regularly travelling long distances between the constituency and the capital. Other orientation programmes may incorporate lifestyle, stress management and health-related content.

> **Key insight:**
> 76% of parliaments report scheduling a guided tour of the parliament building for all MPs

Orientation methods vary: some parliaments favour large-group briefings, while others opt for smaller sessions or an expo-style approach, with information kiosks where expert administrative staff are available to answer questions. Many institutions, such as the Parliament of Sri Lanka, also offer guided tours to help MPs familiarize themselves with their new work environment. Finally, some parliaments provide scaled-back programmes for re-elected members, covering office budgets, policy updates and procedural changes.

Management role

In their first days in parliament, new members often prioritize quickly setting up their parliamentary offices – in the capital and, where applicable, in their constituency – and hiring staff. Some may find this aspect of their duties daunting, especially if they have never managed or hired people before. To help incoming MPs adapt to this new management role, many parliaments offer specialized training and ongoing support on financial management, office budgeting and citizen engagement. Legal, financial and human-resources experts also provide personalized advice so that parliamentarians can familiarize themselves with the institution's financial practices and rules.

Representation role

Once their constituency office is set up and staff have been hired, new members will usually begin fulfilling their representative role in earnest. They will immediately start receiving requests from constituents – by phone, by email and in person. This is a crucial time for many new MPs, as they struggle to come to grips with the magnitude of their new duties – and some may quickly become overloaded with greater-than-expected demands from constituents.

The onboarding process at the House of Representatives of the United States of America

New members of the House of Representatives of the United States of America are allowed to engage two staff members – a transition aide and a designated aide – to support them during the roughly two-month period between their election and their swearing-in. Transition aides are hired as temporary employees of the institution and receive pay, benefits and institutional access, while designated aides, although unpaid, have travel and lodging covered for the duration of the orientation process. Once the onboarding programme is complete, new members are free to hire these two individuals as part of their official staff.

Security considerations

Security is becoming an increasing priority, as all members – both new and re-elected – face growing instances of aggressive behaviour, both in person and online, which can at times escalate into threats of violence. Women MPs and those from marginalized groups are particularly at risk, often facing targeted online and offline threats including gender-based violence and harassment. In response, many parliaments now provide security briefings, conduct personal risk assessments, coordinate with local police for constituency offices, and offer personal protection in high-risk cases.

Regulatory compliance and mandatory training

Key insight:

50% of parliaments report requiring new MPs to provide a declaration of assets

In several parliaments, new members are required to complete training on key governance issues, some of which are mandated by the regulatory framework. These can include mandatory training sessions on human-resource management, the prevention of harassment and violence, and compliance with rules on conflicts of interest. On this last point, several legislatures, such as the Parliament of Hungary and the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, apply strict rules on conflicts of interest, requiring members to declare their assets and liabilities. Additional mandatory training may cover office management, security, constituency work and committee responsibilities.

Good practices

- **Initiate contact early:** Invite new MPs to attend parliament soon after their election and consider organizing pre-opening sessions to provide essential information, logistical support and access to the parliamentary buildings before the inaugural session.

- **Streamline administrative and logistical processes:** Assist MPs with essential administrative tasks such as salary registration, accreditation, security, travel and office allocation.

- **Support office set-up and staff management:** Provide training and expert guidance on financial management, office budgeting, staff recruitment and constituency engagement.

- **Ensure security awareness and deliver compliance training:** Conduct security briefings and personal risk assessments, and ensure that members complete mandatory training (e.g. on conflicts of interest and the prevention of harassment).

- **Prepare MPs for the pressures of parliamentary life:** Organize sessions on work-life balance, stress management and the challenges of frequent travel, and consider providing special orientation for members' spouses.

Phase 2 – Moving into the lawmaker's role

After handling the initial administrative procedures and organizational orientation, new MPs have to take on their legislative responsibilities. To support this shift, most parliaments hold a separate orientation session – lasting for one or two days, or sometimes more – to introduce members to their parliamentary work. Such sessions can cover a wide variety of subjects, including the main functions of parliament, parliamentary customs and practices, decorum, committee work, the legislative process and parliament's powers on international issues.

Key insight:

74% of parliaments report systematically organizing seminars at the start of each term to introduce members to their parliamentary work

Some parliaments invite experienced re-elected members from various political parties to participate in panel discussions – often in the style of "what I wish I knew then that I know now" sessions – so that new MPs can benefit from their insights and receive valuable tips on how best to conduct their legislative work and manage their time.

Aside from these structured orientation programmes, many parliaments ensure that the Secretary General and other senior parliamentary officials are available to provide expert advice and address the many questions that new members may have.

The swearing-in ceremony

For some new MPs, especially in Westminster-style parliaments, their first exposure to their legislative role is their swearing-in or inauguration ceremony. As a constitutional requirement, this individual or group procedure legitimizes new members' authority to sit, speak, vote and perform their duties in parliament, and marks the official start of their parliamentary mandate. The timing of this ceremony varies from parliament to parliament: in some cases, individual ceremonies occur over a period of weeks as certificates of election are received by the Secretary General, while in others, a group swearing-in takes place upon or just before the opening of parliament.

Compressing such a mass of material into a one- or two-day session allows for only a superficial overview of a series of subjects which are complex in themselves. For this reason, many parliaments offer continuous learning opportunities – specialized group briefings or seminars, online modules, or private, individualized sessions – to members and their staff wishing to deepen their understanding of particular subject-matter areas. Topics covered can include gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and inclusive governance, empowering MPs to contribute to more equitable policymaking. Continuous professional development of this kind is essential for parliamentarians to effectively fulfil their legislative, budgetary, oversight and representative roles, enhancing their competencies and ensuring they remain abreast of good practices in parliamentary functions.

Some legislatures, such as the Parliament of Kenya, have established dedicated parliamentary training institutes to support continuous professional development for both MPs and parliamentary staff. These centres play a crucial role in enhancing legislative knowledge, skills and competencies, offering structured training programmes, workshops and research opportunities to strengthen parliamentary functions, legislative drafting, oversight and governance. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, these institutes contribute to the professionalization of parliamentary work and promote global excellence in legislative studies, ultimately supporting democratic governance and effective lawmaking.

Other parliaments offer regular training sessions on soft skills such as time management, public speaking and media engagement. Some partner with international organizations, universities or other parliaments to offer their members awareness-raising sessions on various topics of current interest. Several parliaments are also developing a range of digital learning modules that new members can access at their convenience. Parliamentarians can also benefit from ongoing and immediate access to the thematic expertise of permanent parliamentary staff members.

New members will inevitably take advice from their own party colleagues and group staff as they begin to exercise their parliamentary role. While this can be a valuable support system, it also carries certain risks. In some cases, new members may receive inaccurate or biased information about the institution and its functions from colleagues. Nevertheless, this informal "on-the-job" training is a daily reality for new members, as they observe their more experienced peers in action. It is therefore important that new parliamentarians are offered structured, non-partisan training to complement informal learning and to ensure they develop a balanced understanding of their duties, allowing them to draw their own conclusions about how they wish to carry them out.

Good practices

- **Organize targeted orientation sessions:** Hold structured, non-partisan, dedicated seminars to introduce new MPs to parliamentary functions, procedures, committee work and legislative processes, ensuring they understand their core responsibilities.

- **Facilitate peer learning:** Arrange panel discussions where seasoned MPs share practical insights and advice on managing legislative work, offering a "what I wish I knew" perspective while ensuring that the information provided is accurate and unbiased.

- **Provide continuous learning opportunities throughout the parliamentary term:** Offer ongoing professional development – through specialized briefings, workshops, online courses and one-on-one sessions – to help MPs deepen their expertise over time.

- **Establish dedicated parliamentary training resources:** Create in-house training programmes or establish partnerships with academic institutions, international organizations, other parliaments and experts to provide structured learning on legislative, oversight and governance topics. Consider setting up a parliamentary training institute.

- **Develop digital learning tools:** Provide MPs with access to regularly updated online learning modules and permanent expert support, allowing them to develop their skills and knowledge at their own pace.

Phase 3 – Evaluating and improving onboarding and offboarding programmes

It is considered a good practice to comprehensively evaluate onboarding and offboarding programmes delivered to new and outgoing members respectively – and, where relevant, to their staff. Beyond individual experiences, such evaluations provide critical insights into the strengths and weaknesses of these programmes, enabling parliaments to continuously refine and improve them. The ultimate goal is to ensure that new members receive the necessary tools to navigate their roles successfully while also identifying areas for improvement in future onboarding processes.

Parliaments use a range of methods to evaluate the effectiveness of onboarding programmes, including the following:

- **Feedback surveys for new MPs**: These surveys gather input from incoming members on the usefulness and impact of onboarding activities, providing direct insights into areas where improvements can be made and highlighting the aspects that were most beneficial.

- **Interviews with outgoing MPs**: Outgoing members, having completed their parliamentary term, are in a unique position to reflect on their onboarding experience and offer recommendations for improvement. Exit interviews also allow for a structured discussion to identify strengths and gaps in offboarding support.

- **Performance assessments**: Some parliaments measure the engagement and legislative effectiveness of new MPs, which helps them to evaluate how successful the onboarding programme has been in preparing them for their parliamentary responsibilities.

- **Input from staff**: Parliaments may wish to ask parliamentary staff, as well as the staff of new members, for their input on how the programmes were delivered and how they could be improved. This feedback should be compiled and analysed to help strengthen existing provision.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is crucial to ensuring that onboarding and offboarding programmes remain relevant and effective. A well-structured M&E framework typically involves the regular collection of feedback, including from surveys and focus-group discussions with new and departing MPs, ensuring that real-time insights are captured and integrated into programme improvements. The process also includes data-driven analysis, combining qualitative feedback with quantitative metrics to assess the impact of training and support mechanisms. Benchmarking and comparative studies also play an essential role in refining approaches by examining best practices implemented in other parliamentary systems.

Accountability, adaptive learning and continuous improvement

The evaluation of onboarding programmes should be an ongoing process rather than a one-time assessment. Continuous learning and adaptation help parliaments improve induction programmes in line with the evolving needs of new members. A dynamic and responsive approach ensures that insights gathered from evaluations lead to tangible improvements.

Accountability plays a key role in this process, ensuring that parliament genuinely considers and responds to the views and experiences of new and outgoing members, as well as to those of staff. Transparent feedback mechanisms signal that contributions are valued and acted upon, fostering trust and improving the legitimacy of the process.

A key part of adaptive learning is regularly reviewing and updating training modules to reflect changing legislative priorities and technological advancements. Many parliaments are also expanding digital learning opportunities, such as online courses, webinars and mentoring platforms, to support MPs' ongoing professional development.

The development of institutional memory is another crucial aspect. This involves systematically documenting findings from evaluations to ensure that lessons learned are preserved and applied to future onboarding initiatives. By maintaining comprehensive records of past assessments, parliaments can build on previous experiences, ensuring each iteration of the onboarding programme is more effective than the last.

For the purposes of continuous improvement, many parliamentary administrations view the evaluation phase as an opportunity to fine-tune certain time-honoured practices, to review the delivery of certain modules, and to plan for the adoption of entirely new approaches or ideas for the next onboarding process.

Good practices

- **Collect feedback from new and departing MPs:** Use surveys, interviews and focus groups to gather insights from MPs about their onboarding experience, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

- **Engage staff in the evaluation process:** Collect feedback from parliamentary staff and MPs' staff to assess how well onboarding programmes support both members and their teams.

- **Benchmark against good practices applied elsewhere:** Compare onboarding programmes with those of other parliaments to identify successful approaches and integrate proven strategies.

- **Continuously monitor, evaluate and update training:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of onboarding programmes using qualitative and quantitative methods, integrating real-time feedback to refine content and ensure training remains aligned with legislative priorities and technological advancements.

- **Maintain institutional memory for future improvements:** Systematically document findings from evaluations to ensure lessons learned are preserved and used to refine future onboarding cycles.

Annex 1: Checklist for smooth onboarding

This checklist offers a collection of good practices that parliaments may find useful when preparing to welcome and support new MPs. It is intended to be a non-prescriptive and non-exhaustive resource, providing food for thought to help parliamentary administrations review their existing onboarding processes and identify areas for improvement.

The checklist recognizes the diversity of parliamentary systems, institutional capacities and political contexts, acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, it provides flexible recommendations that can be adapted and tailored to each parliament's specific needs, legal frameworks and available resources. Parliaments are encouraged to use this resource as a reference point for discussion, selecting the elements that best align with their structures and strategic priorities and modifying them as they see fit. The ultimate goal is to facilitate a smooth onboarding process for new MPs, to strengthen parliamentary effectiveness and to uphold democratic governance.

1. Planning phase (ideally before elections)

- **Establish an onboarding steering committee**
    - → Ensure that all relevant departments and teams are represented.
    - → Identify key staff and define roles and responsibilities for each phase of the process.
    - → Map out the profile of future MPs, both first-time and returning, to tailor onboarding to their needs.

- **Secure resources**
    - → Ensure that the budget for onboarding activities – covering all logistics and training-related costs – is approved.
    - → Assign preparatory teams for onboarding, adaptation and departure logistics.
    - → Seek external support if needed.

- **Legal and administrative readiness**
    - → Design onboarding modules and develop or update all materials and resources to include inclusive parliamentary values. Consider also making these resources available in digital format.
    - → Develop an internal onboarding platform to collect MPs' information post-election.
    - → Identify the necessary ICT equipment and software tools for new MPs.

- **Logistics and security readiness**
  - → Plan the refurbishment and allocation of offices for new MPs based on different possible election outcomes and consider transitional arrangements for outgoing MPs.
  - → Ensure that security and accreditation procedures are ready in advance.
  - → Prepare emergency procedures and contingency planning for any logistical challenges.

- **Coordinate with key stakeholders**
  - → Work with electoral commissions to anticipate new member lists.
  - → Engage political parties to plan adaptation support, group formations and logistical needs in advance.
  - → Inform the media about planned onboarding activities.

2. Implementation phase

A. First contact and administrative set-up

- **Initial outreach**
  - → Send an official welcome email with details of the onboarding programme.
  - → Offer helpline contacts and support resources.
  - → Organize the official swearing-in ceremony (where applicable).

- **Initial meetings**
  - → Organize pre-opening sessions where new MPs can meet staff and familiarize themselves with parliamentary facilities. Offer onboarding documents in accessible formats.
  - → Conduct small-group orientation sessions for a personalized onboarding experience.
  - → Offer guided tours of the parliament, highlighting key locations.

- **Orientation day logistics**
  - → Display building maps and emergency exit plans in common areas.
  - → Set up designated welcome areas where MPs can seek assistance during their first week. Ensure accessibility for MPs with disabilities.
  - → Provide stands or dedicated areas where MPs can collect welcome packs, meet parliamentary staff, complete essential administrative forms, and easily access security badges, office keys and official IDs.

- **Office set-up**
  - → Allocate office space (if applicable) and provide office essentials.
  - → Guide MPs on managing parliamentary allowances, travel budgets and staff recruitment.
  - → Conduct ICT set-up for official emails, devices and software, and assign technical support teams.
- **Security briefing and risk awareness**
  - → Conduct briefings on secure digital access, cybersecurity and parliamentary communication platforms for MPs and their staff.
  - → Offer personal risk assessment and constituency office security advice.
  - → Provide briefings on dealing with threats, online harassment and misinformation.

B. Structured onboarding programme

- **Parliamentary induction sessions**
  - → Introduce MPs' legislative role, including lawmaking, policy scrutiny and parliamentary oversight.
  - → Explain committee work, covering participation in discussions, report drafting and inquiries.
  - → Clarify the budget process and MPs' responsibilities in financial oversight and budget approval.
  - → Outline ethics and governance standards, including rules on conflicts of interest and transparency, as well as codes of conduct on harassment and discrimination.

- **Constituency engagement and representative responsibilities**
  - → Guide MPs on how to engage with constituents effectively, including with marginalized groups.
  - → Brief MPs on casework management, communication strategies and public service delivery.
  - → Introduce inclusive governance, including gender-, youth- and disability-sensitive practices.

- **Support for MPs' staff**
  - → Offer structured training for MPs' staff on legislative support and research skills.
  - → Provide guidance on budget management, payroll and human-resources responsibilities.
  - → Suggest peer-to-peer mentoring with experienced political staffers.

C. Ongoing subject-specific training and continuous learning

- **Ongoing learning and training**
  - → Establish a parliamentary training institute or learning portal and propose digital learning options.
  - → Organize specialized professional development workshops on topics such as effective public speaking and media engagement, policy analysis and research tools, and stress management.
  - → Organize subject-specific seminars, where appropriate with relevant partners, on key legislative topics or international issues such as parliamentary diplomacy, human rights, peace and security, climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Technical capacity-building sessions**
  - → Offer ICT capacity-building sessions, including on the responsible use of artificial intelligence, social media tools, digital engagement strategies, cybersecurity awareness and secure data handling.
  - → Propose opportunities to enhance research skills, including on parliamentary databases and legislative tracking systems.
  - → Provide language capacity-building.

- **Preparation for life after public office**
  - → Propose seminars on pension entitlements, financial security and investment strategies post-office.
  - → Offer guidance on legal obligations upon leaving office, including archiving requirements and post-office restrictions such as rules on lobbying, holding advisory roles and avoiding conflicts of interest.
  - → Conduct career transition workshops on handling media scrutiny, maintaining a positive public image, and leveraging parliamentary experience for advisory or other roles in diplomacy, academia, think tanks, and international or non-governmental organizations.

3. Monitoring, evaluation and improvement phase

- **Regular feedback collection**
  - → Conduct post-onboarding surveys and interviews with new MPs to assess the onboarding process.
  - → Organize focus groups with MPs' staff to gather additional insights and to evaluate effectiveness.
  - → Document feedback from committee chairs and parliamentary leadership.

- **Long-term monitoring of MPs' effectiveness and needs**
  - → Assess MPs' legislative effectiveness over their first year.
  - → Track MPs' participation in debates, committee work and policy discussions.
  - → Offer refresher training based on evolving legislative challenges.

- **Institutional memory and knowledge transfer**
  - → Compare onboarding processes with international parliamentary standards.
  - → Identify gaps and areas for improvement based on feedback, document lessons learned and update training materials. Archive good practices for future onboarding cycles.
  - → Maintain a rolling onboarding committee to ensure continuity and readiness for future elections.

Annex 2: List of items to include in welcome packs

The first table lists the essential documents and other materials most commonly included in welcome packs for new members. The second list contains supplementary items provided by a smaller number of parliaments, reflecting individual institutional cultures and logistical capacities.

Items most commonly included

Item	Purpose
Guide for parliamentarians	Offers a detailed overview of roles, responsibilities, key procedures and available services; essential for first-time MPs
Internal rules of procedure	Enable MPs to understand and engage in parliamentary debates, motions and voting in accordance with official procedures
Code of conduct/ ethics	Establishes expected standards of behaviour, promotes accountability, and helps prevent misconduct and harassment
Constitution	Provides the legal and institutional context within which parliament operates, helping MPs understand the limits and powers of their role
ICT tools (laptops/ tablets)	Provide MPs with access to legislative platforms, digital documents and communication tools, especially in digitalized parliaments
Building plans/ precinct maps	Help new members find their way around parliamentary buildings, including offices, chambers and committee rooms
Business cards	Useful for formal introductions, as well as for meetings with constituents and external stakeholders

Item	Purpose
Branded stationery (notepads, pens)	Practical tools that MPs can use immediately in meetings, committee work or plenary sessions
Alphabetical list of members	Facilitates internal networking and coordination across party lines and constituencies

Items occasionally included

Item	Purpose
Topic-specific fact sheets	Offer topic-specific information about parliamentary services, legislative priorities or committee work
Explanatory notes	Clarify procedural or institutional complexities that may not be immediately obvious to new MPs
Guide on gender equality in parliament	Introduces institutional policies and initiatives promoting gender-sensitive lawmaking and women's political empowerment
Guide on decorum/protocol	Informs MPs about formal dress codes, codes of conduct and ceremonial practices, to avoid missteps
Scarves/lapel pins/badges	Reinforce the official identity of MPs and are often used in formal settings and public events
Name and contact details of liaison officer	Ensures new MPs have someone they can directly contact for help with orientation, procedures or logistics