

# CONGRESSIONAL APP CHALLENGE

2021 Congressional Office Toolkit

V.1

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## INTRODUCTION

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Dear Congressional Staffer,

We are thrilled to invite you and your office to host a Congressional App Challenge!

As the House of Representatives continues to grapple with evolving technological policy issues, the Congressional App Challenge (CAC) connects Members of Congress with the young coders in their districts.

From summer through fall, Member Offices across the country host a coding competition for their student constituents. Local judges evaluate the student submissions and choose a winning individual or team to be honored by their Representative. Winners from each district receive prizes and recognition from their Member of Congress, and their apps are put on display in the Capitol Building.

Pending sufficient funding, winners are invited to #HouseOfCode, the springtime computer science fair and reception held in their honor in Washington, D.C..

With the support of the program's non-governmental sponsor, the Internet Education Foundation (IEF), Representatives hosting a CAC encourage students to pursue valuable STEM-based skills – skills necessary for the jobs of the future.

In this toolkit, you will find everything you need to know, including an explanation of how the CAC operates, why it's important, and how we at the Internet Education Foundation can assist you in executing a successful competition.

Thank you for hosting this program and for supporting the students in your district as they embark on their coding journey. Your support for computer science and coding education makes a difference!

Sincerely,

*Joseph Alessi*

Program Director,  
Congressional App Challenge  
A project of the *Internet Education Foundation*

## ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

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This toolkit was created by the [Congressional App Challenge](#) for Congressional Offices hosting a 2021 Congressional App Challenge.

In here, you will find resources, strategies, templates, and information to make hosting a 2021 CAC as easy as possible. The toolkit will provide you with the programming fundamentals: mission, goals, terminology, step-by-step directions for hosting a challenge, fundraising rules, and much more. The Resources section includes materials for you to use as your office follows the outlined steps, and the Appendix includes various reference materials, such as the text of the legislation used to create the program.

Throughout this toolkit, you will find different kinds of tips, as shown in the boxes to the right:

The toolkit is *not* exhaustive. It is meant to be used in conjunction with **regularly scheduled emails sent by IEF**, the official sponsor of the Congressional App Challenge, as appointed by the US House Of Representatives. IEF will provide additional materials (e.g. sample social media posts, letters, press release templates, sponsorship waivers, etc.) not included in this toolkit. As the need for those items arise, they will be made available. It is critical that offices **read the CAC emails** in order to access those additional materials. Please email our Congressional Operations Coordinator, Jack West, with any additional questions: [jwest@congressionalappchallenge.us](mailto:jwest@congressionalappchallenge.us).

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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### Abbreviations

- App: Application.
- CAC: Congressional App Challenge
- CS: Computer Science
- DIS: District Information Spreadsheet
- IEF: Internet Education Foundation
- POC: Point of Contact
- STEAM: Science, Technology, Education, Art, and Math
- STEM: Science, Technology, Education, Math

**The Congressional App Challenge:** (“CAC” or “App Challenge”). The official name of this program is the “Congressional App Challenge.” The Congressional App Challenge is an [“Officially-sanctioned Competition”](#) of the U.S. House Of Representatives. The rules governing

such competitions are in the Members' Congressional Handbook under "Officially-sanctioned Competitions" ([link here](#)).

**The Sponsor:** Per the rules issued by the Committee on House Administration, the CAC must be operated by an external, non-governmental "Sponsor" (see Rules Issued for the CAC by the Committee on House Administration (2015)). The Committee on House Administration has appointed the Internet Education Foundation (IEF) as the official Challenge Sponsor. Their sole purpose is to assist with coordinating the challenge, and not act as a monetary sponsor.

**Internet Education Foundation (IEF):** The Internet Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to a strong Internet to promote communications, commerce and democracy.

**App:** For this competition, an "app" is a piece of software, created using the basic computer functions as specified later in this toolkit, to perform a function on a digital device (PC, web, mobile or otherwise).

## WHY THE CAC MATTERS

The Congressional App Challenge (CAC) was created because Congress recognized that STEM skills, particularly those surrounding coding and computer science, are essential for America's continued economic growth and technological innovation.

Value of the CAC	
To Students	To Members of Congress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Work Skills:</b> Opportunity and incentive to learn incredibly valuable computer science and programming skills. Enhancing overall American competitiveness in the global workforce.</li>   <li>● <b>Civic Engagement:</b> Opportunity to meet and be honored by their Representative in the most prestigious competition in computer science.</li>   <li>● <b>Talent Recognition:</b> Opportunity to showcase their accomplishments on a national scale and the potential of being featured on media outlets.</li>   <li>● <b>Opportunities:</b> Opportunity to build ties with potential future high-tech employers and top-tier collegiate computer science departments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Community Relations:</b> Opportunity to interact with students and deepen constituent relations with the opportunity to use their MRA.</li>   <li>● <b>Improved Tech Policy:</b> Personal exposure to technologies and the young innovators who create and use them, creating a pipeline for domestic talent within their own districts.</li>   <li>● <b>District Pride:</b> Opportunity to showcase the accomplishments of local students.</li>   <li>● <b>Tech Sector Relations:</b> Signals to the private sector that Congress is addressing the issues faced by the tech sector.</li> </ul>

Encouraging students to learn skills required for app development improves their long-term employment prospects, and will help fill the expanding gap between the domestic tech labor force and employer demand. In its efforts to support this initiative, the CAC gives the House of Representatives an opportunity to show the tech sector that it recognizes these issues and takes them seriously without implementing new regulatory burdens. That is an opportunity students in every district in America deserve.

## MISSION&METRICS

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### CAC MISSION

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1. **Inspire:** To inspire students from every corner of the country to explore STEM, coding and computer science through hands-on practice;
2. **Include:** To actively include and engage students from communities that are traditionally underrepresented in the tech community; and
3. **Innovate:** To innovate policymaking by connecting Members of Congress to new and emerging technologies through personal interactions with their student constituents.

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### METRICS OF SUCCESS

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IEF sets the national goals for the Congressional App Challenge. Offices are encouraged to set targeted goals for their own districts. The CAC will measure national success by:

#### National Outreach Goals

- District Count
- Student Engagement
- Diversity: Rural, Racial, Gender and Skill Level.



## **District Goals**

Offices may set goals for their district however they see fit. We recommend the following metrics:

- Growth over past years
- Number of student participants
- Number of schools engaged
- Number of apps submitted

## WHAT IS AN “APP”?

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“App” is short for “application.” An application is any computer software program written in any programming language. An application can run on a variety of platforms such as:

- a personal computer (example: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel)
- a web app (example: Dropbox, Google Forms, MailChimp)
- a mobile phone (example: Lyft, Uber, WhatsApp, Candy Crush)
- a robot (example: computer program which makes a robot follow a delimited perimeter)
- a tablet, a vehicle with automated features, etc.



Applications can provide entertainment (i.e. games), simplify work functions (e.g. calendar), support health (e.g. fitness tracking apps), daily assistance tools, educational resources etc. Given their versatility, it's not surprising that many people have a hard time concretely defining what an app is. An application receives an input and performs a function producing an output.

Colloquially, the term “app” is often used to refer specifically to software that can be used on smartphones. While that use of the term is correct, **apps are *not* limited to mobile phones.** To participate in the CAC, the students may create any type of application as long as the submission meets the originality and functionality requirements and is completed by the time of submission.

# TIMELINE

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## TIMELINE SUMMARY

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Step-by-step details and instructions will be provided on the following pages.

\*We strongly encourage students to register by September 1, 2021. Early registration by students is extremely important to the success of the Challenge. Early registration also provides MOCs with a metric to assess student engagement with the district's Challenge.

## KEY DATES

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### **Preparation Period** (Spring 2021) Key Dates for Your 2021 App Challenge

**April 15th:** Congressional Sign-Up Period Begins

**June 24th:** Student Applications Begin

**August 1st:** Final Day for Offices to Register

- Let middle and high school teachers know their students final projects can be submitted starting in June.
- Reach out to summer programs about the CAC launch.

**November 1st:** Student Applications Close

**December 1st:** Office Must Submit Winners

IEF will begin sending check-in emails with guidance on CAC execution.

**Student Registration and Submission** (June – November 2021)

**June 24th:** Congressional App Challenge launches

**August 1st:** Last day for MOCs to declare an App Challenge in their district

**Student Submissions Close** (November 1st, 2021)

**November 1st:** Deadline for students to submit their app.

**Judging Period** (November 1st - December 1st, 2021)

**November 1st:** First day offices may announce their winner

**December 1st:** Deadline for offices to report winners to IEF

**December 7th:** Computer Science Education Week

**January 15th:** IEF will make National Winners Announcement

# PROCESS

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## STEP 1. GETTING STARTED

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### ASSIGN THE POINTS OF CONTACT

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The sign-up process itself is very brief. Before you sign up, decide which staffers will be serving as the points of contact (POC).

The POCs do *not* have to be an expert in tech or education policy, just someone who can work with students and allies within the district and report back pivotal information.

Offices may divide the work of executing the *Challenge* however they see fit. However, here is a suggested breakdown:

#### 1. District Point of Contact

- The district POC is arguably the most important person working on the CAC.
- This person will be the main point of contact for students, teachers and any other stakeholders in the district.
- This person should execute community outreach, build relationships with teachers and orgs, promote the CAC and plan relevant events in the district (e.g. award ceremony, hackathon, winner meet and greet with the MOC).
- The District POC should be familiar with this toolkit and should also be sure to virtually “attend” the info sessions.
- The District POC should check-in with constituents to ensure that they’ve registered for #HouseOfCode.

**Best Practices:  
District POCs play a KEY role**

Your district POC will be the face of the Challenge in your district. Most offices reported that 80-85% of CAC implementation was led by someone in the district office.

#### 2. DC Point of Contact

- The DC POC is responsible for attending any DC briefings and reporting necessary information back to relevant staff.

- The DC POC will be in charge of getting approvals for materials the district POC might need. (example: getting a flyer approved from House Franking).
- The DC POC is responsible for ensuring that their constituent winner is able to meet with their MOC at the annual #HouseOfCode.

### 3. Communications Lead

- This person should assist with promoting awareness of your Office's Challenge: utilizing social media, press, etc..
- The CAC is an *amazing* opportunity for positive local press. Since 2015, the IEF has tracked over 1000 local and some national news stories published about the CAC.
- The comms lead should push the CAC through social media posts, floor speeches, op-eds, and whatever other means your office utilizes.

CAC Social Media:	
<b>Facebook</b> 	<u>AppChallenge</u> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/CongressionalAppChallenge/">https://www.facebook.com/CongressionalAppChallenge/</a>
<b>Twitter</b> 	<u>@congressionalAC</u> <a href="https://twitter.com/congressionalAC">https://twitter.com/congressionalAC</a> Hashtag: #Congress4CS
<b>Instagram</b> 	<u>Congressional App Challenge</u> <a href="https://www.instagram.com/CongressionalAppChallenge/">https://www.instagram.com/CongressionalAppChallenge/</a>
<b>Linked-In</b>	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/congressional-app-challenge/">https://www.linkedin.com/company/congressional-app-challenge/</a>

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STAY ON TRACK: E-MAILS & CONFERENCE CALLS

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After the contest launches, IEF sends the POC's emails with guidance and instructions. These emails include all of the necessary resources to host your 2021 App Challenge.

If the POC's don't start receiving the emails after having signed up, they should contact the Congressional Operations Coordinator to rectify the situation (CAD@CongressionalAppChallenge.us).

To provide additional support, IEF will also hold monthly conference calls (dates will be sent in the emails) to give offices a chance to ask questions that haven't been covered in this toolkit or on the emails.

## USING YOUR DISTRICT INFORMATION SPREADSHEET

IEF will create a unique District Information Spreadsheet (DIS) for each office that signs up to host a CAC. The DIS provides information that is only pertinent to *your* district (as opposed to this toolkit, which is intended for use by all offices).

The DIS includes district-specific information; for that reason, **you should never share access to the DIS** with *anyone* who isn't working on the CAC in your office.

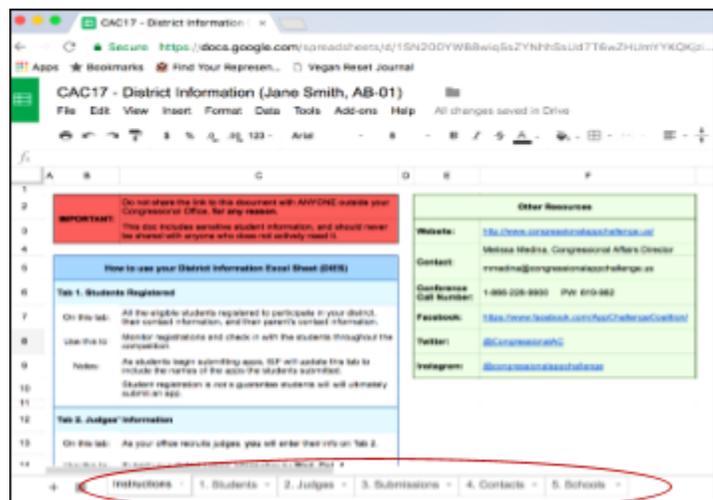
### Best Practices: Read the emails!

Besides this toolkit, these emails will be your most important resource for successful challenge execution. They include up-to-the-minute tips. **Please be very careful to read them thoroughly.**

### Five Tabs

The DIS will be *crucial* to successfully running your challenge, so you should get familiar with it. The DIS includes five sections, which can be accessed using the tabs at the bottom of the page:

- Instructions
- Review Portal
- Judges
- Contacts
- Schools



**Instructions:** This tab explains how the DIS works and what's included on each tab.

*You'll use this tab:* As a reference for what each tab includes, for links to other online resources and for contact information.

**Review Portal:** This tab lists the email address that has access to our Congressional App Challenge review portal and with directions for how to access and review your district applications.

This point of contact was submitted by your office when your office registered for the Congressional App Challenge. This email can be updated by contacting the CAC team.

**Judges:** On this tab, *you* will enter your selected CAC judges' information.

As soon as you confirm your judges, enter their information on this page. IEF also recruits volunteer judges who can supplement any district's judging panel. If you request assistance with finding judges, we will enter the volunteer judges on this tab for you.

*You'll use this tab to:* Report your judges' information and find contact information for your supplemental judges.

**Contacts:** This tab includes a customized list of relevant contacts in your district.

These contacts are aggregated from previous year App Challenges.

*You'll use this tab to:* Get started on outreach, save new contact information and build your network for future years.

**Schools:** This tab includes a list of relevant schools in your district.

IEF has collected a list of schools in your district that either provide AP Computer Science classes or have had students participate in the CAC in the past.

*You'll use this tab to:* Get started on school outreach, save new school information and build your network for future years.

**Additional Tabs:** Any additional tabs will provide information about previous Congressional App Challenges hosted in your district.



## STEP 2. PREPARE FOR ANNOUNCEMENT AND LAUNCH

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Constituents need to know that your office is hosting an *App Challenge* this year. Be sure to use local media, social media and email for connecting with interested constituents. Check out the [CongressionalAppChallenge.us](http://CongressionalAppChallenge.us) website for CAC social media graphics and flyers.

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### CREATE OR UPDATE CAC PAGE ON OFFICE WEBSITE

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We highly recommend creating/updating a page on your House.gov webpage dedicated to the CAC, similar to what most offices have created for the Congressional Art Competition. (See earlier text for your website. Content for Your Congressional Page (house.gov) in the Appendix).

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### ISSUE A PRESS RELEASE

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Issue a press release announcing you're hosting a CAC to all local media. See sample press release content in Generic Template for Press Release/Press Pitch, page .

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### GET FAMILIAR WITH THE REVIEW PORTAL

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The Review Portal will allow your office to review applications and select a winner once the application window has closed. Access to the Review Portal has been granted to the Member Office's main point of contact upon registration. Contact and login information can be found within your District Information Spreadsheet (DIS).

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### COMMUNICATE WITH SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

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Notifying local schools and teachers about the district's Challenge is a critical component of reaching students. Our District Information Sheet (DIS) will link you to academic resources in your district. We hope to add more resources that have computer programs/clubs or interested students. This information will carry over year after year.

**Best Practices:  
Personal Outreach to Teachers**

Over 75% of participants first heard about the App Challenge "through a teacher at [their] school," according to a 2015 survey.

Building the list will benefit your office. Refer to **DIS - Tab 5** (DIS information on page 16 in the 2018 Toolkit).

1. *Inform the Schools*: Reach out to all of the local middle and high schools, letting them know you're hosting a CAC. We've provided a sample Invitation Letter to local schools, detailing how to follow up with the school contacts to increase participation rates.
2. *Visit Schools*: Offices which received a high number of submissions reported that their in-person visits – either by the Member of Congress or a staff member in the district – made a significant difference in the engagement of students and teachers.

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### INFORM RELEVANT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

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Connect with STEM and coding-related organizations in your district. Please utilize our list of partners to see if they have locations in your district. It is important to identify and contact groups who may have summertime classes, county coding clubs, school clubs or after school programs that teach students how to code.

For example, CAC partners with *Girls Who Code*, a nonprofit organization which hosts summer immersion camps for young women in various cities around the country. This is in addition to the year-round coding clubs they facilitate, which currently operate in all 50 states. If you have a *Girls Who Code* chapter in your district, reach out to them and let them know about the CAC. You can see CAC's partners on our [website](#).

We recommend identifying and reaching out to these types of organizations. If you find that you need assistance, please get in touch with IEF before August 1st.

## STEP 3. CHALLENGE EXECUTION

### SOLICIT STUDENT SUBMISSIONS

IEF aims to make the Challenge's execution as easy as possible for each office, but the success of the Challenge will ultimately be determined by how much effort the office puts into recruiting student participants. To make that as easy as possible, we've provided the following suggestions.

In the two weeks before the student registration deadline, Congressional offices should make a final push to recruit submissions. Final push efforts should include:

- Posting reminders on social media and doing so more frequently as the last day approaches (i.e social media countdown).
- Visiting schools or programs.
- Retweeting IEF posts about the approaching deadline.

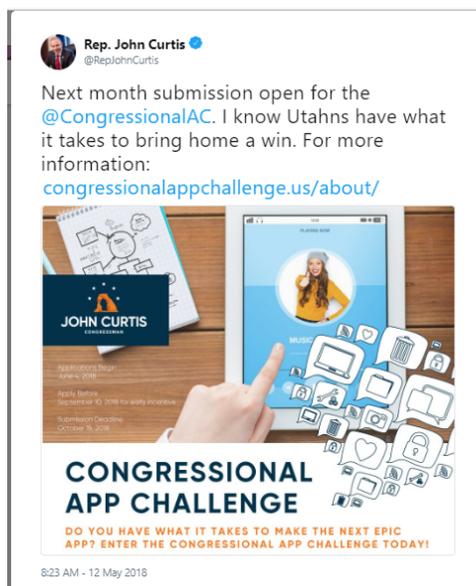
IEF will provide Congressional Offices with graphics and materials you can use closer to the Student Submission Deadline.

#### Utilize Social Media and Use Visuals

Social media is a great (and free!) resource to raise awareness about the Challenge. Make sure that you use the hashtags **#Congress4CS** (and whatever hashtag you use for your own district), as this will allow IEF to see your posts and reshare them to amplify your message.

Using graphics on social media also make information easier to digest. IEF will provide various graphics (both in this document and on our website throughout the CAC), but feel free to make your own as well.

The CAC is an incredible opportunity for offices to engage in constituent relations, and pictures are worth a thousand words. Students, schools and parents *love* when the Members share pictures recognizing their efforts. Tweet and post pictures of your students!



# #Congress4CS

## Get buy-in from other levels of government

Reach out to state, county and local government officials to let them know that your District is hosting a Challenge.

### Best Practices: Get Community Gov't Buy-In

In 2015, Rep. Bruce Westerman (AR-04) aligned his district's Congressional App Challenge with the state-wide efforts to expand computer science education, led by Governor Asa Hutchinson. The Governor attended Rep. Westerman's award ceremony, and even published an article about the CAC. It is important to engage with any existing state level efforts that can contribute to boosting turnout.



L to R: Rep. Bruce Westerman (AR-04), First Place Team, and Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson

Offices should strive to connect with local government officials, especially if there are already local government-sanctioned efforts underway to support computer science education (i.e. an existing club or competition). Aligning the Challenge with those efforts can significantly boost student participation rates.

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## RECRUIT JUDGES

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Congressional offices have the opportunity to select their own judges to evaluate local submissions. However, this is not required, and IEF can assist your office in recruiting judges if needed. To facilitate the process, we suggest the following best practices and suggestions.

### Selecting Judges

Offices are encouraged to use the CAC as an opportunity to engage with local computer science professionals. We recommend that Offices recruit a diverse selection of professionals to act as judges.

District staff reserve the right to substitute or modify the judging panel at any time for any reason. Judges have the right to withdraw from judging in the event of circumstances beyond their control. Judges must be fair and impartial. We ask that judges elect to recuse him or herself from judging a submission, if it is not appropriate for him or her to judge that particular submission because of a past or current relationship with that particular participant.

#### *Judging panels should:*

- Consist of impartial judges who do not have a conflict of interest in the outcome.
- Consist of an odd number of judges (ideally 3-7) in the case of a tie.
- Be as close to equal in terms of gender as possible to avoid any unintentional judging bias.
- Include judges of different racial and gender backgrounds, to avoid any unintentional bias.

#### *Profile of ideal judge:*

- A Computer Science professor or college student from a local university
- A tech entrepreneur
- A local celebrity related to Computer Science
- An employee at a tech-related company in the district

#### **Best Practices: Judges can help raise awareness**

Your judges can be an excellent asset to help you raise awareness in the community, both during and after the Challenge. Announce your judge selection on social media. Suggest that your judges' institutions issue press releases announcing their selection. Another option is to ask the judges to write blog posts or articles about their experience.

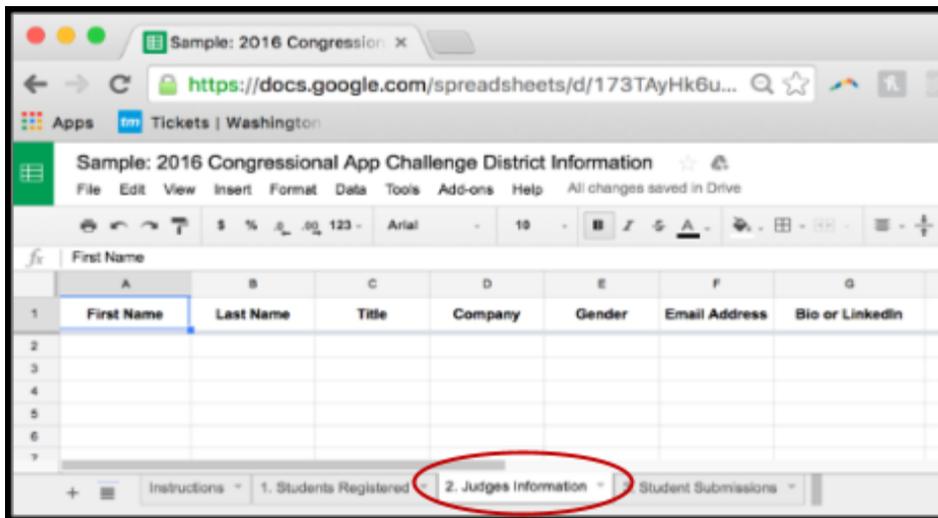
Note: If you are having difficulty recruiting judges that meet these criteria, the Internet Education Foundation can assist you. The Internet Education Foundation (IEF) actively recruits judges on a national scale in case offices are in need of additional judges for any reason.

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### REPORT JUDGE SELECTION ON DIS

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Once you have selected your judges, your Office will need to report your choices and the judges' information on Tab 2 of the District Information Spreadsheet.



This should be done as you recruit judges but should be completed by no later than **Wednesday, October 10, 2021**.

IEF needs this information to gauge which offices have judges and which offices may need to request judges for their panel. Please fill it out as soon as your nominees have agreed to serve as judges.

## STEP 4. CONCLUDE SUBMISSION PERIOD

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### Final Recruitment Push

In the two weeks before the deadline, congressional offices should make a final push to registered students in their district. Final push efforts should include:

- Visiting schools or programs.
- Emailing students who've registered, reminding them to submit their work (Reminder: you can find the student contact information on your District Information Spreadsheet).

#### **Best Practices: Finish strong!**

Outreach in the final week is key. Many students start off strong, but then get distracted by life. Reminding students in the final week to submit their apps will significantly improve the ratio of registrations to submissions.

Please **be careful to read emails thoroughly**, as that's where we'll notify offices with tips for final push outreach when the time approaches.

## STEP 5. JUDGING PERIOD

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### JUDGING

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#### Where to find your submissions

All student submission for your district can be found in the Review Portal (access information in your DIS sheet). From here, you can download a copy of each application and send them out to judges for review. If you've received 10 or more applications, and need to distribute them to more than one judge, please contact [cad@congressionalappchallenge.us](mailto:cad@congressionalappchallenge.us) to receive applications in .xlsx format.



**Sign In/Sign Up Instructions**

**For New Users:**

Please enter your email address and we will verify if you are in our system. If your email is part of our system, a confirmation will be sent to that address. *If your email is not in our system or you do not receive a confirmation email, please contact [cad@congressionalappchallenge.us](mailto:cad@congressionalappchallenge.us).*

Upon confirmation of your email, you will be taken to the **Sign Up** screen where you can choose a password to create an account. *Your password must be at least 8 characters in length.* Once you have chosen your password, your account will be created and you will gain access to the portal.

**Welcome!**

To get this process started, new and returning users please enter your email address below.

Email

[Already have a confirmation code?](#)

#### What to do with your submissions

After the deadline to submit an app has passed, you should share the submissions with your judges.

You can download the applications from your review portal or, as mentioned above, you can reach out the CAC team to receive your applications in .xlsx format. Be sure to distribute these files to your judges no later than **November 1st, 2021**. Judges should return their scores to the Congressional Office by **November 15th, 2021**.

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## JUDGING CRITERIA

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This competition is meant to be as inclusive as possible, so as not to discourage students who haven't coded before. It is only required that students can code a functional app, regardless of its level of complexity. For all of these reasons, the Internet Education Foundation has intentionally created a very broad set of judging criteria that give the local judges a lot of leeway in their evaluation.

As long as the submission meets the bare minimum requirements, there will be at least one winner in each district that has submissions.

The judges will view the Submission and Demonstration Videos and may judge the apps on:

<b>Use of "block code"</b> (computer programming with graphical blocks). Students create apps without writing a single line of code, learning the syntax of a formal programming language.	<b>vs.</b>	<b>Use of "text based" programming</b> in a programming language such as C/C++, JavaScript, Python, etc. It requires coders to obey and conform to formal syntax, as experienced in college and in the workplace.
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### 1. Demonstrate an understanding of Computer Programming Skills

- Did the students use CS skills to code their app?
- Is the app fully functional and applicable for societal use?

### 2. Quality of the Idea

- How creative is the app?
- How original is it?
- If the app addresses a problem, how creative is the solution?

### 3. Implementation of the Idea

- Did the student consider the user experience?

- Did the student give thought to the app design?

### **Additional Notes on Judging**

**Themes:** On a national level, the CAC does not set a theme. However, we give offices the autonomy of creating their own theme, if you choose to do so, please be sure to inform the Internet Education Foundation.

**Source Code:** On a national level, the CAC will not collect source code. Offices are welcome to collect student source code, but any office that chooses to do so is responsible for the collection, storage, and dissemination of the code to the judges and intellectual property risks.

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### OFFICE REVIEW OF JUDGES' CHOICES

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Each Congressional Office has final say on their district winner.

After receiving the scores from the judges, each Office has a week to review the scores, tally the judges' choices and approve the final winner.

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### SUBMIT WINNER TO IEF

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As soon as the District winner is chosen and approved, Congressional Offices should submit their choice to IEF.

Winners can be selected by using the feedback portion of the CAC Review Portal. Please be sure to only select one winner for your district.

## STEP 6. ANNOUNCE & HONOR WINNER(S)

### IEF WINNERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Members of Congress are encouraged to announce their CAC winners at the start of Computer Science Education Week (Dec. 7, 2021).

Congressional offices are encouraged to host their own event or meet-and-greet to honor the winner before or after the national announcement.

IEF will announce all winners to the public on **January 15th, 2021**, so be sure to announce before that time.

### HOST AN EVENT TO HONOR WINNER(S)

At a minimum, Congressional offices **must** meet with their winning student(s).

We request that each Congressional office host a recognition event in their district; it's an incredible opportunity for positive constituent engagement. Congressional offices have a variety of options which include (but are not limited to):

- **Meet-and-Greet:** A Meet-and-greet with the Member (inviting students, family and teachers) where they will present the student(s) with certificates of recognition.
- **Reception:** A Reception to which they invite student participants, family and friends, STEM stakeholders, teachers, etc. and announce the winner there.
- **Demo Day:** A Demo day (like a science fair) where the students will pitch their app and a winner is named at the event.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Name of App Submitted	Student First Name	Student Last Name	Email Address	School Name	High School Zip Code	Team or Individual
2	Compass	Jane	Doe	jnedoe@gmail.com	Miller High School	11111	Team
3	Compass	Sam	John	samjohn@gmail.com	Miller High School	11111	Team
4							
5							

(If offices plan to have an in-person event with judging take place on a particular day, we advise them to circulate the submitted app info with a link to the video for judges to view prior to the event. This allows the judges to have some familiarity with the content. This time frame gives judges ample time to review the material and submit their scores to the Congressional Office for final review.)

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### BEST PRACTICES FOR ANNOUNCING WINNER(S)

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While your office should inform the winner personally, we highly recommend you take the opportunity for community engagement by publicizing the choice. Your office should:

- Issue a press release with a quote from the Member about the student(s).
- Announce the winner(s) on social media and share pictures (see examples above).

## RULES FOR MEMBER OFFICES

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### REGULATIONS FOR MEMBERS AND IEF

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In October of 2015, the Committee on House Administration passed the rules that govern the execution of the CAC (see the Appendix for the full text of these rules).

While we emphatically recommend reading the full text of the rules, here's a summary of several key points:

- The Congressional App Challenge will be operated by an external, non-governmental entity. That entity is the Internet Education Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit.
- As this is an officially-sanctioned competition, Congressional Offices may use the following resources to support the CAC as long as they are compliant with the House Ethics Handbook regulations:
  - The Frank
  - Advertisements
  - Food and beverage expenses
  - Rental of rooms, chairs and audio systems
  - Gifts and donations
  - Staff time and the use of incidental resources
  - Use of letterhead and official seal of the House by the Member Office, provided such letterhead and seal are not used for solicitations
  - Mileage
  - The Member official website

#### IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Congressional App Challenge is exempt from election blackout dates.

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### SOLICITING DONATIONS

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Offices may solicit donations but only under very specific conditions:

“A Member may only solicit donations (including in-kind) on behalf of the officially-sanctioned competition if the Member first receives written approval from the Committee on Ethics.” (Pg. 4 of [Committee Resolution 114](#)). You can find this form on pg. 43 of the Appendix and on the House Ethics Committee website:

House Ethics Committee website > [Forms](#) > [STEM Competition](#)

<https://ethics.house.gov/sites/ethics.house.gov/files/STEM%20Solicitation%20Waiver%202018.pdf>

The Congressional App Challenge continues to seek private-sector sponsors to help ensure the future viability of the program. Sponsors help support our team, provide resources to participants, and hold our annual #HouseOfCode festival. The Congressional App Challenge offers a variety of sponsorship tiers for companies large and small.

If you know of a company in your district that would be interested in supporting the CAC's mission to promote computer science education in every corner of the country, please contact the [CAC Team](#).

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#### DONATIONS OF PRIZES

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Private institutions may donate prizes for your Challenge within the rules outlined below:

**Donations worth \$50 or less:** Organizations may offer to donate prizes worth less than \$50 to the student participants and/or winners of the Congressional App Challenge. **IMPORTANT:** Prizes shall *not* be directed to the Member's office; instead, it should be directed to the entrants and winners of the competition.

Examples of such prizes might include (but are not limited to):

- o A \$50 gift certificate donated by a local business to the winner of the Congressional App Challenge in a specific district.
- o Three gift certificates worth \$25, \$15 and \$10 are donated by a local organization to the first, second and third place winners of their district's App Challenge (totaling \$50).
- o A tour of a local business organized and hosted by that organization.
- o **NOT ALLOWED:** An organization donates three \$50 gift certificates (totaling \$150) for the top three winners. This would violate the \$50 limit.

#### IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you have questions or concerns about soliciting prizes, please feel free to contact the Ethics Committee. When contacting Ethics, please be sure to clarify that you are calling specifically about the CAC, as the rules around the Challenge may differ from other events.

**Donations worth more than \$50:** Offices must direct any donations (in the form of (a) technical assistance with the competition, or (b) prizes for the entrants and winners of the competition), to the Sponsor (IEF) if the value of the donation(s) from any single source is more than \$50.

For example: if you want to donate tickets (valued over \$50) to an event for the winner, you must be willing to make that prize available to **all** the winners from **every district** which hosts a Challenge.

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### RULES FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

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- Students are only eligible to compete in districts that have signed up for the Challenge.
- Any given student may only compete in *one* district.
- Students may compete in either:
  - the district in which they reside, or
  - the district in which they attend school.
- Students must be in middle or high school at the time of contest close: October 19th
  - Students may *not* participate after having graduated from high school.
- No limits on application theme or topic.
- Students can use any programming language (C, C++, Java, JavaScript, Python, Ruby, etc.) or "block code."
- Students may use any platform (PC, web, tablet, robot, Raspberry Pi, mobile, etc.)

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### STUDENT AND TEAM ELIGIBILITY

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- Students may compete as individuals or in teams of up to four.
  - Teams with five or more students are NOT eligible.
  - If competing as a team: At least two of the teammates must be eligible to compete within the district in which they are submitting.

The district-related rules are not flexible. Please see examples:

<b>TEAM CONFIGURATION ELIGIBILITY TABLE</b>	
Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 3 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 4 lives/attends school in District B  ✓ PARTICIPATE IN DISTRICT A.	Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 3 lives/attends school in District B Teammate 4 lives/attends school in District B  ✓ PARTICIPATE IN DISTRICT A or B.
Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 3 lives/attends school in District B Teammate 4 lives/attends school in District C  ✓ PARTICIPATE IN DISTRICT A	Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District B Teammate 3 lives/attends school in District C Teammate 4 lives/attends school in District D  ✗ This team is not eligible
Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 3 lives/attends school in District B  ✓ PARTICIPATE IN DISTRICT A	Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District B Teammate 3 lives/attends school in District C  ✗ This team is not eligible
Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District A  ✓ PARTICIPATE IN DISTRICT A	Teammate 1 lives/attends school in District A Teammate 2 lives/attends school in District B  ✗ This team is not eligible.

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## SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

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- Students may submit their apps any time between the launch and the student submission deadline.
- The app students create may cover any topic, but they must:
  - Be original and appropriate.
  - Have been created within the calendar year prior to the Challenge closing date.
- To complete a submission, students must submit the following:
  - **Sign-up Form.** Students must fill out a sign-up form so their eligibility can be verified.
    - If students are competing as part of a team, the sign-up form must include the relevant information (e.g. mailing address) from each student.
  - **App Information.** Students will be asked to answer a series of questions including:
    - Title of the app.
    - The coding language used.
    - What they were trying to accomplish and why.
    - An explanation of a difficulty they faced in programming the app and how it was overcome.
    - What improvements the students would make if they were going to create a version 2.0 of their app.
  - **Demonstration Video.** Students must create a 1 - 3 minute video, post it on YouTube or Vimeo and submit the link on the CAC submission form. The video must be set up to public view. Videos that are longer than 3 minutes will be penalized per the judges' discretion.
  - **Exit Questionnaire.** The exit survey will be emailed to all students following the submission of their app.

The full text of the rules for student participants are included here:

<https://www.congressionalappchallenge.us/students/rules/>

## RESOURCES

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### GENERIC TEMPLATE FOR PRESS RELEASE/ PRESS PITCH

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#### MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

[DATE]

Contact: [POINT PERSON NAME], [PHONE NUMBER]

[OFFICE OF REP. ...]

#### ANNOUNCING[CONGRESS MEMBER]'s 2021 CONGRESSIONAL APP CHALLENGE

WASHINGTON, DC – [CONGRESS MEMBER]'s office is excited to announce that the [MOC NAME] will be hosting a Congressional App Challenge (CAC), an app competition for students in middle and high school.

The CAC accepts computer programs (or apps) written in any programming language, for any platform (desktop/PC, web, mobile, raspberry Pi, etc.).

The Challenge's submission portal is now open. Students are encouraged to register online by September 10<sup>th</sup> before submitting their app by October 19<sup>th</sup>. The competition is open to all students who meet the eligibility requirements, regardless of coding experience.

We strongly encourage students of all skill levels to participate and learn how to create their own apps. Winners will be selected by panels of judges drawn from the local community and honored by their Member of Congress. Their apps are eligible to be featured on display in the U.S. Capitol building, on house.gov and on the Congressional App Challenge website.

The CAC was created because Congress recognized that STEM and computer-based skills are essential for economic growth and innovation and that the U.S. has been falling behind on these fronts. By some estimates, the U.S. may be short by as many as 1 million programmers by 2021. These are high-paying, high-demand jobs. To maintain American competitiveness, it's crucial that the United States invests in our youth now and helps them acquire these valuable skills. The CAC encourages students to pursue those skills and recognizes them for their efforts.

Recognizing the racial, gendered and other disparities in the tech sector, the CAC also focuses on inclusivity and making the Challenge as accessible as possible to people from all backgrounds. Deliberate efforts will be made to include students from all backgrounds, including those traditionally underrepresented in tech.

For further information about the Congressional App Challenge, please visit [www.CongressionalAppChallenge.us](http://www.CongressionalAppChallenge.us)

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### Example 1

We are pleased to announce that the Congressional App Challenge (CAC), a competition designed to encourage student participation in computer science and coding, will be hosting our annual coding competition this year. Students are encouraged to register online by Sept 10<sup>th</sup> before submitting their app by October 19th.

Officially launched by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2015, this nationwide effort allows students to compete against their peers by creating an application (also known as an “app”) for desktop/PC, web, tablet, mobile, raspberry Pi or other devices. We accept any programming language, such as C, C++, Java, JavaScript, Python, Ruby, or "block code." The Challenge is designed to promote innovation and engagement in computer science.

The Congressional App Challenge is open to all middle and high school students in the [NUMBER] Congressional District of [STATE]. Students entering the competition must submit their app to CongressionalAppChallenge.us during the Competition Submission Period through October 19th, 2021.

The winner from the [DISTRICT NUMBER] Congressional District, chosen by a panel of expert judges, will be featured on CongressionalAppChallenge.us. The winning app will also be eligible to be on display in the U.S. Capitol, honoring the winners from across the country.

For more information, please visit the official Congressional App Challenge website at CongressionalAppChallenge.us, email StudentSupport@CongressionalAppChallenge.us, or contact [DISTRICT POINT PERSON] at [POC's CONTACT INFO].

## **Example 2**

I am pleased to announce that my office is hosting a 2021 Congressional App Challenge.

The Congressional App Challenge is a competition aimed at encouraging middle and high school students to learn how to code by creating their own applications. The Challenge is intended to highlight the value of computer science and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education.

The House of Representatives knows how crucial these skills are and wants to encourage students to engage in these fields. By encouraging and recognizing our nation's young programming talent, Congress hopes to shine a light on the growing importance of these skills.

This competition is open to all students who meet the eligibility requirements, regardless of coding experience. We strongly encourage students of all skill levels to participate, enabling them to learn how to create their own apps. Students are encouraged to register online by Sept 10th.

To learn more about the competition or to submit an app go to the [CongressionalAppChallenge.us](https://CongressionalAppChallenge.us) website.

## INVITATION LETTER TO LOCAL SCHOOLS

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[DATE]

Dear [Principal and Teachers]:

I am writing to invite all middle and high school students from the [STATE #] Congressional District to participate in the 2021 Congressional App Challenge.

Officially launched in 2015, this competition is a nationwide event intended to engage students' creativity and encourage their participation in STEM fields. This competition allows students to compete with peers in their own district by creating and exhibiting their software application (also known as an "app") for web, PC, tablet, mobile, raspberry Pi or other platform of their choice. We accept any programming language, such as C, C++, Java, JavaScript, Python, Ruby, "block code", etc.

Students may compete as individuals or in teams of up to four, as long as two of the teammates are eligible to participate in our district. Students are encouraged to register online by Sept 10<sup>th</sup>, before submitting their app by the November 1st deadline.

The apps will be evaluated by a panel of local judges who work within the academic, software and entrepreneurial fields. The winning app from each congressional district which hosted a Challenge will be featured on the U.S. House of Representatives' website ([www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)) and displayed in a U.S. Capitol exhibit.

For additional details, you can visit [www.CongressionalAppChallenge.us](http://www.CongressionalAppChallenge.us).

I hope that you will participate in this exciting event. Should you have any questions or concerns, please call my District Office at [PHONE NUMBER] or email [StudentSupport@CongressionalAppChallenge.us](mailto:StudentSupport@CongressionalAppChallenge.us).

Sincerely,

[NAME]

Member of Congress

Online outreach is one of the most effective ways to engage the types of students who might participate in a competition such as the Congressional App Challenge. We will share more sample social media materials throughout the course of this Challenge via email.

### Best Practices for Using Social Media

To engage in the online conversation and get the latest updates, please be sure to follow us:

- **Facebook:** [facebook.com/CongressionalAppChallenge/](https://www.facebook.com/CongressionalAppChallenge/)
- **Twitter:** [@CongressionalAC](https://twitter.com/CongressionalAC)
- **Instagram:** [@CongressionalAppChallenge](https://www.instagram.com/CongressionalAppChallenge)



#### Facebook Best Practices:

- Use the hashtag #Congress4CS so that others can find your posts when looking up the Challenge
- Tag us in your posts
- Tag the people you are referencing so that they can see your posts. Examples of people you can tag include:
  - Local schools
  - Local tech businesses
  - Local STEM and CS organizations
  - IEF
- Use links or pictures; posts with media in them get greater levels of interaction. This can include things like:
  - The link to the CongressionalAppChallenge.us page
  - The link to the description of the challenge on your House page
  - The link to IEF's page with more details (CongressionalAppChallenge.us)

### Sample Facebook posts:

- The 2021 Congressional App Challenge has launched. The Challenge is open to students of all levels of coding experience. Visit the website to learn more about the rules at [CongressionalAppChallenge.us](http://CongressionalAppChallenge.us) #Congress4CS
- The Congressional App Challenge is now open! The CAC is a nationwide event that allows U.S. students to compete against their district peers by creating and exhibiting a software application, or “app,” for web, PC, tablet, mobile or other platform of their choice. Learn more at [CongressionalAppChallenge.us](http://CongressionalAppChallenge.us) #Congress4CS
- We are proud to host a Congressional App Challenge! The CAC is a nationwide event, open to middle and high school students in our district. Students can work as individuals or on teams to create an application, or “app,” for web, PC, tablet, mobile or other platform of their choice. Learn more at [CongressionalAppChallenge.us](http://CongressionalAppChallenge.us) #Congress4CS
- In full support of STEM education, we are proud to host a Congressional App Challenge. The Challenge is a nationwide event, open to students in our district. Students can choose to work together or compete against their peers by creating an “app.” Learn how you can participate by visiting [CongressionalAppChallenge.us](http://CongressionalAppChallenge.us) #Congress4CS #STEM

### Twitter Best Practices:

- Tweet regularly. There’s nothing wrong with tweeting several times a day.
- Use the hashtag **#Congress4CS** so that others can find your post and retweet it.
- Be concise; there’s a character limit on twitter, so be as clear but succinct as possible.
- Tag the people you are referencing so that they can see your tweets
- Use pictures; tweets with photos get greater levels of interaction
- Retweet others who are tweeting about the Congressional App Challenge.

### Sample tweets:

- Proud to host a Congressional App Challenge and support STEM and coding education  
[@CongressionalAC](https://twitter.com/CongressionalAC) #Congress4CS
- Supporting CS and coding education by participating in the 2021 Congressional App Challenge  
[@CongressionalAC](https://twitter.com/CongressionalAC) #Congress4CS
- Any middle and high school student coders out there? If so, check out the 2021 Congressional App Challenge [@CongressionalAC](https://twitter.com/CongressionalAC) #Congress4CS
- Calling all middle and high school students interested in coding! Submit an app for the 2021 Congressional App Challenge #Congress4CS

### Instagram Best Practices:

- Pictures from local CS classrooms
- Pictures of kids coding from your partners
- Pictures from last year's recognition ceremonies (if your office hosted a Challenge last year)
- Pictures of the CAC display in the Capitol building

Be sure to follow and tag the Congressional App Challenge instagram account in your posts!  
(Our handle is: @CongressionalAppChallenge).

## APPENDIX

### ETHICS WAIVER

If your office is interested in seeking prizes for the Congressional App Challenge, you can submit a waiver to the Ethics Committee. Waiver can be found on the House Ethics website Go to Forms >STEM Competition> Waiver



### CONTEST PRIZES

1. Each district may provide prizes to district winners. A Member office may provide authorized gifts or awards of nominal value as part of the app competition. Gifts authorized by the Members' Handbook include certificates, folders and frames of a nominal value.
2. If the participating Member decides to host an awards ceremony, finalists will get the chance to present their apps to Judges, Congressional staffers and community leaders. The winning app in each district will be featured on the House.gov website and the CongressionalAppChallenge.us website.

3. If the winner is not able to attend the district awards ceremony, the prize will be mailed to the winner's address within 45 days of receipt of the signed affidavit(s) of eligibility and liability/publicity release form(s).

## JUDGING RUBRIC

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**Sample Rubric:** < <https://www.congressionalappchallenge.us/get-involved/judges>>

## RULES ISSUED FOR THE CAC BY THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION (2015)

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Link: [https://www.congressionalappchallenge.us/?page\\_id=9#history](https://www.congressionalappchallenge.us/?page_id=9#history)

H.Res.77 - Academic Competition Resolution of 2013:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-resolution/77>