

CONGRESSIONAL APP CHALLENGE

TIPS FOR HOSTING AN APP CHALLENGE DURING COVID-19 in 2021

STUDENT SUPPORT

Even with schools partially reopening in the fall as the pandemic subsides, conditions around the country are changing rapidly. We encourage congressional offices to approach this year's Congressional App Challenge with an open mind, and to incorporate a hybrid component to the events put on for the competition in the following months.

Additionally, virtual events held last year such as mentoring and accountability partners have proven to be of great help to students and have increased accessibility and inclusivity, so we highly encourage the continuation of such efforts.

- **Virtual Mentoring:** Students would benefit greatly from virtual mentoring during the competition. In the questionnaire, ask if students would be interested in being a mentee, and what areas they would like to receive guidance on app idea brainstorming, big-picture programming planning, careers in tech, etc.
 - Gather and vet local educators and professionals who might be interested in mentoring these students, connect the two parties, and help them make a schedule of meeting times.
- **Accountability Partners:** Because students will not be in their usual school environment, they may benefit from time-management support. In a questionnaire, ask if students would be interested in being paired up with a fellow competition entrant to help each other stay on track throughout the competition timeline.
- **Technology Access:** Many students rely on school for computer access, and will have a difficult time participating in the Challenge without a personal laptop or iPad. Ask students if they have limited access to the necessary technology in the same questionnaire. Partner with local nonprofits and schools which allow lending of personal devices.

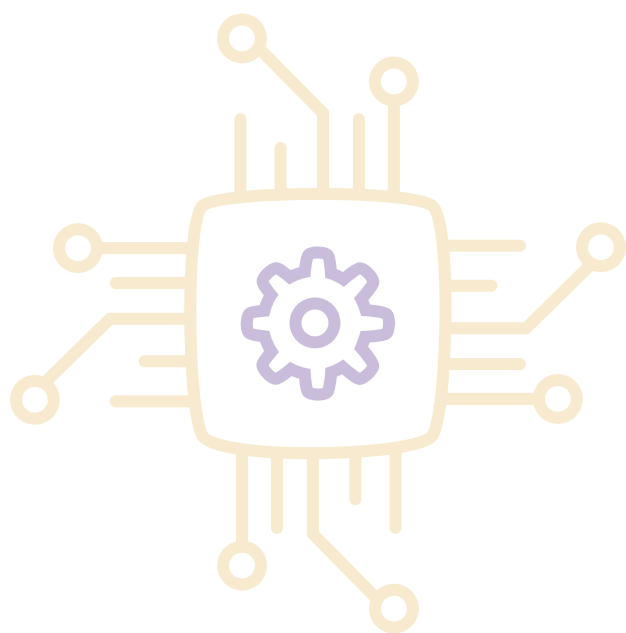


LIST OF RESOURCES

Students may be largely unaware of resources designed to help them, especially now that they are stuck at home. Compile and distribute a document detailing relevant local non profits, virtual STEM camps, and education resources in your district that students can access for help during the competition.

VIRTUAL Q&A

Even with schools returning to in-person teaching in the fall, virtual Q&As can still be held over the summer to provide students with the most support possible. A virtual Q&A event with a local computer science educator or industry professional during the Challenge period would greatly benefit students and encourage participation from total beginners and those lacking at-home resources.



HYBRID OPTIONS

Even if some of the bigger events of the Congressional App Challenge are planned to be held in-person, such as Award Ceremonies or Demo Days, the resources listed above can still be great tools for students to have. Districts should feel free to have a hybrid approach to hosting their events. As always, check your district and state guidelines for the safest way to proceed.

