

# **United States Coast Guard Auxiliary**

## **NATIONAL STAFF GUIDEBOOK**



**2016**

US Coast Guard Auxiliary  
National Staff Guidebook 2016



**THE NATIONAL COMMODORE  
OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY**

**Richard Washburn**

November 1, 2016



From: Commodore Richard Washburn  
To: Distribution

Subj: NATIONAL BOARD AND NATIONAL STAFF STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES

Congratulations on your appointment to the US Coast Guard Auxiliary National Staff! Your selection by a National Department indicates that you are considered to have something very special to share—your expertise, your time, and your dedication! Along with the honor of being selected to the National Staff comes the responsibility—a responsibility that cannot be taken lightly!

This Guidebook will help to explain the responsibilities of being a member of the National Staff and help you to understand the “do’s and don’ts” of National Staff service.

Richard Washburn / s /  
National Commodore

Dist: National Staff



***Mission***



***Leadership***



***Excellence***

## INTRODUCTION

Now, here's an important question for you...

### *Why did you decide to serve on the National Staff?*

Check as many answers that may apply to you. Be honest! No one will see your answers!

<input type="checkbox"/>	I was flattered
<input type="checkbox"/>	I felt I could help others
<input type="checkbox"/>	My friends urged me to apply for a position
<input type="checkbox"/>	It sounded like fun
<input type="checkbox"/>	I enjoy building new programs
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a special talent that would be useful

<input type="checkbox"/>	I was a bit bored and needed a challenge
<input type="checkbox"/>	I wanted more stripes on my shoulder boards
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have too much time on my hands
<input type="checkbox"/>	I wanted the Coast Guard to pay for me to go to National meetings
<input type="checkbox"/>	I wanted to make new friends
<input type="checkbox"/>	It was new and different

All of the reasons listed above are legitimate, but real success on the National Staff comes from primarily two things:

1. A need to be of service to others, sometimes quite anonymously.
2. The discipline to work hard, work independently, and meet aggressive deadlines.

You will get satisfaction from knowing that your work provides programs and resources to thousands of Auxiliarists around the country. You will help our members take on new initiatives, better serve the needs of the Coast Guard, and help protect the citizens of our country. While your efforts may be “low profile,” your results can be “high impact.” Serving others is a big reason many folks successfully transition to the National Staff.

The legendary “glory and prestige” of serving on the National Staff is a myth! The truth is that all of the jobs on the National Staff require hard work and dedication to be executed successfully. So if your reasons for serving on the National Staff don't include a hefty dose of hard work and a disciplined work ethic, you will have a more difficult transitioning to the “work environment” that you will face. Later in the Guidebook, we'll discuss some “strategies for success” on the National Staff that everyone will find helpful.

## PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

You are expected to read this Guidebook in its entirety, and when you have completed reading it, verify that you have read it to the person to whom you report. Completion of this National Staff Orientation is mandatory for National Staff members.

**Terminal Performance Objective #1:** After reading the National Staff Orientation Guidebook, distinguish the difference between working on the National Level and in your flotilla, division, or district.

### **Enabling Objectives:**

1. Describe the National Staff as a “virtual organization.”
2. Recognize the common acronyms that are used on a National level.

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3. Define the reporting relationships found in a National Department.

**Terminal Performance Objective #2:** After reading the National Staff Orientation Guidebook, complete routine administrative functions necessary to be effective on the National Staff.

**Enabling Objectives:**

1. Explain the purpose of the copyright form and your responsibility having signed and notarized it.
2. Describe the process for recruiting other members onto the National Staff.
3. Follow the process for expense reimbursement associated with work on the National Staff.

**Terminal Performance Objective #3:** After reading the National Staff Orientation Guidebook, explain the communication and reporting responsibilities of a National Staff member.

**Enabling Objectives:**

1. Distinguish the differences between intra-departmental, inter-departmental, and external communication.
2. Review the limits for communicating externally the rationale and the process for external communication.
3. Describe the reporting requirements for a National Staff member.

**Terminal Performance Objective #5:** After reading the National Staff Orientation Guidebook, describe the issue resolution process for tasking and relationships.

**Enabling Objectives:**

1. Explain the importance of good, open relationships on the National Staff.
2. Discuss the importance of starting with the person to whom you report in solving a problem.

**Terminal Performance Objective #6:** After reading the National Staff Orientation Guidebook, use basic concepts to communicate effectively using electronic methodology.

**Enabling Objectives:**

1. Describe how and when specific electronic communication tools should be used.
2. Explain basic e-mail options and discuss their use within the Auxiliary.
3. Discuss the use of more advanced e-mail options.
4. Explain how e-mail should be used within the Auxiliary.

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**ACRONYMS**

Working on the National Staff will expose you to an entirely new language—the acronyms that can be labeled as “National Speak.” They all can be found in the Auxiliary Manual; however, unless you are interacting at a National level, you probably haven’t noticed them. It is time for a quick review of the “A, B, Cs” of “National Speak”!

**National Executive Committee (NEXCOM)**

NACO	National Commodore
VNACO	Vice National Commodore
NIPCO	National Immediate Past Commodore
CHIDIRAUX	Chief Director of the Auxiliary
DNACO	Deputy National Commodore—Mission Support (MS), Operations (O), Recreational Boating Safety (RBS), Information Technology and Planning (ITP)

**The National Staff**

DIR-	Director
DIR-d	Deputy Director
DVC	Division Chief
BC	Branch Chief
BA	Branch Assistant

The DIRs and their teams develop, implement, and maintain programs in the Department areas listed below.

Departments	
A	Public Affairs
B	RBS Outreach
C	Computer Software & Systems
D	Diversity & Inclusion
E	Public Education
H	Human Resources
I	International Affairs
M	Measurements
P	Prevention
Q	Incident Management & Preparedness
R	Response
S	Strategic Planning
T	Training
U	IT User Support & Services
V	Vessel Exam

**The National Commodore’s Staff (The N Staff)**

The N Staff conducts administrative duties for the National Commodore and manages some programs that support both the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and the USCG Auxiliary Association, Inc. As you can tell from the job titles, the National Staff provide valuable support to the organization that fall outside the traditional program areas.

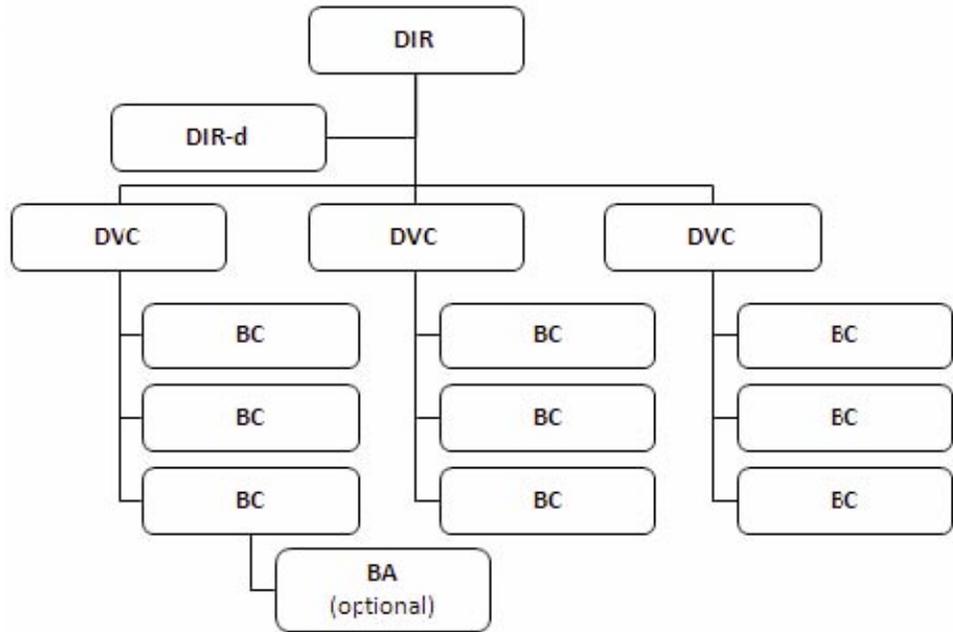
N-C	National Conference Administrator
N-Cd	National Deputy Conference Administrator
N-EA	National Executive Assistant
N-D	Aides (3)

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The National Staff is a **Virtual Organization**. We communicate almost exclusively via telephone, email, and web conferencing. Face-to-face meetings are rare. The National Staff is comparable to a Coast Guard Headquarters unit but without the building. We are spread out over all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Being aware of this reality can help you work more effectively in your new role.

**THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION**

The organization chart shown on the following page is the “big picture” of the National Organization, although the N Staff if not represented on this chart. This chart depicts the **reporting relationships** that exist on the National level.



The following chart illustrates “typical” reporting relationships within a National Staff Department.

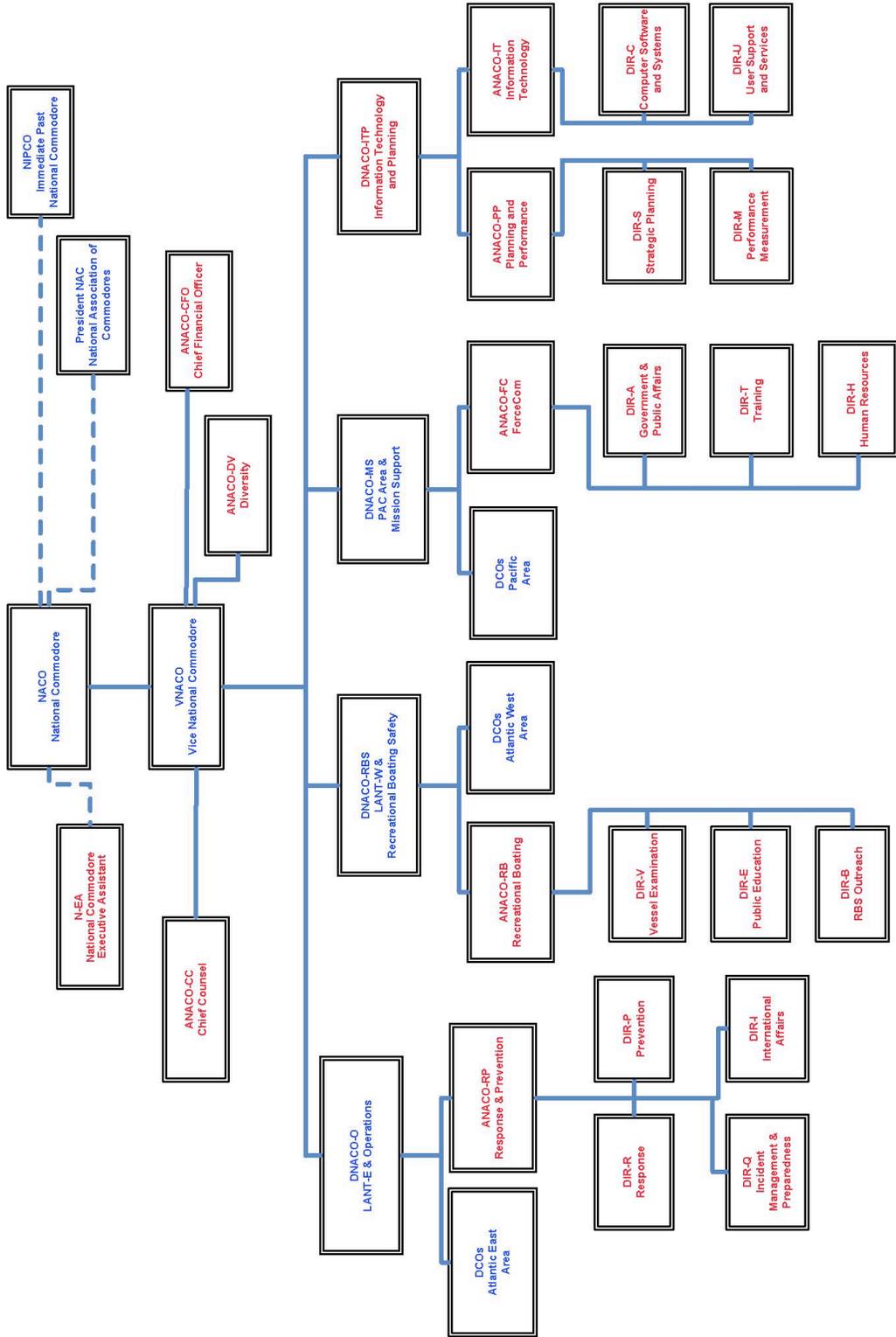
While this organization chart can be considered “typical,” department structures vary. All departments are configured based on the programs and missions that they are responsible for managing.

Ask the person to whom you report for a copy of your Department’s organization chart. In general, however, reporting relationships in a National Department follow these guidelines listed below.

	<b>Reports to</b>
ANACO	DNACO
DIR	ANACO
DIR-d	DIR
DVC	Either the DIR or the DIR-d
BC	DVC
BA	BC

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**U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary  
Organization Chart**



## **THE NECESSARY “ADMINISTRIVIA”**

The DIR is responsible for the administration and management of the department. In the absence of the DIR, the DIR-d will take acting responsibility for Department administration and management. In many Departments, the DIR-d is responsible for personnel issues and working with the Division Chiefs. The DIR is responsible to NACO and the membership for the good stewardship of the program. They are also responsible for carrying out tasking specified and consistent with the National Auxiliary Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is the “driver” for staff activities.

### **Changes in Staff Member Information**

As your address, phone numbers, or email addresses change during the course of your tenure of the National Staff, it is your responsibility to ensure that the rest of the Department can still reach you quickly. Submit your changes to the person to whom you report and be sure to copy the DIR and DIR-d. Some Departments may have a person designated to manage personnel records. If that is the case in your Department, please send your changes to that person, too. Submit a Change of Member Information (Form 7028) form to your IS officer for the changes to be noted in AUXDATA.

### **Coast Guard Auxiliary Association, Inc. Agreement for Copyright Ownership**

Before you were appointed to the National Staff, you signed and had notarized (or signed by an active duty Coast Guard officer) a Coast Guard Auxiliary Association, Inc. Agreement for Copyright Ownership. Specifically, you have:

1. Assigned the rights to all of the work you author, co-author, or otherwise create from or related to the execution of your duties on the National Staff to the US Coast Guard Auxiliary or the Coast Guard Auxiliary Association, Inc. In other words, while you serve on the National Staff, the USCG Auxiliary and the Coast Guard Auxiliary Association, Inc. own the physical and intellectual property created as a result of your work in your staff office.
2. Certified that the work you create, author, or co-author as a result of your work on the National Staff will be original and will not violate other copyright protected material.

As you can see, signing and notarizing the Coast Guard Auxiliary Association, Inc. Agreement for Copyright Ownership form carries personal responsibility and high standards of behavior.

### **Records from your Position**

As you begin your new job on the National Staff, you should receive the historical files from your predecessor in that position. If you have not received those files, please request them. Likewise, when you leave the National Staff, you must provide all your electronic and hard copy files to your successor. Be sure to “cc” the person to whom you report on your request for records.

If you have not been given a position description for your job, request a copy of it from the person to whom you report.

## **Recruiting and Hiring New Staff Members**

All of us have networks of colleagues who have done great work on a local level. These folks may be great candidates for a position on the National Staff. So, what is the process for recruiting and hiring new members to the National Staff? The general framework for bringing new team members on board follows.

The DIR & DIR-d identify open positions, review position descriptions, post the job on Help Wanted. Interested Applicants submit a brief professional & Auxiliary resume. The DIR & DIR-d determine which applicants get interviews making sure the candidate has completed mandatory training. The DIR & DIR-d conduct interviews and determine the ideal candidate. The DIR asks the DCO for input on the candidate prior to making the offer to the candidate. The DIR & DIR-d offer the candidate the position. The selected candidate must provide Form 7062, National Staff Application and the Coast Guard Auxiliary Association, Inc. Agreement for Copyright Ownership form. The DIR completes the required paperwork.

Departments may have individual differences for recruiting.

Colleagues that you recommend to the National Staff will have to go through this process, but your endorsement will be helpful in making a decision!

## **Non-travel Related Expenses You May Incur**

The US Coast Guard Auxiliary is not a wealthy organization. Did you know that the cost to run the Auxiliary is NOT paid for by the Coast Guard? The cost to run the Auxiliary is borne by the CG Auxiliary Association, Inc. The work being done by the CG Auxiliary Association, Inc. in fundraising and development is critical to the viable operation of the US Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Department budgets are given to the DIRs at the start of the fiscal year and are fixed with no additional incremental funding available through the year. You may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses that can be quantified if your Department budget can support the expense. You are strongly encouraged to follow these guidelines to get an item reimbursed:

1. Discuss the expense you would like to have paid with your DIR and/or DIR-d PRIOR TO incurring the expense to see if there is money available and to be sure everyone is in agreement that it is a legitimate request.
2. Incur the expense within the expense guidelines previously discussed.
3. Submit for reimbursement to your DIR on CGAuxA-4, Claim for Reimbursement—Non-travel.

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#	Scenario	Resolution
1	A DVC's job included regularly scheduled telephone calls with the members of the Division. The DVC spoke to the DIR and DIR-d and asked to have the long distance charges reimbursed.	The DIR decided to purchase the DVC a telephone card through the AUXCEN to reduce costs and track usage.
2	A BC whose job included printing certificates submitted a bill for \$105.10 for ink purchased over the course of the year. The BC had purchased 2 Canon BC-21e Black/Color Ink Cartridges (2/Pack) during the course of the year and had printed 275 certificates. The certificates required only black ink to print the recipient's name and the date	The DIR was not going to pay for color ink that was not used for work related to the BC's job. The DIR reimbursed the BC for 2 Canon BCI-21 Black Ink Cartridges at a cost of \$16.30. Each black ink cartridge has an expected yield of 200 sheets of paper.
3	A BC who was developing a Qualification (PQS) Manual submitted receipts to cover the costs to print drafts of the PQS Manual. The BC requested reimbursement for a case of paper and ink over a 3-month period. There had been no prior conversation about reimbursement for printing drafts and no quantity of supplies utilized was tracked.	The DIR questioned the expense. The DIR decided that, going forward, the BC would be reimbursed \$20 per quarter of out-of-pocket costs to print drafts of the document until the project was finished.
4	A DVC was teaching a National Leadership class and needed to purchase flip charts and markers for the class since the host unit would not be able to procure them. The DVC asked the DIR if those expenses could be reimbursed.	The expense was approved and reimbursed.

Here are a few examples of situations which were fully, partially, or not reimbursed at all!

If you have any questions about expense reimbursement, please ask the person to whom you report for an explanation.

### Recognition & Awards

*The simple act of paying positive attention to people has a great deal to do with productivity.*

—Tom Peters

Members of the National Staff are frequently recognized for the outstanding results of their efforts and hard work beyond the minimum of their position description. While not every project is eligible for an award, the on-going efforts of National Staff members should be recognized and celebrated! Each of us, at any level of the organization can recognize another for a job well done. To the best of our ability, we should acknowledge the “many, many, many tiny efforts” that our team members do.



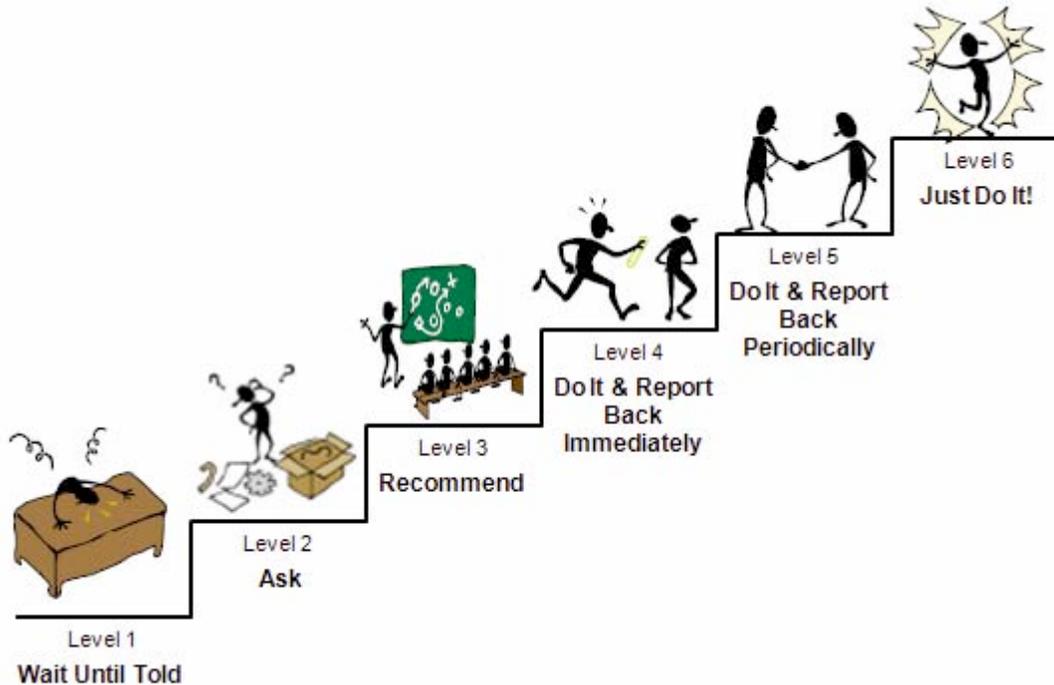
Submission of formal award packages for work completed on the National Staff is handled as outlined in the Auxiliary Manual. It is the responsibility of the DVC, DIR-d, and DIR to identify great performance and prepare the needed documentation.

**Auxiliary Commandant's Letter of Commendation (ACLOC)** *This award is used as an example only.*

## COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE!

You know, if you interviewed 100 people in the Auxiliary, probably 50% would say they get too much information and 50% would say they don't get enough! However, that is the age-old dilemma of the Information Age we live in today. The question becomes, how do we find the right balance that meets most of our needs? That is what this section of the Guidebook hopes to do!

To illustrate and help to define communication processes on the National Staff, we will use the concept of **Levels of Initiative**<sup>1</sup>. As you get to know the communication and working style, you may find this chart helpful.



The Communication Dilemma	The Level of Initiative	The Rationale
You need to work with someone from your department you have never spoken with before. They are in a different Division than you are.	6	Just do it! Call that person and introduce yourself and begin working together.
A DCO sends you an email on an issue your department has been dealing with for two months.	2	Check with the person to whom you report and ask about "next steps". Many DIRs are the single point of contact with DCOs, DCOSs and even DSOs.

Now, let's look at some typical communication scenarios on the National Staff.

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Covey, **"The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness"** FREE PRESS, A Division of Simon & Schuster. 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 Copyright © 2004 by Franklin Covey.

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The Communication Dilemma	The Level of Initiative	The Rationale
You manage a program and you receive an email from a Director of Auxiliary requesting a policy interpretation.	3	Notify the person to whom you report and advise them of the email and its contents. Recommend a response. You and the person to whom you report can determine the best person to send the response to the Director's office.
Your project requires that you partner with a DVC from a different Department. You have been given this person's name as the other Department's representative on the project.	5	Do it and follow-up with the person to whom you report. If you were given the person's name as a contact, it is safe to assume that everyone "is in loop".
Your DNACO emails you for information about your program.	3	Notify the person to whom you report and advise them of the email and its contents. Recommend a response. You and the person to whom you report can determine the best person to send the response to the DNACO.
You receive an email from a member. They are having difficulty with their FC about a difference of opinion in a policy question for a program you maintain.	2	Check with the person to whom you report and ask about "next steps". Member questions may seem innocent but can become volatile.

What about regular and routine communication? Here are some guidelines.

1. Set up regular weekly or bi-weekly telephone call with the person to whom you report. Having it on the calendar will remind both of you about the need to communicate! This meeting can be cancelled if both parties agree to do so, but this simple idea will improve the communication with the person to whom you report by 50%.
2. If you have not heard from the person to whom you report after 2 weeks, CALL them immediately. Lack of communication is the most frequently cited reason for leaving the National Staff. Remember that communication is a 2-way street. It is as much your responsibility as the person to whom you report. Use Level 6 initiative!
3. Be sure to return all emails and voice mails within 24 hours even if you need to acknowledge the call or email by saying; "I don't have an answer for you today. I need to do some research, but I should be able to get back to you in a few days."

### Reports

Directors (DIR) have written reports due to their ANACO and DNACO four times a year. Because each department has a unique structure, your next higher level should furnish you with report due dates. Here is a report schedule for you to post on your calendar.

Your DIR's Report Due
January 15
April 15
July 15
October 15

You may, of course, be asked for ad hoc reports, *sometimes on very short notice*. Typically, these special requests for information come as a result of inquires from the senior officers. Take a minute right now to put your report due dates into your personal calendar!

## **ACTING & INTERACTING AS A NATIONAL STAFF TEAM MEMBER**

### **Grooming & Protocol**

Your appointment to the National Staff indicates to other members that you are expected to be a role model as it pertains to good grooming, proper uniform, and protocol. While this Guidebook will not review issues like grooming and protocol, it does serve to remind you of the importance of creating an impression of professionalism.

Your work on the National Staff may put you in the position of working with active duty Coast Guard personnel, especially at Coast Guard Headquarters. Be certain you are well acquainted with officer rank and insignia, saluting, wardroom customs, and other conditions where military courtesies are expected.

Your appearance and behavior will reflect on your colleagues on the National Staff. It is your responsibility to ensure that that reflection is a favorable one.

### **Working Independently**

Since the National Staff is a Virtual Organization, the most common work situations you will encounter is that of working independently and, in many cases, working alone. It is this situation that frequently derails folks from being successful on the National Staff. Listed below are some practical “strategies for success” from folks who have learned to manage this unique working situation.

### **Strategies for Success**

1. Try to keep your workspace separate from your living space. This will help you focus on the job to be done by eliminating familiar distractions.
2. Set up “office hours” of regularly scheduled times when you work on your National Staff tasking—and stick to it! For example, “I work on my National Staff job every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 0900—1100.”
3. Plan the work and work the plan. Set up deadlines along the course of the project and let the person to whom you report know what they are. Why? It is very motivating! If you set a deadline that no one knows about, if you don’t meet the deadline then no one will know about that, either! More importantly, the person to whom you report can also help you if you run into difficulty meeting the deadlines by providing coaching or additional resources.
4. If you are working with a team, have frequent telephone and email conversations with the members of the team. This helps to keep the project on track and allows team members to anticipate and prepare for problems.
5. Request frequent feedback from the person to whom you report and other stakeholders so that you are sure you are satisfying their expectations continually. At the end of a project your stakeholders may accept your project even though they are disappointed with the result. Ongoing feedback helps avoid this problem.
6. At the end of your “office hours,” take a break! Do something fun! Take a walk or get some exercise! Spend some time with friends! You deserve it!
7. Celebrate milestones that you complete! Take a bow! Completing of milestones take hard work, creativity, discipline, and a strong work ethic. Bravo Zulu to you!

**Interfacing with Your Flotilla, Division, and District**

Being appointed to the National Staff doesn't mean that you are National Staff 24/7. When you are at your flotilla meeting, you are a flotilla member, not the "National Staff." When you are giving advice to your DCDR, you are doing so as a member of the division.

Why is this issue being brought to your attention? Several members of the National Staff (who have gone before you) that have tried to "pull National Staff rank" on the local level and left a bad taste and hard feelings in their flotilla, division, or district as well as their National Staff leadership. Being selected to join the National Staff does not bring power and influence, but it does bring many responsibilities. Your power and influence will grow as you establish a track record of performance, high quality work, and dependability.

**Tasking**

You will most often receive your tasking from the person to whom you report, sometimes augmented by the DIR or DIR-d. Typically, task assignments are based on capacity and capability. That means you will be assigned a task based on your availability (do you have a light workload right now?) and expertise (do you have the skills and knowledge?).

Sometimes you will be tasked in an area with which you are not familiar and will need to learn. This is known as development—an opportunity to expand your expertise and become well-rounded. Under these circumstances, you can expect a lot of coaching and direction until you become more comfortable. Tasking may involve the participation of other departments or entities. As mentioned earlier in this Guidebook, the active exchange of information across divisions or departments may be necessary to develop project plans and complete tasks as assigned. Under these circumstances, use Level 5 initiative.

**Travel**

While working on the National Staff, you may be asked to travel. Traveling for your duties on the National Staff will require "orders"—written pre-authorization that you have permission to travel, will be covered by insurance, and your expenses will be reimbursed.

If you are asked to travel, it will most likely be to one of the two national meetings—the National Convention (NACON) or the National Training Conference (N-TRAIN). Don't expect to be ordered into a national conference unless you have a job to do or you are attending a National School. Most National Staff members who receive orders to national conferences will be instructing seminars, classes, or workshops. Being ordered to a national meeting is not a "reward"; it is typically an assignment that requires planning, preparation, long days, and hard work! But don't worry, there's a lot of fun, too!

Your orders can come from two different sources—the Coast Guard or the CG Auxiliary Association, Inc.

Source	Forms Required for Reimbursement	
Coast Guard	FMS-2231 Auxiliarist DD-1351-2	Federal Direct Deposit for Auxiliarist Travel Voucher or Subvoucher
CG Auxiliary Association, Inc.	CG AuxA-3	Claim for Reimbursement - Travel

All of the forms are available on the Auxiliary National website at [www.cgaux.org](http://www.cgaux.org).

## THE NATIONAL STAFF BADGE

All members **currently serving** on the National Staff are entitled to wear the National Staff badge (wearing the National Staff badge is optional). This badge designates you a member of the National Staff and can be worn on all uniforms, jumpsuit, flight suit, and ODUs. When you leave the National Staff, you are no longer authorized to wear the National Staff badge regardless of how many years you were on the National Staff. Information on how to wear the National Staff badge can be found in the Auxiliary Manual in Chapter 10 and in the Uniform Procurement Guide.

The National Staff badge is available in two sizes. Your choice of badge size may depend on your body size, type of uniform you are wearing, or personal preference. The devices are available only by special request from the Auxiliary Center (AUXCEN). The item numbers for the devices are:



Part #	Size
#50370	Large Device
#50371	Small Device

While serving on the National Staff, Auxiliarists may wear the Auxiliary National Staff identification badge. Auxiliarists may wear this badge replacing any service or staff badge or insignia worn centered on the right breast pocket (beneath a flap, if present) of dress uniforms and in the same relative position on dress uniforms with no pockets. Women may wear the staff badge above the name tag and in the same relative position on the Dinner Dress jacket. When worn above the name tag, female Auxiliarists wear the AUXOP device, if earned, below the name tag. On the Dinner Dress Blue jacket, men wear it centered on the right side between the top two buttons and women wear it centered on the right side above the top button. On the Dinner Dress White jacket, both men and women wear it centered on the right side above the top button. Auxiliarists do not wear it on working uniforms. Two sizes of National Staff badges are authorized. The larger is worn for formal occasions while the smaller is worn for normal day wear. Women have the option of wearing the smaller badge on formal occasions. (Auxiliary Manual, Chapter 10, F.9.b.(3).)

## TROUBLESHOOTING

Everyone hopes that you will find your work on the National Staff to be professionally challenging and rewarding. We also hope that the people you meet and the relationships you develop, particularly in your Chain of Leadership and Communication, are ones that you find valuable, but what do you do if you are experiencing difficulty as you serve on the National Staff?

Open, honest, and well-intended communication can preserve and enhance working relationships. Conversations that are constructive, don't seek to blame, seek to understand, and are open-minded can go a long way to "clear the air" and grow mutual respect.

1. First, can you talk about your issue with the person to whom you report? That person may not be aware of your issue or concern regarding your tasking or how the two of you relate. So try to explain and give that person a chance to help.
2. If you need additional assistance, speak to your DIR or DIR-d. Explain your issue and provide as many examples as possible. If you are having difficulty with someone on the team, your DIR or DIR-d will most likely want to speak with that person to get a balanced perspective. Remember, everyone involved wants the same outcome—satisfied National Staff members who can work together as a team!

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3. Finally, you can bring your concerns to your ANACO or DNACO. Expect your ANACO or DNACO to go through a “fact finding” process to fully understand the situation, as well, in the hope of finding a resolution to the matter.

It is the most sincere hope of the Senior Leadership of the US Coast Guard Auxiliary that you have a long, rewarding, and challenging “tour of duty” on the National Staff!

## **EMAIL ON THE NATIONAL STAFF**

The clearest form of communication is usually a face-to-face meeting; phone calls come next. Emails come last. It is very difficult to convey tone correctly in an email. However, email is probably the most frequent means of communication for National Staff members. Because the National Staff is a virtual organization, except for NACON and N-Train, members have few opportunities for face-to-face meetings. With the advent of web-based video conferencing, members have an electronic alternative for face-to-face dialogue.

Email is an easy way to convey a great deal of the information with which we deal on a day-to-day basis in the Auxiliary. Email is the most efficient form of communication for reports, meeting notices, agendas, and informational messages. It can convey detailed information in attachments, create a paper trail, and keep several members of a team “in the loop.”

Some suggestions for effective emails:

1. Subject Line: Try to keep it brief, but complete. “Report” is a useless subject. “2012 1st Quarter Report—BC-HCM” is far better. Recipients can file the email correctly and refer to it when necessary.
2. REPLY: If your name is in the CC: column, most of the time no reply is required. Replies are needed if an email requested information from you or if you have something important to add to the thread.
3. REPLY ALL: If collaborating on a project with several other members, REPLY ALL is usually correct so that all members are aware of changes/questions relating to the project. However, if you decide to reply to an informational email sent out from your Director, REPLY ALL would be incorrect because not all receiving the original message need to see your reply.
4. BCC: The use of the bcc: should be avoided. Members of the team should be aware of all others working on a project. If you believe someone else in the Auxiliary should be informed, don’t hide the fact. CC: that person so all are aware of the distribution.
5. CC: Often we should keep others in the loop. For example, a BC working with members of another department might want to keep his DVC apprised of his work on that project. (More on this topic in “The Auxiliary Chain of Leadership and Management” below.)
6. Timing: Always reply in a timely manner—check your inbox frequently.
7. Absence: If you will be away and out of communication for a time, be certain to notify those staff members who contact you regularly.
8. Threads: Usually it is a good idea to include the original message in your reply. Although several back-and-forth replies can make for a very long email, the email will have the entire thread so that all can see the progression. A staff member need save only the last of the emails since that one has the entire conversation.
9. Forwarding: Check the distribution list before forwarding emails. Avoid forwarding to those who have already received it. If you must forward an email, be sure to add more than “FYI.” Add your explanation, request, etc. to the top of the message.

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10. Formatting: Plain text is readable by all. Special formatting might not be readable by your recipient.
11. Attachments: If attachments are required and if they are large, it is often best to send each attachment as a separate email since many IPs do not allow large emails. Also, it is best to use well-recognized packages when creating an attachment. A DOC or RTF format, (for documents), a CSV or XLS format (for spreadsheets), a JPG or GIF format (for pictures), or a PDF format should be readable by almost all members of the Auxiliary. Newer versions of MicroSoft's Office have DOCX and XLSX formats, which are not readable by many programs including earlier versions of Office. Most programs offer a "SAVE AS" option. Choose one of the above-mentioned formats to be certain your file can be read.
13. High-Priority, Delivery Notification: Use the high-priority option sparingly. If all your emails are marked "high-priority," none are. Use the priority option only when the message clearly requires a rapid response. Similarly, avoid the use of "Delivery Notification"; the responses clutter the receiver's Sent Box. If you need to insure that a message has been received, ask the recipient to send an acknowledgement.
12. Upper-case: Use only for abbreviations/acronyms and when using plain text, to replace italics or bold-face.

### **The Auxiliary Chain of Leadership and Management**

The Auxiliary Chain of Leadership and Management is similar to the Coast Guard Chain of Command. On the National Staff level that chain can be a bit more complicated than on the flotilla level because often staff members assist outside their own division and even outside their own department. The normal chain would be Branch Chief => Division Chief => Deputy Director => Director => Assistant National Commodore. It is not unusual to work directly at the request of the DIR or the ANACO. Keeping the chain intact in these cases is sometimes difficult. If working directly for the Director, BCs should keep their DVC in the loop because the DVC must make monthly reports to the DIR regarding what the staff is involved in. While the majority of reports would go directly to the ordering authority, staff members should try to keep their immediate next link in the chain aware of the nature of the work they are doing in other divisions or departments.