



City of Santa Fe **Council Staffing** **Assessment**

June 10, 2026

Agenda

- Project Scope & Methodology
- Commendations
- Council Support Models
- Council Support Recommendations
- Other Considerations
- Questions

Project Scope

The City of Santa Fe engaged Baker Tilly to conduct a Council staffing study to assess Councilors' support needs, evaluate current staffing structures, and identify potential staffing models.

Methodology

This study was conducted between October 2025 and May 2026 and consisted of four major phases (project planning, fact finding, analysis, and reporting). Fact finding and analysis was informed by:

- **Interviews:** We conducted interviews with seven Councilors, the Mayor, and ten members of City management and staff.
- **Document Review:** We gathered relevant documentation for review, including organizational charts, budgets, and governance procedural documents.
- **Industry Best Practice:** We conducted research into industry best practices for related topics such as council staffing support models.
- **Peer Benchmarking:** We conducted benchmarking with ten cities to assess how Santa Fe's council structure and needs compare to similarly situated jurisdictions.
 - Austin, TX
 - Boulder, CO
 - Hartford, CT
 - Lansing, MI
 - Odessa, TA
 - Provo, UT
 - Reno, NV
 - Rio Rancho, NM
 - Salem, OR
 - Topeka, KA



Commendations



We'd like to extend our gratitude to city leadership and staff for their active engagement and valuable participation throughout this assessment. The success of this work are supported by several commendations, including:

- **Councilor and Staff Commitment to Constituents**
- **Staff Commitment to Supporting Councilors**

The contributions of staff have formed a strong foundation from which the City can continue improving governance and operations.

Council Support Models

Council Support Models

Model A One-to-One Support

1+ dedicated staff assigned to each Councilor

Advantages

- High responsiveness
- Strong district familiarity
- Personalized support

Considerations

- Higher staffing/FTE needs
- Less resource flexibility

Model B Shared & Centralized Support

Shared/centralized staff team supporting multiple Councilors

Advantages

- Collaborative approach
- Flexible staffing resources
- Consistent service delivery

Considerations

- Less individualized support
- Requires coordination across Councilors

Model C Decentralized Support

Various department staff provide support as needed

Advantages

- Efficient use of resources
- Integrated with operations

Considerations

- Limited dedicated capacity
- Reduced responsiveness to Councilor priorities

Council Support Recommendations

Santa Fe's Current Model: Model C (Decentralized Support)

City staff support Councilors as needed across the following areas:

City Staff	FTE	Level of Support	Type of Support
Constituent Services Manager and Specialists	4 FTE	Medium	Respond to constituent complaints and coordinate events
Marketing and Communications Manager	1 FTE	Low	Market events and send out certain communications for Councilors
Mayor and City Manager Executive Assistants	2 FTE	Low	Provide ad hoc onboarding, travel, scheduling, and purchasing support
Legislation and Policy Innovation Manager and staff	3 FTE	High	Research policy issues and develop resolutions and legislation



Issues with Current Model

Limited Councilor Capacity

- Councilors report insufficient time to manage workloads--including legislative, constituent, and administrative responsibilities.
- Commonly reported support needs include additional legislative research and planning, constituent communications, meeting preparation, scheduling, and event coordination.

Limited Staff Capacity

- Staff supporting Councilors balance their requests with other departmental responsibilities.
- Existing resources are often sufficient to address priority requests, but not the full volume of support needs.

Role Ambiguity in Staff Support

- There is a lack of shared understanding regarding appropriate levels of Councilor support.
- The individual staff members authority to prioritize or decline requests is unclear.
- Direct requests from Councilors to staff members outside established processes can create confusion and inconsistent service levels.

Peer Approaches

	Model A: One-on-One Support	Model B: Shared & Centralized Support	Model C: Decentralized Support
# of Peer Cities Using the Model	2	4	4
Strengths	High responsiveness	Higher collaboration and consistency, lower redundancy	Increased specialized expertise
Challenges	High staff cost Lack of coordination	Managing Councilors competing priorities	Managing Councilors competing priorities Coordinating with various stakeholders
Best Fit	Large cities with significant resources or full-time Councilors with high workloads	Cities with some resource capacity for centralized staff	Cities with limited resources



Council Support Recommendations

Recommendation

Retain the current Council support structure while adding a centralized Council Program Manager within the City Manager's Office to improve coordination, consistency, workload management, and administrative support across Council operations.

Core responsibilities of the Council Program Manager position would include:

- Coordinating administrative and operational support functions
Ex: scheduling meetings, coordinating travel and training, preparing briefing materials, and supporting Council-led events
- Supporting constituent engagement efforts
Ex: inquiry triage, coordination of departmental follow-up, issue tracking, and communication support
- Assisting with legislative coordination activities
Ex: tracking policy initiatives and coordinating with the Office of Legislation and Policy Innovation.

Roles and Responsibilities Recommendation

Observation

Roles and responsibilities between Councilors and City staff are not always clearly defined, resulting in confusion, inconsistent expectations, and uneven support.

Recommendation

Establish and document a formal Council support framework that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of Councilors and City staff and standardizes how work flows between them. This documentation will improve consistency, efficiency, and equity for Council support.

Other Considerations

Other Considerations

Although this assessment is primarily focused on Council staffing structures and support models, legislative and committee processes are closely tied to Council workload, responsiveness, and perceptions of support capacity.

Topic	Observation	Recommendation
Legislative Research Process	The City’s legislative research and drafting process is critical to effective governance. However, the process lacks transparency, clear prioritization criteria, and shared visibility which has created frustration for Councilors.	Formalize a legislative research and drafting process that establishes clear prioritization criteria, encourages shared visibility across Councilors, and promotes consistent communication on the status of legislative requests. The Council Program Manager could support these efforts.
Committee Review Process	Inefficiencies in legislative routing, committee review, and policy coordination can increase administrative burden and affect the overall effectiveness of Council support.	Evaluate the committee review process to identify opportunities to streamline legislative workflows, reduce redundancy, and improve efficiency for Councilors and staff.

Questions?

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