

Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



How to install a Congressional Advisory Service to enhance democracy

Prepared by Isabel Millan V. Past
Head Congressional Advisory
Service Library of Chilean Congress



Soledad Ferreiro
sferreiro@bcn.cl
@soleferreiro
www.facebook.com/sferreiro



Is it possible to...

Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



Provide assistance to parliamentary duties from a library?
Contribute to Committees' and MPs' individual work from a
parliamentary library?
Contribute this way to enhancing democracy?



Case study

Successful installment of the Congressional Advisory Service that supports Committees, Senators and Deputies on legislative, oversight and representation matters.
10 steps to replicate the case in other parliaments....

A young child with brown hair, wearing a red and green striped shirt, blue denim shorts, and red sneakers, is seen from behind, climbing a blue carpeted staircase. The child is on the second step from the top, with their right hand on the step below and their left foot on the step above. The background is a solid blue color.

Steps 1, 2

Learn about your client: who is s/he , responsibilities, concerns, support received.

Study your organization: services offered and attributes, providers, available competencies, coordination efforts, demand vs. supply coherence





Steps 3, 4

Learn from others: differences between parliamentary research services and political advisors, services provided, values, attributes, shared problems, alternative solutions, lessons learned.

Design the research and advisory service (structure, roles, responsibilities, procedures and products) **and invite professionals with experience in Congress**





Steps 5, 6

Best for specialization: support human capital accumulation of those who take the challenge, buy in the market specialized competencies not available within the organization.

Learn by doing: let competencies come to practice, make space for mistakes, provide timely feedback, correct as needed.





Steps 7, 8

Listen to your clients: research and advisory service experience, service expectations, satisfaction level, how to improve CAS contribution to Committees and MPs, provide feedback to the team

Review and modify processes to guarantee quality, objectivity, pertinence, timeliness, access equality and confidentiality.
Establish the framework, products, roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures and research methods.



Steps 9, 10

Learn from mistakes, provide feedback and take difficult decisions if needed: evaluate performance against standards, improve methods and quality standards, redesign policies and procedures, strengthen quality controls, give time to adjust, if not reformulate structure, communicate new standards.

Do not let urgent issues inhibit you from staying alert, accumulating knowledge and getting prepared: promote skills acquisition and training, create and maintain research groups to follow specific topics, guarantee objectivity, prioritize Committees requests against individual requests.





And...

Do not think everything is learnt, listen to your client and research team to look for excellence.



CAS: Origins

April 2003, Chair of Senate request:

“To lead a quantitative and qualitative advance in knowledge production for MPs and to enhance citizenship links to Congress”.

How?

IADB Funds and regular BCN public budget

Watch and understand



Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



BCN Committees: research and recommendations.

MPs interviews and visits to districts: permanent tension between being a good.... politician, legislator, manager, close to people.

Image of National Congress study: low knowlege of parliament

Watch and understand



Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



Institutional diagnosis: UAPROL:

responsiveness, awareness, clients feedback, commitment;

small team; overwork; lack of quality control, research standards, coordination with other researchers within BCN, roles and responsibilities clearly stated.

Design, invite and make it possible

July 2005: first design.

August 2006:

Pilot experience, advisory to 7
Committees.

70% MPs evaluation is positive.

October 2006:

BCN under administrative
reorganization,

Prototype design for CAS.



Design, invite and make it possible

Prototype:

To provide specialized technical advisory to Committees and MPs.

Permanent supply of content analysis, particularly for Committees.

Structure: 5 topical areas (6 researchers and 1 coordinator each) and 4 support areas (4 and 1)

Invitation to join CAS voluntarily.



Design, invite and make it possible

Setting up the scene, 2006:

Human resources

Infrastructure and
equipement

Funding

Processes, products,
clients, access, first set of
standards.



Show time: Learn by doing

2007:

Hire Head, coordinators and specialized advisors.

Produce services for Congress, under the new rules.

Join two different cultures.

Train the team who accepted the challenge.

Incorporate referencists from other BCN teams.

Improve selection process; academic and soft skills matter!



Show time: Learn by doing

2007:

Assist Deputies Committees during sessions.

Establish principles and values that guide advisors.

Review request allocation and research development processes, roles and responsibilities.

Adjust structure to 5 topical areas and 2 support areas.



Show time: Learn by doing

2007 and beyond...

Keep learning from others: visits to UK, Finland, Belgium and UE parliaments; PreIFLA at Capetown (followed by PreIFLA Canada, Sweden, Puerto Rico; Dan Mulhollan's training; visits to Canada, Scotland, UK and Brazil Parliaments).



Establish processes and evaluate accordingly

2008 areas:

Economics & Government

Foreign Affairs and
Defense

Legal Analysis

Natural Resources,
Science, Technology &
Industry

Social Policies

GIS & Statistics

Knowledge Management



Establish processes and evaluate accordingly

2008:

Differences in contents and style of advisory services make evident.

Need to build a shared vision of what Congressional Advisory Service is meant to be.

Actions taken:

Participatory review of all procedures

Proposal of a regulatory framework for CAS, that sets products, as well as principles and values for the services provided: quality, timeliness, objectivity, pertinence, equality of access, confidentiality (about who requests what).



Establish processes and evaluate accordingly

Actions taken:

Participatory review of all procedures

Proposal of a regulatory framework for CAS, that sets products, as well as principles and values for the services provided: quality, timeliness, objectivity, pertinence, equality of access, confidentiality (about who requests what).

Promotion of proactivity.

Proposal of training policy for CAS.

Hiring additional competences needed.

Improving hiring conditions of the team.



Establish processes and evaluate accordingly

Evaluation: 34 Deputies interviewed, October-December 2008:

Most declared:

CAS services contributed to parliamentary work, as a technical counterweight to ideological opinions;

providing insights for parliamentary debate, to support their positions and to strengthen bills under study.



Establish processes and evaluate accordingly

Evaluation: Deputies interviews..

Need to improve:

interview the client to better understand their requests;

analyze different points of view during the debate;

Follow the parliamentary agenda;

Customize services;

Get feedback;

Communicate/update on CAS products to MPs.



Review and modify processes to guarantee values respect

2009:

Approval of CAS regulatory framework.

Follow ups and audits to advisory work.

Creation of Deputy Head position, for centralized requests allocations and follow up along the process

Creation of evaluation team, for quality control of all products before delivery (after coordinators' control).



Review and modify processes to guarantee values respect

2009:

Reorganization of research groups according to their methodological approach:

Legal Analysis

Economics

Government, Defense and Foreign Affairs

Natural Resources, Science & Technology

Social Policies

GIS & Statistics

Knowledge Management



Make sure urgent issues leaves room for relevant matters

2010-2012:

CAS consolidation as the institutional Technical Advisory team.

Research and analysis based on multiple disciplines,

Guided by quality, objectivity, timeliness, pertinence, equality of access and confidentiality.

Permanently aware of legislative, political and public agenda.

Both demand driven and anticipatory work.



Make sure urgent issues leaves room for relevant matters

2010-2012: Key factors...

Multidisciplinary specialized advisory team.

Being part of the legislative and oversight process as technical advisors, increasingly active.

Well-known and shared rules of conduct.

Annual goals to challenge the team further.

Shared awareness of the importance of objectivity as CAS distinctive attribute.

Allocation of work, based on clients expectations and competences required.



Make sure urgent issues leaves room for relevant matters

2010-2012: Key factors...

Priorities: Committees first, individual MPs next

Quality assurance through 2 quality controls before delivery: 1) similar approach; 2) values and CAS standards.

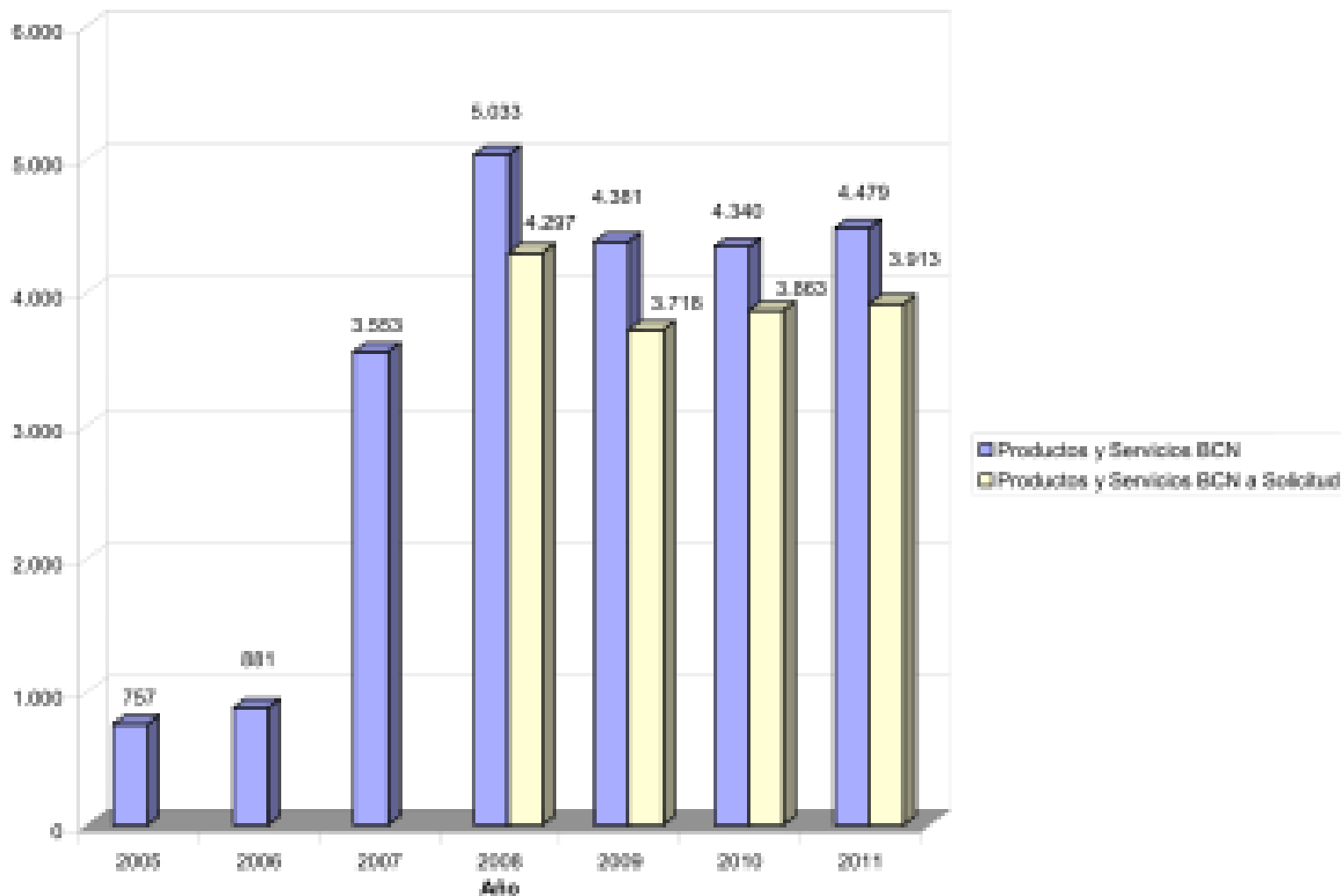
Improved communication to Committees and MPs of the services provided.

Institutional support to continuous training and updating on strategic parliamentary issues

Recent workflow, to follow up requests and better understand MPs concerns



BCN products for parliamentary community: 2005-2011



CAS products for parliamentary community: 2007-2011

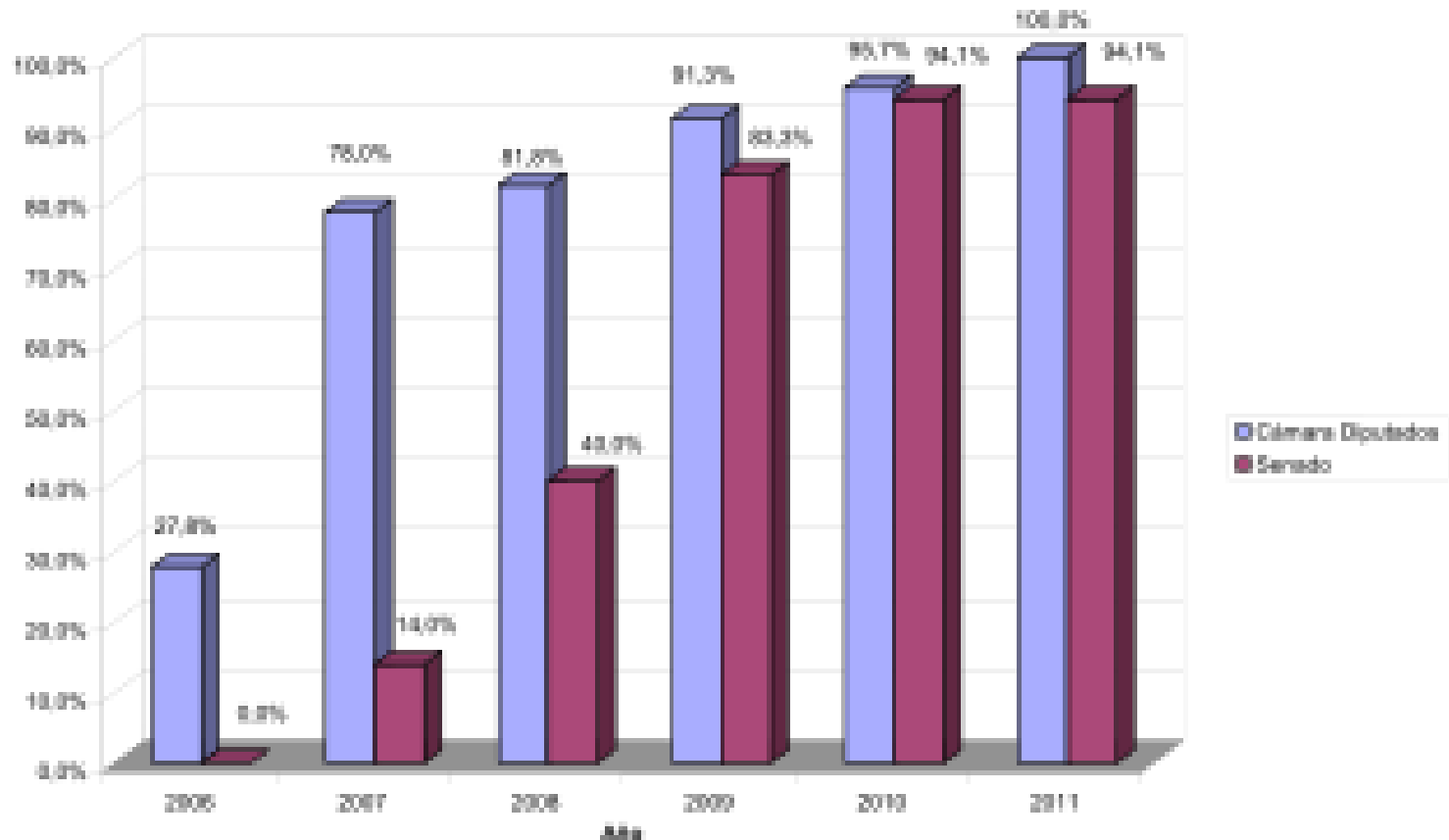
By origin:

Origen	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Demanda	2.409	3.415	3.289	3.402	3.438
Oferta	148	559	248	198	269
Total	2.557	3.974	3.537	3.600	3.707

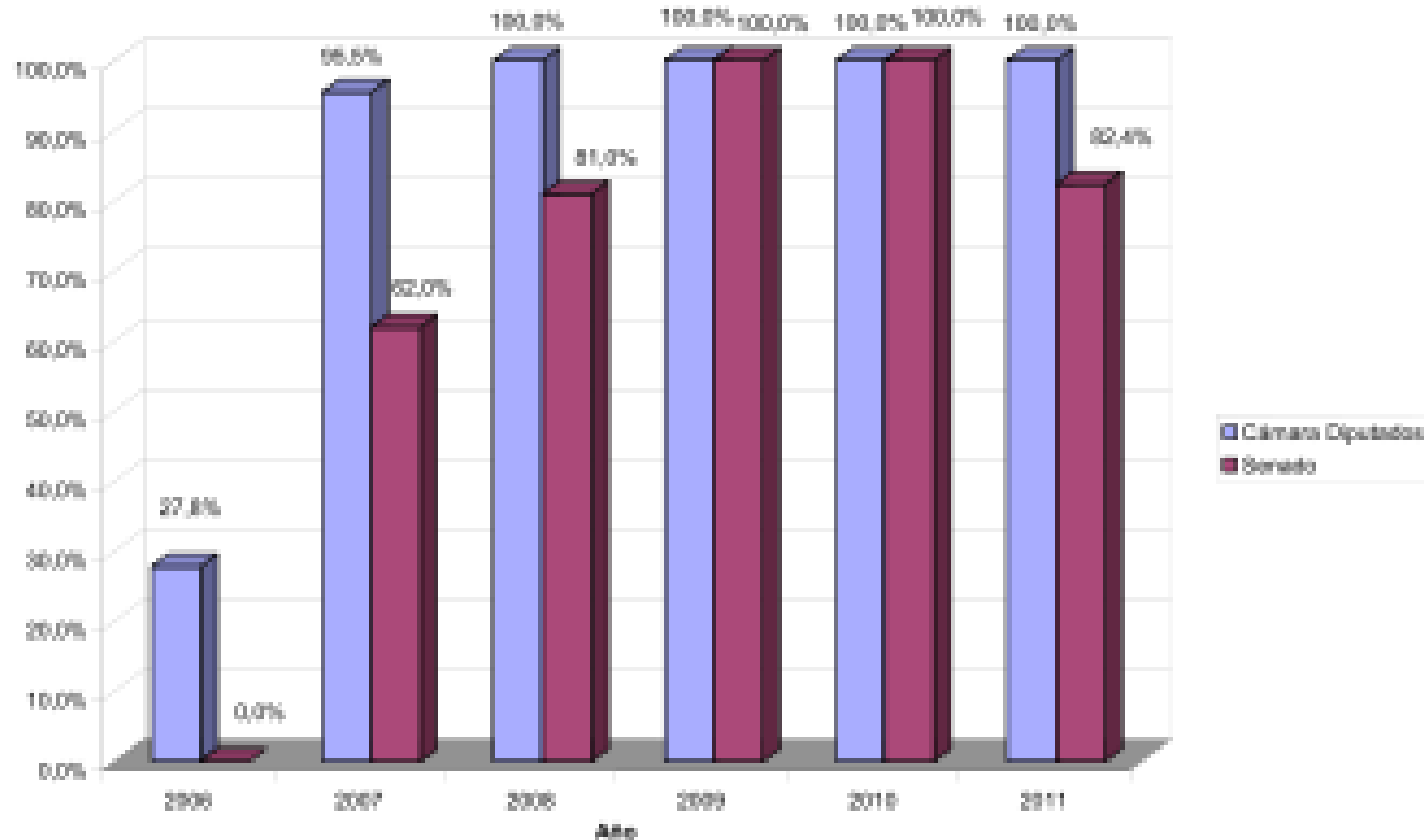
By type, just demand:

Demanda	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Análisis	980	1.508	1.686	1.518	1.553
Referencia	1.429	1.792	1.492	1.584	1.485
Texto Guiado y Doc. Res. Comisiones		115	111	300	400
Total general	2.409	3.415	3.289	3.402	3.438

Congressional Advisors during Committees sessions. Coverage 2006-2011



Congressional Advisory Products for Committees: Coverage 2006-2011



Congressional Advisory Incidence: 2010-2012



Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



42 out of 236 “Historias de la Ley” from January 2010 to June 2012 inform CAS contribution: memos & reports for Committees, advisory during Committees sessions (technical presentations), technical advisory for topical Seminars.

Products for more than 50 bills being discussed in Congress.

60 journalistic articles in Chilean press, regarding CAS contributions to legislative and oversight work.

CAS vision for the future

Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



A parliamentary advisory service of excellence, relevant for its clients:
Flexible, adaptable & client oriented;
Focused on Committes work;
In continuous training and updating;
Validated by its clients;
Externally wel positioned;
That contributes at its maximum capacities to parliamentary work and
democracy development.

CAS next steps: Keep improving in search of excellence



Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



Quality: Promote human capital accumulation, transdisciplinary work, and knowledge management.

Committees Advisory: improve demand management & identify and share topics for proactive work

Pertinence: need of periodical client evaluation; promote access to quality sources; products & services innovations.

CAS next steps: Keep improving in search of excellence



Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile



Incidence and positioning: promote proactive work; selectively disseminate products to Committees and MPs; improve linkage with research centers, international organizations and public agencies;

thank you



Soledad Ferreiro
sferreiro@bcn.cl

@soleferreiro

www.facebook.com/sferreiro