



Membership Guidebook

Welcome to the first professional association for public sector social media professionals in the United States, founded by [Government Social Media LLC](#) (GSM) in October 2015! Government Social Media membership is guided by this plan, which clarifies the purpose, structure and operations of the association.

What We Do

Why does Government Social Media membership exist? Quite simply, to support government social media professionals in successfully communicating with the public. The purpose of this professional association is to:

1. **Provide a network** for government professionals to collaborate about social media
2. **Promote social media use** in government in the United States
3. **Support professionalism**, integrity and credibility in this field
4. **Establish best practice standards** for social media use in government
5. **Meet educational needs** for government social media training
6. **Facilitate communication** between social networks and government

How We Do It

What is the value of GSM membership? GSM offers many services for its members.

Professional Development

GSM works to establish and promote best practice standards for government social media to support professional development in this field. We monitor and communicate issues of relevance to members and assist in facilitating discussion with social networks. We communicate new platform features and products to member agencies.

Online Resources

GSM members can access a number of member-only online resources, such as member-only webinars and a Resource Library with helpful member-contributed reference documents such as policies, plans and templates.

Community Network

Members have access to a membership directory to search, message and connect with social media peers in their area. A gated online community allows members to communicate with each other and share challenges and lessons learned with social media professionals dealing with the same issues across the country.

Our Structure

How does this professional association operate? Here's the simple framework.

Government Social Media LLC runs the membership association, and company leadership may appoint an Executive Director, Deputy Director and assign administrative staff to support the needs of members. A membership-elected Council offers advice and recommendations to GSM on how to best serve the community.

Executive Director

The Executive Director is responsible for oversight of the association, which may include managing operations, finances, legal issues, programs, policies and strategy. GSM may also assign staff to serve roles such as community management, office support, design, marketing, communications and more. These positions help support the purpose of GSM membership, encompassing everything from engaging members to facilitating back-end office functions. GSM leadership holds the final decision-making authority of the association and the Executive Director serves as the official spokesperson.

Membership Council

A six-member advisory Council is elected by membership to represent one of six geographic regions of the United States. Council members serve as advisors for the association for a term of two years.

Membership Eligibility

We support local and state agencies, the United States Federal Government, regional government, academics and more. Only local and state members are currently eligible to vote and serve on the Membership Council, however, members from other entities may be eligible to vote and serve on the Council in the future if an at-large representative position is created.

Members can have any job title — it's not limited to social media manager — but must be actively employed full/part-time (not as contractor or consultant), or be an elected or appointed official, at any of the following entities within the United States of America, including their departments, agencies, boards and commissions:

- City, town, township, municipality, borough, county, tribal
- State
- Special district (water, airport authority, sanitation, visitor's bureau, port authority, utility services owned by government agencies, etc.)
- Economic Development Corporation
- Library: City, county, state or federal
- Courts: Municipal, county, state or federal
- Public safety entity: local or state
- U.S. federal agencies
- Active duty U.S. military or civilian staff
- League/association of cities or counties

- Municipal league
- Public entity insurance pools or exchanges
- Public employees retirement system or benefits authority
- U.S.-based school or university

Paid Interns are Eligible

An internship is a common stepping stone to government employment, and some agencies supplement their social media support staff by utilizing interns. While it is our goal to elevate the status of the government social media manager by encouraging full-time regular employment, we want interns to have as many resources available as possible. Volunteer interns are ineligible for GSM membership, though paid (full/part-time) interns working for an eligible agency may qualify. Interns are not eligible to vote or serve on the Membership Council.

Six Regions

Members of the professional association belong to one of six geographic regions of the United States, based on the location of the agency they work for or the location of their office (in the case of federal agencies). GSM may update the boundaries of these regions if necessary in the future.



West: California, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah

Northwest: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming

Midwest: Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin

Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia

Southeast: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee

Southwest: Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Member Code of Conduct

In support of our mission to support the professionalism, integrity and credibility of the social media manager profession, our members are held to a code of conduct. Violation of these values and expectations could result in action taken by GSM up to and including termination of membership. As a member, you must:

- Demonstrate and be dedicated to the highest ideals of ethical integrity in your role as a public sector employee
- Respect and show proper consideration for the privacy of citizens, colleagues and other members
- Never post malicious or misleading content about your agency, colleagues, or other members
- Be respectful to others and treat others with civility, even in disagreement
- Never unlawfully harass or mistreat other members
- Attempt to resolve disagreements and differing views with other members constructively
- Never use data you obtain from your GSM membership, including contacts in the membership directory, for your own gain, marketing, consulting or for-profit work

Membership Council

Serving on the Membership Council is an exceptional way to get involved in the government social media community. This advisory body is made up of six members who represent state or local agencies, each elected by their region. Council members serve as advisors for the association for a term of two years. From time to time, an eligible member may be appointed by the Executive Director, in collaboration with the Council, to fill a vacant position (this might happen if a Council member moves out of their region or their employment status changes, for instance).

Council Responsibilities

- Help plan and support the strategic direction of the association
- Keep open communication with members in their region
- Offer recommendations to GSM on how to best serve and support members
- Collaborate with GSM to promote a diverse and inclusive environment within the association
- Participate in Council meetings, chair and serve as members on committees
- Support member recruitment efforts and professional development opportunities in their region
- Assist in establishing rapport with major social media platforms
- Assist in planning and volunteering at GSM events

Leadership Positions

It takes dedication to take on projects and help execute the vision of our association. To help support our amazing community, Council members take on one-year assignments in various leadership positions.

Council works closely with the Executive Director to choose how to make this selection from its ranks, such as by a vote of the Council. The Executive Director reserves the right to adjust Council assignments as necessary and to resolve any ties.

President. Must have one year of experience serving on the Membership Council. This role works to ensure Council projects align with the purpose, vision and values of the association. The President leads Council meetings and serves as an advisor to the Executive Director (often serving as a liaison between the Council and Executive Director). The President may represent GSM membership by speaking about Council initiatives and projects in a way that complements the voice of the overall

brand, including providing the President’s perspective, while the Executive Director serves as the official spokesperson and may speak on behalf of the association.

Vice-President. Fulfills the role of the President in his/her absence, including leading Council meetings; Supports the accountability and operational success of GSM membership by keeping track of action items, Council decisions and ensuring projects have a champion.

Award Program Chair. Supports an exceptional award program to recognize the impact, success and professionalism of individuals and agencies in this growing field; Researches and recommends improvements to the award program; Serves on the Golden Post Awards committee and assists in selecting judges; Works with staff to encourage high participation.

Communication Chair. Works to establish open communication with the major social networks and platforms in order to facilitate discussion of issues on behalf of GSM membership; Coordinates member-contributed content; Works with GSM staff in creating communications for both current members and the greater government community; Assists in enforcing any GSM style/brand guides.

Education Chair. Assists in planning the member certification program and identifies continuing education needs for social media practitioners in government; Recommends GSM training offerings, such as webinars, online training, guides and #GSMCHAT topics; Champions GSM best practices recommendations; Provides oversight and recommendations for member resources.

Membership Chair. Manages the Member Advocate program, including recruiting and making assignments; Collects and recommends ideas for adding value to and enhancing the GSM membership experience, including membership activities, meetups and participation; Curates stories about member’s accomplishments, wins and recognition for GSM promotion; Plans membership surveys; Ensures GSM members needs are met in event planning; Monitors membership satisfaction.

Council Code of Conduct

In addition to the Member Code of Conduct, representatives serving on our Membership Council have additional expectations. They:

- Serve by representing the best interests of GSM and its member network in the field of social media in government.
- Should not represent that their personal opinions online or offline are officially on behalf of GSM.
- Agree not to disclose any private information such as membership data, operational data or any explicitly private information. A confidentiality agreement between each Council member and GSM is required.

Elections

Membership Council representatives serve a term of two years. Instead of all six regions being up for election every two years, starting in October 2020, elections will be staggered. Regions up for election in even-numbered years will be: Southeast, Southwest and West. Regions up for election in odd-numbered years are Northwest, Midwest and Northeast.

Term. The regular term of the Membership Council is two (2) years, with staggered elections being held in October, terms starting in November and running through the end of the second October.

Positions. Each of six (6) membership regions will be represented by one member elected to serve on the Membership Council.

Eligibility. Nominees must be state or local members in good standing for at least one year prior to the election and must work within the boundaries of the region they are running to represent. Immediate past Membership Council representatives are ineligible to run in the election cycle immediately following their term, but may run in future elections.

Nominations. Any member meeting the eligibility qualifications may self-nominate during the nomination period in October of the year their region is up for election, using the process defined in communications to members.

Voting. Voting will be held every October for three of the regions. All eligible GSM members get one vote in the election and may only vote for a representative of his or her own region. Nominations will conclude before the balloting period begins and voting will take place via electronic ballot.

Member Advocates

The GSM Membership Council may appoint volunteers to serve as Member Advocates (MA) at any point throughout the year. This program invites more participation by members and taps into the experience and enthusiasm of the broader association. MA's can contribute to a number of projects and tasks based on their interest area and skillset. MA's do not have a defined term, and may continue to serve as long as they are actively contributing and continue to meet the criteria of GSM membership.

The Membership Chair is responsible for managing the Member Advocates program, with assistance from GSM staff.
