



Membership Guidebook

Welcome to the first professional association for public sector social media professionals, 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.

About the Association

The Government Social Media professional association (GSM association) is a membership organization created by Government Social Media LLC (GSM). Members elect regional representatives who serve on a volunteer advisory council to help communicate member needs to GSM and other stakeholders.

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
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

Membership Benefits

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.

Educational Webinars

We organize monthly member-only webinars taught by social media experts and fellow socialgov professionals. Members can also view archived recordings of previous webinars.

Regional Virtual Meetups

We host quarterly meetups for each region held via Zoom and facilitated by council and Team GSM. The meetups are a great opportunity to collaborate on regional topics and network with nearby public communicators.

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.

GSMCON Extras

Members registered for the Government Social Media Conference can participate in our annual membership meeting, get complimentary professional headshots and be identified with a member ribbon. Virtual participants can also join in on the membership meeting.

Our Structure

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

Government Social Media LLC, based in Nevada, USA, 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 volunteer 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

The GSM Membership Council is a six-member advisory group elected by membership to represent one of six geographic regions of the U.S. Council members serve as volunteer advisors for the professional association for a term of two years.

Membership Eligibility

We support local and state agencies, the United States Federal Government, regional government, academics, Canada government agencies and more. See the Elections section of this guidebook for information on voting and election eligibility.

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, etc.) owned by government agencies
- Council of governments, regional planning commissions, metropolitan planning organizations
- Economic Development Corporation
- Public 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 public school or university

Canada Membership

Full- or part-time employees at most federal, provincial and municipal government entities in Canada qualify for GSM membership. Employees at academic institutions in Canada are currently not eligible for membership. Canada members are currently not eligible to vote or serve on the Membership Council, but are welcome to serve on association committees.

Paid Intern Eligibility

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.

Members in Transition

Our "Members in Transition" policy is designed to support current members facing job loss, who would otherwise be ineligible to continue membership due to not being employed by an eligible entity. Our goal is to provide members with a bridge during this transitional period, for continued access to a support network of peers and job postings in this field to facilitate a smoother transition to new opportunities.

Definition. "Members in Transition" refers to members who are experiencing job loss and are therefore not employed full/part time by an eligible entity due to circumstances such as layoffs, end of term for elected officials, or similar employment gaps, who have been approved to continue their GSM membership for a period of up to six (6) months or until they become employed during that time.

Requirements.

- Transitioning members will be able to continue their membership for up to 6 months starting the day after their last day of employment, regardless of whether their original membership renewal date would occur during or after the 6-month timeframe.
- Members must notify GSM within two weeks of job loss if they wish to participate in the Members in Transition program. If they notify GSM after two weeks, they may still be eligible, though the six-month period still begins the day after their last day of employment. Members must have been in good standing prior to their employment change.
- Transitioning members must represent themselves in the GSM network as an individual. For example, when indicating their employer in their profile, they must either leave their agency information blank or indicate 'formerly with X agency'. Because consultants and freelancers are not typically eligible for membership, to avoid confusion, transitioning members are prohibited from listing any entity as their employer (such as if the member is self-employed as a freelancer during the transitional period.)
- While freelancing as an individual is allowed during the transitional period, transitioning members must follow all regular membership rules, including being prohibited from promoting/soliciting their services or products in the network and association.
- Members in transition must notify GSM immediately if they become employed during the 6-month member extension period (outside of freelancing as an individual).
 - If they become employed by an entity eligible for membership, they can choose to reinstate their membership by completing a new member application. Approved members can continue to keep their existing profile.
 - If they become employed by an entity ineligible for membership during this time (such as a consulting firm or other private industry company), then their transitional membership ends on their date of employment.

Access Level.

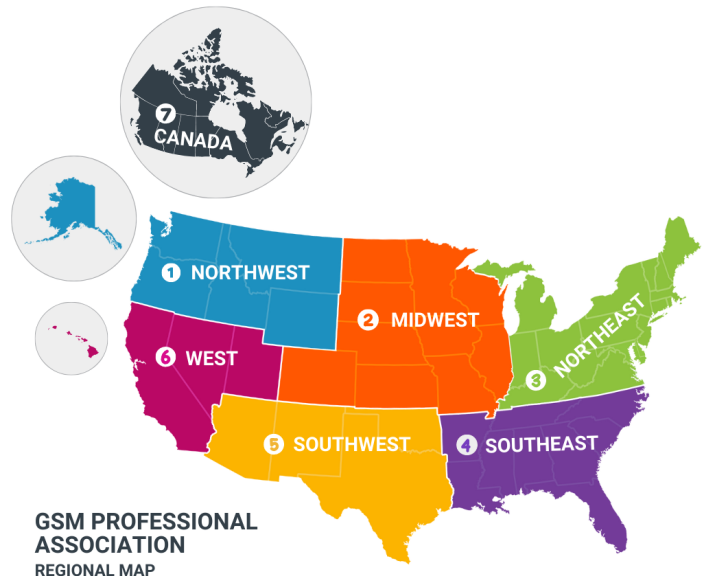
- Access includes all regular membership benefits available to members at their current membership level.
- Members in transition may apply to serve on committees during committee recruitment, or continue their committee service during this time, but are ineligible to run for council.
- Currently seated council members who are approved as a transitioning member may continue to hold their seat during this time, provided they meet all requirements of this policy.

Post-Membership. After the 6-month membership extension, membership will be officially ended, including any committee and council involvement, and access to the professional association and regional groups in the network will be removed. However, if a member in transition informs GSM that they are still facing job loss, they may continue to access the job board for an additional 6-months or until employment is secured during that time.

Regions

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

- 1. Northwest:** Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming
- 2. Midwest:** Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin
- 3. Northeast:** Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia
- 4. Southeast:** Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
- 5. Southwest:** Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
- 6. West:** California, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah
- 7. Canada:** Spans the entire country



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. The GSM Membership Council is a six-member advisory group elected by membership to represent one of six geographic regions of the U.S. Council members serve as volunteer advisors for the association for a term of two years. Canada members currently are not represented on the Membership Council and do not have voting status, although this may be re-evaluated as Canada regional membership grows.

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, must chair or co-chair at least one committee and are encouraged to serve on other committees as a member
- 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.

Assignment Procedure. Leadership positions will be filled within the first two new Council meetings after annual elections. The first meeting will include an overview of leadership roles and eligibility. The second meeting will allow Council members interested in serving as President and Vice President to make brief remarks on why they wish to serve and all Council members will cast a private vote. The committee chair process is less formal, with Council members collaborating on who will co-chair each committee. The Executive Director reserves the right to adjust Council assignments as necessary and to resolve any ties.

President. Ensures 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.

Eligibility. Council candidates for President must have one year of experience serving on the Membership Council within the last five years. All eligible Council members are encouraged to run for President.

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.

Eligibility. Any Council member is an eligible candidate for Vice President. First year Council members are encouraged to run for Vice President to allow for leadership development in each new Council cohort. The Vice President does not automatically assume the position of President in the next term.

Committee Chairs. Leads and supports committees of volunteer members. Committees invite more participation and tap into the experience and enthusiasm of the broader association. A current list of committees and vacancies will be posted on the public website for the professional association: <https://www.governmentsocialmedia.com/association-committees>. The President does not typically co-chair standing committees unless there is a vacancy.

Leadership Position Succession. If the President resigns at any point, the Vice President will become Acting President for the remainder of the one-year assignment. The Acting President would remain eligible to run for President the following cycle, provided they meet the other eligibility criteria for President. If the Vice President resigns at any point, or transitions to Acting President, and it is over 90 days away from the next annual leadership assignment, then a new Vice President will be selected via private vote according to the Assignment Procedure. If it is 90 days or less before the next leadership assignment, the Vice President position will remain vacant. If a Committee Co-Chair resigns at any point, Council will collaborate on the following options: the other co-chair leads the committee themselves, or another council member is assigned.

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. Regions regularly up for election in odd-numbered years will be: Southeast, Southwest, and West. Regions regularly up for election in even-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 summer, with terms starting and ending in August.

Vacancies. When an active council member leaves their position for any reason, a vacancy occurs. The approach to any vacancy is determined by the length of time away from the next election and whether or not the next election is on the regular 2-year cycle for the region in question.

- **If a vacancy occurs less than 5 months away from an election in which the region IS regularly up for election**, then the position will be left vacant until the election.
- **If a vacancy occurs less than 5 months away from an election in which the region IS NOT regularly up for election**, then the position will be left vacant until the election, at which time the position will be up for election for a partial term until the next regular election. Any new council member elected to serve for a partial term will also be eligible to run for a full term in the next election.
- **If a vacancy occurs more than 5 months away from an election in which the region IS regularly up for election**, then an appointment may be made (see Appointment procedures section).
- **If a vacancy occurs more than 5 months away from an election in which the region IS NOT regularly up for election**, then an appointment may be made to fill the remainder of the representative's regular term.
- **If there are no candidates for any region in any election**, then the Appointment process will be triggered. If there are also no candidates for appointment, then the President will take over communications with the region until the next election (if the next election is not the regular cycle for the region, the Vacancy process will be triggered at that time).

Time from Next Election	Election Cycle	Vacancy Status
Less than 5 months	Region IS up for election	No appointment
Less than 5 months	Region is NOT up for election	No appointment; Election for 1-year partial term
More than 5 months	Region IS up for election	Appointment made
More than 5 months	Region is NOT up for election	Appointment made for remainder

		of regular term
No candidates in an election	Region IS up for election	Appointment made

Appointments. Appointments may be made when a Council vacancy occurs more than 5 months away from an election or when there are no candidates in a particular region for an election. Appointed council members are also eligible to run in the next Council election, regardless of how long they filled the seat, except in a rare case where there are no candidates in a regular election and therefore an appointment was made for an entire 2-year term. Council appointments will follow these procedures:

- GSM will notify the region of the vacancy and will ask for eligible candidates to self-nominate. Eligible members must be active members who have been a member for at least one cumulative year within the preceding three years to apply.
- Candidates must submit responses to nomination questions to apply.
- The deadline for the submission of these responses will be no shorter than two (2) weeks.
- Within two council meetings following the application deadline, the appointee will be selected by the Executive Director and Council based on a review of application materials.

Partial Terms. Elected Council members who serve less than half of their term due to being ineligible to represent their region because they moved to another region are eligible to run in the next Council election in their new region if they are employed by an eligible entity. Appointed Council members or those serving a 1-year partial term, who become ineligible to serve because they no longer work for an entity eligible for membership, would be eligible to run in the next election if they now work for an eligible entity. Council members who resign their position for other reasons will not be eligible to run in the next election.

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

Eligibility. Nominees must be active members in good standing for at least one cumulative year within the three years 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. Interns are not eligible to run or vote.

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

Recruitment and Endorsements. Current council members are not restricted from promoting or campaigning for themselves if they are eligible to run in the next immediate election (such as with appointed or partial-term Council members), but they may not use any official GSM association communication channels that are exclusively accessible to Council members to do so. Current council members are not prohibited from encouraging eligible members to self-nominate, but their explicit public endorsements or campaigning for any individuals running for Council is prohibited.

Voting. Voting will be held every summer for any regional position that is up for election. All eligible GSM members get one regional vote in the election for a representative of their own region. Nominations will conclude before the balloting period begins and voting will take place via electronic ballot.

Election Tie. In the event of a tie in any region, a runoff election between the candidates who tied will be held within two weeks of the tie determination. Electronic ballots will be sent to eligible voting members who will cast one (1) vote. Should the runoff election result in another tie, the Executive Director and Council will determine how to break the second tie during the next council meeting, such as based on a review of application materials.
