

Federal Web Managers Council Charter

Updated June 2012

Who We Are

The Federal Web Managers Council (Web Council) was created in January 2004 as a way for federal Web managers to collaborate across government and share common challenges, ideas, and best practices. Since then, it has grown into a dynamic and influential digital government community of practice, representing all federal Cabinet agencies, as well as major independent agencies, sub-agencies, and Congressional support agencies that deliver top citizen tasks. Members work in various branches of their respective agencies, including policy, communications, public affairs, and CIO staffs.

Our Purpose

The purpose of the Federal Web Managers Council is to:

- Help federal government agencies create a great service experience for their customers;
- Address high-level digital content policy issues that affect all agencies, and work with OMB to modernize policies to meet our business goals;
- Advise and make recommendations to policy-makers, partners and other stakeholders to improve government digital content, and strengthen content management policies;
- Work with GSA to train government Web and new media staff in the core skills needed to manage websites and digital communications channels, and educate government employees about emerging trends and future needs;
- Promote intra-agency, cross-agency and inter-governmental collaboration;
- Provide opportunities for government Web and new media managers to share skills, knowledge, best practices, ideas, and solutions;
- Communicate our successes (and challenges) to stakeholders to bring greater recognition and support for our work and the government Web space as a whole; and
- Leverage the size and influence of our community to get things done across government that would be harder to do individually.

Our Goals

Our long-term goals are:

- Help the public quickly and easily accomplish their most critical tasks online;
- Coordinate and streamline delivery of digital content across government to reduce redundancy and manage IT resources more efficiently; and
- Support and expand our dynamic community of government Web and New Media Professionals from across the country so they can share lessons learned and best practices.

What We Do

To accomplish these goals, we:

- Manage HowTo.gov, a repository of federal web and digital content requirements and customer service best practices;
- Provide oversight and guidance on digital content policy issues to the Content Managers Forum community;
- Help agencies identify and improve top customer tasks, and leverage USA.gov to make those tasks easier to find online;

- Coordinate the work of various digital government Communities of Practice;
- Manage an online community on OMB's MAX wiki for government Web and New Media Professionals to connect and collaborate; and maintain email listservs for members and communities of practice to communicate with each other;
- Support training and workshops through DigitalGov University;
- Coordinate regular monthly Forum conference calls/webinars to discuss common challenges, exchange ideas, share best practices from agencies, and learn from digital government and online communications experts;
- Support an annual conference for government Web and New Media Professionals;
- Host New Media Talks with industry thought leaders, to keep our community informed of the latest tools and technologies;
- Monitor innovative policies and practices used by other governments, looking for opportunities for replication and coordination; and
- Sponsor and/or partner with similar communities of practice such as the Federal CIO Council, MobileGov Community of Practice, Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN), Federal Intranet Content Managers (FICM), National Association of Government Webmasters (NAGW), National Association of State CIOs (NASCIO), K-12 Web Managers, or regional groups.

Relationships

The Federal Web Managers Council depends on regular collaboration with members and stakeholders to ensure that our work products align with our community goals, as well as the broader goal of improving digital government and the online government customer experience. Stakeholders include: White House Office of Digital Strategy; Office of Management and Budget (OMB); CIO Council and agency CIOs; Public Affairs Offices; General Counsels; PLAIN; GSA's Office of Government-wide Policy (which manages .gov domain registration and policies); the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C); the Privacy Committee, NARA, and others.

The Council oversees, supports, and collaborates with three groups that work on digital government communications:

- **Web and New Media community** – Also known as the Content Managers Forum ("The Forum"), it's a vibrant community of over 3,000 Web and New Media professionals from federal, state, local and tribal U.S. Government agencies. Forum members collaborate via the "Web and New Media" community on the [OMB MAX website](#). Members must have an active government email account (.gov, .mil, .edu or state/local equivalent) and participate in the community using that email address. Contractors with an active government email address are permitted to join MAX. Non-sensitive conversations and collaborations are conducted on MAX.
- **Content Managers listserv community** – The listserv is a government-only email list for members to share, ask questions, and discuss issues relevant to their work. Membership is restricted to government employees only (no contractors) to provide a secure venue for government colleagues to discuss sensitive issues such as contracting.
- **Communities of Practice (CoPs)** – Many Forum members participate in and contribute to these topic-based, web-related communities, which are listed on the [HowTo.gov Communities page](#). Each community is led by two Chairs who represent their community on the Federal Web Managers Council, and advise other Council members on issues related to their area of expertise. Most communities meet regularly (usually once a month), to share knowledge, develop best practices and guidance on topics related to their area of expertise, and support the publication and management of those resources on HowTo.gov. Requests to create new communities should be

referred to the Web Council Co-Chairs, who approve new Forum Communities of Practice and appoint new Chairs.

Funding

GSA's Center for Excellence in Digital Government is funded to support the Federal Web Managers Council as part of its larger mission, which includes managing and maintaining HowTo.gov, the MAX Web and New Media Community, DigitalGov University, and other activities related to supporting the U.S. Government web and new media community.

Rules of Operation

These rules govern day-to-day Web Council operations:

- **Philosophy** – “All for one, one for all.” Members support each other through regular communication, collaboration and sharing of information. Recognizing that the public sees individual agencies as “one government,” members work together to provide a seamless online government customer experience to the American public.
- **Organization** - The Federal Web Managers Council has two Co-Chairs, an Executive Sponsor, and limited membership. It oversees the work of the government Web and New Media/Forum community, and several topic-based Communities of Practice (CoPs).
- **Leadership** – [GSA's Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies \(OCSIT\)](#) sponsors the Council, because of its role in managing [HowTo.gov](#), the official guide to managing federal public websites and other digital government assets; and [USA.gov](#), the official online portal for citizen-facing U.S. government information. Day-to-day Web Council operations are managed by two Co-Chairs, one of whom works in [GSA's Center for Excellence in Digital Government \(CEDG\)](#), which is part of OCSIT. The second Co-Chair is elected from current Web Council members, and serves a one-year (FY) term. The Executive Sponsor is the CEDG Director, and coordinates with OMB and the White House Office of Digital Strategy on behalf of the Web Council.
- **Co-Chair Elections** – Nominations for the agency Co-Chair position are opened to current Council members approximately one month before the end of each fiscal year. Nominees must agree to run before their name will be placed on the ballot. The current agency Co-Chair may run, if they wish to serve another term. If more than one nomination is received, an election will be held to determine the new Co-Chair. If no new nominations are received, and the current Co-Chair wishes to stay on, they may serve another term without an election.
- **Membership** – Members are federal employees who have management support to participate and are empowered to speak for their agency on Council matters. To inform decisions with a perspective from other parts of the country, we encourage members from outside of the Washington DC area.

The Web Council is composed of the following member types:

- Web and New Media Directors at Cabinet agencies (up to two members plus a backup)
- Web and New Media Directors at major independent agencies, sub-agencies, and Congressional support agencies that deliver top citizen tasks (one member plus a backup)
- A representative from the OMB eGov Office

- Community of Practice Chairs (up to two Chairs per Community)

Membership is determined as follows:

- Web Directors may be nominated by their agency or selected by Council Co-Chairs. Members may serve as long as they hold a lead Web management position at their agency and regularly participate in Council activities
 - New Media Directors must be nominated and confirmed by the White House Office of Digital Strategy, and may serve as long as they hold their position and regularly participate in Council activities. New Media Directors may act as sole representative for their agency on the Council if the Web Director position at the agency is vacant
 - The OMB eGov representative may be nominated by their agency or selected by Council Co-Chairs
 - CoP Chairs serve a one-year term coinciding with the fiscal year, which may be renewed by Council Co-Chairs if the person wishes to continue to serve. Chairs can serve a dual role as CoP Chair and Agency Rep if they are the sole rep for their agency on the Council. When a Chair resigns, or their term expires, a new Chair will be nominated by the outgoing Chair. Nominees must be current members of the CoP to ensure smooth transfer of knowledge and continuation of operations for the community
- **Participation** – To ensure agencies have adequate representation on the Web Council, members must actively participate by regularly attending Council meetings and conference calls, and representing the Council at their agency. Council Co-Chairs may replace members who are inactive (for example, members who miss several meetings).
 - Members will be designated “inactive” on the Council membership list published on HowTo.gov if they do not attend at least one Council meeting during a three-month period
 - Once designated “inactive”, if members continue to miss a majority of Council meetings, Co-Chairs may ask the person to step down, and the agency should nominate someone else to take their place. Extenuating circumstances will be considered before a member is asked to step down
 - Council Co-Chairs will work with the agency to designate a new rep
 - **Collaboration** – The Council is responsible for basing its decisions and recommendations primarily on input from federal content managers, as well as other staff who support federal websites and digital communications channels, industry thought leaders, expert advisors, other stakeholders, and citizens, as appropriate.
 - **Responsibilities** – Members serve as liaisons from the Council to their respective agencies and related Communities of Practice.
 - Web and New Media Directors are responsible for regularly attending Council meetings, participating in and informing their agencies of Web Council activities, and soliciting input from their agency as needed. They also advocate within their agencies to improve digital services and communications, and collaborate with others on the Web Council to craft relevant policies that further government-wide digital government initiatives
 - CoP Chairs are responsible for informing their community of Council activities and soliciting input from members, as appropriate. Chairs may be tasked to do research or other projects to support the Web Council and Forum.

- **Meetings** – The Web Council usually meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. The Web Council must meet at least once each month, to ensure that issues are dealt with quickly, but generally no more than once per week. CEDG staff will distribute meeting notes after each meeting. Most meetings are conducted via conference call or webinar, and relay conference captioning will be provided upon advance request. In-person meetings are typically held quarterly in Washington, DC.
- **Voting** – All recommendations, positions, and decisions of the Web Council must be approved by the Group as a whole, and Co-Chairs will exercise due diligence to achieve consensus whenever possible. If consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be made by majority vote.
 - Each Agency has an equal voice, and each Agency is allowed one vote per issue. Web Directors and New Media Directors should consult with each other to cast a unified vote for their agency.
 - CoP Chairs (unless they are also the lead Web Manager for their agency) are considered non-voting members, but are expected to advise the Web Council on matters related to their area of expertise.
- **Confidentiality** – Members must keep deliberations (including meetings, listserv, and MAX discussions) confidential until the Co-Chairs or Sponsor clear information for release outside the Council.
- **Backups** – Web and New Media Directors should designate a backup for Council representation and emergencies. Each CoP should have two Chairs, who provide backup for each other at meetings, and when representing their group on the Council.
- **Press relations** – Any Council members who are cleared by their agency may speak to the press on behalf of the Web Council and the Forum, but they should inform the Council Co-Chairs or Sponsor before giving any interviews that may involve talking about Council activities.
- **Annual Conference** – All Council members receive one free, non-transferrable admission to the annual Government Web & New Media Conference, in appreciation for their contributions to the Council. The non-GSA Co-Chair receives an additional pass, so they can also invite a member of their team to the event.

Duties of Web Council Co-Chairs

To support the Web Council, the Forum, and our Communities of Practice, the Web Council Co-Chairs share the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate and lead Web Council webinars/conference calls and meetings;
- Provide guidance to CoP Chairs on how their work contributes to the larger goals of the improving digital government, and lead regular meetings with CoP Chairs to help them build and support their communities;
- Regularly update Forum members about accomplishments and activities, to keep community members informed and motivated, and promote sharing of best practices;
- Coordinate with CoP Chairs to keep CoP-related content current on HowTo.gov;
- Keep the Executive Sponsor informed of major Council activities;
- Draft any reports or papers issued by the Council;
- Host the annual Government Web and New Media Conference; and
- Represent the Web Council in the larger digital government community, and to the public, including public speaking events, interviews, articles, social media outreach, etc.

In addition, the GSA Co-Chair will:

- Oversee management of HowTo.gov, the MAX Web and New Media community, the Forum, Council, and CoP Listservs, and other Council- and Forum-related training, communication and outreach initiatives;
- Lead or assist with planning monthly Forum webinars/conference calls.

The Web Council Co-Chairs may invite members of the Forum or others with specialized knowledge and experience to be involved in specific tasks and activities.

Communities of Practice

The Web Council sponsors several Communities of Practice (CoPs), groups that collaborate around specific areas of digital government such as Accessibility, Social Media, or Metrics; they are led by Chairs who sit on the Web Council. The CoP Chairs support and lead their communities; help to develop best practices and guidance for publication on HowTo.gov; conduct research and provide recommendations to the Council and larger community on matters related to their area of expertise; and recommend policy enhancements to improve digital government and online service delivery.

Current CoPs are listed below. Web Council Co-Chairs may stand up additional CoPs, reorganize existing CoPs, or disband CoPs as needed, to support the government web and new media community in its mission to improve digital government. Visit the [Web Content Groups page on HowTo.gov](#) to learn more.

- Current CoPs, as of June 2012:
 - **Accessibility** – helps agencies deliver accessible web content and digital information in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act
 - **Governance and Operations** – helps agencies improve internal web governance and website management, and leverage the web and digital tools to achieve agency mission and goals
 - **Metrics** – helps government Web Managers define and measure the success of their websites through analysis of site visitor behavior, outcomes, and experience data
 - **Multilingual** – develops best practices to help agencies manage non-English web content
 - **Search** – develops best practices to help agencies improve search engine optimization (SEO), search results and content findability
 - **Social Media** – bringing together social media best practices and resources for the benefit of government agencies
 - **Technology and Innovation** – solving common technical challenges and sharing information on new and upcoming technologies of relevance to the Web and New Media community
 - **Training and Development** – provides advice, research and consultation to DigitalGov University, to improve training for the government Web and New Media community
 - **User Experience** – enhancing the public’s trust in government by proposing and promoting actions to make all government websites useful, accessible, informative, authoritative, and objective
- **CoP Leadership Structure**

- There may be up to two Chairs for each community
 - Chairs must be federal government employees
 - Chairs must be members of the Web and New Media community on MAX, and help to manage their relevant MAX CoP, since that is the primary platform for their community to collaborate
 - If Chairs wish, they may establish a steering committee for their CoP, with membership drawn from government members of the CoP, and operating as the Chairs desire.
 - Chairs may also establish a listserv for their CoP steering committee, which GSA will host and help to manage
- **Duties of CoP Chairs**
 - Serve as subject matter experts and share news, trends, and accomplishments in their area of expertise with Council, Forum, and community members
 - Moderate discussions and respond to questions that arise on the Content Managers Forum listserv and MAX “Web and New Media” community related to their area of expertise
 - Coordinate CoP meetings and work projects
 - Provide regular content updates and reviews for HowTo.gov (see [HowTo.gov Website Governance](#) for content creation and posting guidance)
 - Collaborate with other communities on overlapping areas of interest/expertise
 - If Chairs establish a steering committee, they are responsible for managing its membership, including:
 - Defining specific contribution requirements for members
 - Establishing a regular meeting schedule (monthly or quarterly), giving members ample time to plan
 - Regularly documenting committee activities and accomplishments (via meeting minutes, etc.) and sharing with Web Council Co-Chairs
 - Replacing members who are inactive (for example, members who miss several meetings)
- **CoP Membership**
 - Membership is restricted to U.S. government employees only, and contractors with a valid government email address; private individuals are not allowed
 - Membership in the Web and New Media Community on MAX is required, since much of the community collaboration happens on that platform
 - Members are welcome to be as active or passive as they please, they don’t have to directly contribute; it’s OK for CoP members to just listen and learn
 - To join a community, join the related group in the “Web and New Media Community” on MAX, or contact the CoP Chairs listed on HowTo.gov
- **Support for CoPs**
 - GSA CEDG will support Chairs and CoPs with such tasks as:
 - Creating and supporting collaboration spaces on MAX
 - Hosting listservs
 - Coordinating and running conference calls and webinars for community meetings
 - Editing content for posting on HowTo.gov