

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Washington, DC 20405

ADM 9252.1A

May 14, 2015

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: Employee Associations

1. Purpose. This Order updates basic procedures governing the organization and operation of employee associations within the General Services Administration (GSA). This policy also refers to and includes other professional organizations with chapters nationwide and within GSA.
2. Cancellation. ADM 9252.1 is cancelled.
3. Applicability. This Order applies to each formally organized employee association within the General Services Administration whose primary purpose is to serve the general welfare of its members. This order does not apply to labor organizations established under title 5 USC Chapter 71. Credit unions, small flower, water and gift funds, as well as other informal groups such as those formed for exercise are also excluded from the provisions of this order.
4. Background. Voluntary employee associations and other professional organizations have many beneficial purposes for their members and for the agency through sponsorship of civic, professional, social and recreational activities, emergency loans and grants, employee newspapers, and similar group activities. Funds for the activities of these employee associations have been derived from membership dues, receipts from sponsored activities, donations and miscellaneous sales.
5. Nature of revisions. This Order reflects the following changes:
 - a. The Order is issued to maintain uniform standards in the organization and operation of such associations.
 - b. Obsolete references have been removed and the policy has been updated to include GSA's current nondiscrimination clause.
 - c. Professional organizations with chapters in GSA have been included with employee welfare and recreation associations.
6. Procedures. The guidance governing employee associations within GSA is attached to this Order.
7. Signature.

/S/ _____

DENISE TURNER ROTH

Acting
Administrator

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS

1. General procedures.

a. Employee associations, including professional organizations (collectively referred to as “associations” in this document), within the General Services Administration assist GSA with meeting some employees’ services needs and interests. GSA encourages the establishment of voluntary associations for its employees. Management officials at all levels shall support the provisions of this Order.

b. Employee associations within GSA shall be organized and operated in the best interests of their members, be consistent with the policies outlined in this Order, and reflect positively on GSA.

2. Responsibilities.

a. Chief Administrative Services Officer. The Chief Administrative Services Officer is responsible for administering this Order and for ensuring compliance by employee associations in GSA that include Central Office employees in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

b. Regional Administrator. Each Regional Administrator is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Order by all employee associations within his or her region.

3. Specific procedural guidelines.

a. Authorization.

(1) Existing employee associations. Each existing employee association in GSA may maintain identification with the GSA subject to continuing compliance with this Order. Identification with the GSA includes the use of the name or initials of the agency or its constituent organizational units. Whenever the responsible management official (either the Chief Administrative Services Officer or Regional Administrator) finds that an employee association is not complying with this Order, the Chief Administrative Services Officer shall withdraw the permission for the association to use agency identification and other facilities and privileges. The official may require, as a condition of continued permission, evidence of compliance with this Order.

(2) New employee associations or organizations. Whenever a group of GSA employees proposes to organize a new employee association, it shall provide the responsible management official with copies of proposed bylaws, a copy of their charter and evidence of the ability to comply with this Order.

b. Membership and participation.

(1) Membership in employee associations identified with GSA normally shall be restricted to GSA employees. However, Federal employees of other departments or agencies may be accepted for membership provided that (1) the facility where they are employed does not have a similar association

and (2) the majority of members of the association must be GSA employees. Honorary memberships in GSA employee associations may be conferred by an association upon former members who have retired.

(2) Membership in GSA employee associations and participation in activities sponsored by such associations shall be open to all employees without regard to race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, religion, status as a parent, or sexual orientation.

(3) No employee association that practices discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, religion, status as a parent, or sexual orientation, shall be allowed to make use of the name, sponsorship, or facilities of the GSA.

4. Organization.

a. Control.

(1) Associations shall provide in their constitutions or bylaws a form of organization that ensures democratic control by the membership. Each association shall hold an annual election for the general membership to elect their representatives. The representatives shall nominate and elect the governing body. Only currently elected representatives are eligible for nomination and election to the governing body. The governing bodies shall meet no less than once each quarter to transact association business.

(2) To allow for continuity of membership of the governing body, the terms of the elected representatives shall be for at least 3 years, and the terms of office shall be staggered so that not more than one half of the terms expire during any one year. For organizations who are chapters of a larger national or regional organization whose charter includes terms of office that are inconsistent with this provision, the Chief Administrative Services Officer or Regional Administrator has the discretion to approve a deviation from this Order on a case by case basis.

(3) Associations organized at a regional headquarters city that provide for membership of regional employees at field locations outside the headquarters city shall provide for such field employees to elect representatives as specified above. Field representatives may vote by proxy for the governing body.

b. Name of association. The agency identification (organizational nomenclature or initials) shall be the beginning words of the official name of each GSA employee association: for example, GSA Region 5 Employees Association, Inc. or GSA NARS Association. This requirement is necessary to avoid the appearance that the agency is the incorporated body; for example, Employees Association, GSA, Region 6, Inc.

c. Association and organization management. The bylaws of each employee association shall carefully define the functions and authorities of the elected officers and of the governing body for the management of the association. Copies of bylaws and charters shall be provided to the Office of Administrative Services.

d. Incorporation. Associations in GSA may or may not be incorporated. The governing body of each association should consider the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating under the laws of the State (or other jurisdiction) in which located and determine whether or not the activities of the association justify incorporation.

e. Minutes. Associations shall make available to all members copies of the minutes from meetings that are open to the general membership.

5. Activities.

a. Associations may, within the limits of applicable Federal, State, and local laws, engage in activities that contribute to the general welfare, recreational and other needs of their members without reflecting negatively on the agency.

b. Activities of each association shall be planned to permit reasonable and equitable opportunity for all members to participate. Examples of appropriate activities are:

(1) Employee newspapers or periodicals;

(2) Emergency loans to assist members where necessary amounts cannot be secured readily through regular loan sources such as a GSA credit union or a bank;

(3) Direct grants or loans in extreme hardship or disaster;

(4) Intra-association or inter-association participation in sports, hobbies, or adult education.

(5) Group activities, serving recreational, social, or occupational interests of limited numbers of employees, such as hiking, bridge, and stamp clubs, and similar activities, provided opportunity for participation is extended to all interested members;

(6) Social activities, such as parties, picnics, and dances, provided such activities are open to all members of the association; and

(7) Scholarships for members or the children of members provided scholarships are awarded on a competitive or merit basis under clearly defined standards.

c. Funds of associations shall not be used to finance activities for which appropriated funds are available.

d. Associations may not participate in lobbying or political activity.

e. An employee association in GSA shall not engage in outside vendor sales.

6. Financial management.

a. Accounting systems. Each association shall maintain adequate records of receipts and disbursements of association funds as well as a current inventory of association property [there should not be any retail stock]. The type of accounting system will depend on the volume of funds handled. The system shall provide for accountability and adequate internal controls over cash and property.

b. Periodic audits. The bylaws of each association shall provide for an annual audit of its financial records. This audit may be made by an audit committee whose members are not officers in the association, or it may be performed by a qualified public accounting firm.

c. Financial and audit reports. Each association shall brief, publish, or distribute to members the financial reports resulting from audits. Members shall have the right to inspect a copy of the complete audit report and that right shall be stated in the published report. A copy of each financial report and each audit report shall be furnished to the Chief Administrative Services Officer or the Regional Administrator, as appropriate.

d. Physical security of funds. Each association shall safeguard its funds, preferably by daily deposit in a bank or other insured savings institution, or at least by storage in a safe or adequate, locked facility. Associations should deposit amounts in excess of those required for routine daily operations, rather than retain them in a safe or locked facility overnight, over weekends, or over holiday periods. Custody of keys and knowledge of safe combinations should be entrusted to as few association

officers as is compatible with proper conduct of association activities. Lock and safe combinations should be changed whenever a custodian of keys or safe combinations ceases to be entitled to them.

e. Bonding. The elected officers of an association who have access to association funds in excess of \$1,000 shall be bonded at association expense in a sufficient amount to protect against possible loss.

f. Insurance. Associations that keep on hand or in transit (not in bank deposits) amounts in excess of \$2,000 shall procure burglary and holdup insurance.

g. Commingling of funds. Monies or other assets that do not pertain to the authorized activities or operations of an employee association shall not be commingled with the funds of the association.

h. Limit on cash reserves. Associations shall not be operated for the purpose of accumulating funds. Income is to be used for organizational activities in accordance with the association's purpose and bylaws. Each association should establish with the responsible management official a reserve fund sufficient to maintain its affairs on a sound financial basis.

7. Conflict of interest. An employee association in GSA shall neither seek nor accept gifts or donations from firms or other entities doing or seeking business with GSA.

8. Use of Government facilities.

a. General. GSA will provide associations with facilities and services as may be feasible on a local basis. Agency management officials shall be guided in this matter by the applicable laws and regulations governing the custody and administration of Federal property and facilities.

b. Space. Auditoriums, cafeterias, and similar space shall be made available for group activities upon request with the understanding that any costs, other than minor incidental costs, involved will be paid by the association. Space for business operations shall be made available to associations when the Administrator or Regional Administrator determines that its purpose is in the Government's interest and will not hamper program operations. However, space shall not be made available for the operation of outside vendor sales.

c. Services. The responsible management official may provide services such as the following to employee associations where locally feasible and under appropriate safeguards:

(1) Use of distribution services for association publications, ballots, and announcements when this will not interfere with the efficiency of the Agency.

(2) Use of printing or reproduction when this will not interfere with the efficiency of the Agency. Associations shall make reimbursement for services rendered in accordance with the appropriate price schedules of the Working Capital Fund.

d. Records. Associations shall provide for retention of association records. Such records include articles of incorporation, constitutions, bylaws, minutes of meetings, annual balance sheets and financial statements, reports to the general membership, and policy-making correspondence or documents.

9. Use of official time for association business. Management officials may authorize use of official time for elections and for officers and members of the governing bodies of associations to conduct business in accordance with the following:

a. Use of official time for conducting occasional association business is permitted but must not interfere with the performance of any employee's regular duties.

b. Use of official time shall be confined to matters that cannot reasonably be taken care of outside of official hours.

10. Agency relationships with associations.

a. Administration. Associations are self-sustaining special interest groups, set up by people acting exclusively outside the scope of any official capacity as officers, employees, or agents of the Federal Government. The associations operate within GSA with management's consent, but the associations are not part of GSA and are not Federal entities, and should not be treated as such.

b. Representative. The responsible management official shall designate a liaison representative for each association in his or her area of jurisdiction. The role of a representative is advisory. The association should use the management representative for keeping management informed of the association's activities and problems and for obtaining management's views, if needed.

c. Financial management. The responsible management official may, at the association's request, designate a qualified employee to survey the association's financial management requirements and to recommend methods of meeting them. The association shall be responsible for securing the professional services to implement recommendations.

d. Inspector General reviews. The Office of Inspector General (J) may conduct audits or inspections of any GSA employee association. The OIG would conduct such reviews to determine whether the organization and the operations of the association comply with this Order. The report shall be submitted to the responsible management official. A copy of the report shall be furnished to the governing body of the employee association.