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# Introduction and Helping Orgs

* Welcome! We are the Air Force National Company Grade Officers Council (CGOC), the organization charged with supporting and sustaining all Air Force and Space Force CGOCs at all bases, to include those involving the Guard and Reserve.
  1. Here is our site: <https://www.afcgoc.org/>
  2. Contact info for the Board of Directors is here: <https://www.afcgoc.org/pages/leadership.html>
* Regional CGOCs
  1. Your CGOC is also serviced by a Regional CGOC, which has responsibility for multiple CGOCs based on their respective geographic locations.
  2. Regional CGOC Directors are typically graduated CGOC Presidents or Vice Presidents, and thus have a great deal of experience and expertise with running a CGOC.
  3. So, reach out to your Regional CGOC at any time! In fact, it’s good practice to keep in contact, in case there are any opportunities or areas of trouble that come to light.
  4. If you’re a Guard or Reserve CGOC, consider also contacting the appropriate liaison.
  5. See here for details: <https://www.afcgoc.org/pages/councils.html>
* This document provides guidance and resources to start and operate a CGOC.
* Use the Startup and Operating headings in the Table of Contents as checklists.

# What Does a CGOC Do?

* A CGOC supports the careers, morale, and welfare, of company grade officers. Additionally, it assists and supports the enlisted force, and serves the base and local community.
* Fundamentally though—a CGOC is what its members make it.
* People come and go, CGOCs ebb and flow. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many successful CGOCs… but also spurred more than one.

# Starting a CGOC

## Find an FGO champion

* 1. Find a dedicated FGO who wants to help out with your CGOC.
  2. Your champion can help you work through issues, and may be aware of opportunities that you otherwise won’t hear about.
  3. Squadron commanders and DOs are typically too busy. Try a deputy at a group, or perhaps the Wing Vice. Be creative!

## Start a social media presence and/or chat group

* 1. CGOCs all over the world have had GREAT success by starting Facebook groups, and Whatsapp or Slack chat groups. Find out what people are using, and do that.
  2. Create an informal community to get people interested, and to be able to rapidly respond to questions or requests for help and advice.
  3. For example, the Kaiserslautern Military Community CGOC Whatsapp group has assisted numerous members with last-minute TDYs, network systems approvals, and other issues that might otherwise take weeks of phone calls to resolve. Other chat groups have helped people write bullets and find critical POCs.

## Know the AFI

* 1. CGOCs and other private organizations (POs) are governed by AFI 34-223 and its applicable supplements.
  2. Find the latest version here: <https://www.e-publishing.af.mil/product-index/#/?view=search&keyword=34-223&isObsolete=false&modID=449&tabID=131>
  3. Bottom line, while there is some paperwork to do and some processes to be followed, this is a very permissive AFI.
  4. Stay away from gambling-type events, be wary around alcohol, follow the book by the book when fundraising, and you’ll be alright.
  5. More details on money matters are below!

## Define Roles and Responsibilities

* 1. President and Vice
     1. These should mostly be interchangeable roles.
     2. Responsible for determining priorities and doing most work. Will also delegate a fair bit of work, but beware, it looks very bad if a President or Vice dishes out projects for others to lead but does not do work themselves.
  2. Treasurer
     1. It’s very important to have a single, trustworthy, detail-oriented member to be responsible for financial matters. More on this later!
  3. Secretary
     1. Another important role… keeping meeting minutes, maintaining logs, and assisting with any and all other duties as needed.
  4. Others?
     1. Some CGOCs have larger staffs, with sub-councils for professional development, social, etc. This is probably overkill, but do what makes sense for your situation.
     2. A small but dedicated and productive team is all that’s needed… diffusing responsibility and having TOO many things going on, with too many emails being shotgunned out, can be counter-productive.
     3. And it is important to keep out “bullet hunters” who want to get credit and kudos without doing much work.

## Write Bylaws

* 1. The National CGOC has a template for CGOC bylaws.
  2. This is not prescriptive instruction, but we recommend you leverage it and take it into consideration when writing your CGOC’s bylaws.
  3. <https://www.afcgoc.org/pages/resources.html>
  4. Keep it simple, keep it permissive, and keep it flexible—that way, you don’t paint yourself into a corner or accidentally violate your own rules. Have some protocols for voting and personnel changes; otherwise, go forth and conquer!

## Store important documents digitally

* 1. Everything important should be maintained here in a simple, organized hierarchy.
  2. Some CGOCs use the cloud, others use sharedrives or sharepoints. Be aware that you should not use official resources for POs, and figure out what works for you.
  3. Do what makes sense, maintain security, and don’t complicate things.
  4. Bylaws, meeting minutes, financial transactions, important emails, major decision points, logs of events, etc should all reside here.

## Become an official PO: the FSS PO Monitor

* 1. It is imperative that your CGOC obtain official PO status.
  2. How do you do that? Contact your wing’s FSS PO monitor.
  3. Search the GAL, the FSS’s site, your ODR shop’s site, or call the FSS to find them.
  4. The PO Monitor may keep a roster of official POs and may have processes that you must accomplish in order to stay in their good books.
  5. Should your CGOC pursue 501.c3 status?
     1. Almost certainly not. It’s a lot of paperwork and (often expensive!) overhead for little benefit. Even the National CGOC is not a 501.c3 organization!

## Get an organizational bank account

* 1. Once you are an approved, official PO, make an organizational bank account—likely with a bank on or near your base.
  2. You should probably restrict access to the President, VP, and Treasurer for redundancy and security. That way, you can do things with money regardless of personnel moves.
  3. Build a simple guide to the bank account so that it’s not a scramble to figure out how to hand off access when people change roles.
  4. Leave the Treasurer as the responsible party for money matters. President and VP should only get directly involved as backups.
  5. Never forget to pay your taxes!

## Get an organizational inbox

* 1. We HIGHLY encourage creating an organizational inbox for the CGOC.
  2. That way, it persists and is accessible regardless of individual members’ comings and goings. And that way, newcomers and other orgs can easily find you!

## Create an email distribution list

* 1. Distribution lists are also handy to shotgun out newsletters and other opportunities
  2. Be sure to use the PO disclaimer in all communications. Your FSS PO Monitor should explain what this is; if not, read the AFI!

## Get added to unit inprocessing checklists

* 1. Work with your wing tasking master.
  2. Send out a task to all units on and around your base to add similar to the following verbiage to their inprocessing checklists: “CGOs can connect with the local CGOC by…”
  3. This will make newcomers aware of the CGOC, how to find it, and what it does.

# Operating a CGOC

## Remember: A CGOC is what its members make it.

* 1. Do anything and everything that you want, as frequently or infrequently as you want.
  2. People come and go, CGOCs ebb and flow.

## Voluntary Leadership

* 1. As military members, we are accustomed to doing what we are told, when we are told to do it, how we are told to do it, without necessarily asking why we must do it. This is key to a well-disciplined warfighting force, but can leave us unprepared to motivate and lead people when we can’t actually compel them to do anything.
  2. Play to peoples’ strengths! Let people do what they like and are good at, and encourage them to shore up any weaknesses they may have.
  3. Delegate effectively! A CGOC should not consist of a single overtasked overachiever.
  4. Be flexible! You may have certain goals or wants, but these may not be shared by everyone—or anyone. The word “no” is not an attack, it just means that you might need to try something different.
  5. Sun Tzu, the famous sage and author of The Art of War, said, “Treat your men as you would your own beloved sons, and they will follow you into the deepest valley.”
  6. As well, a CGO in our own United States Armed Services once said that the most important skill to have in any position is human empathy. That CGO is Navy SEAL, Harvard Doctor, NASA Astronaut Lieutenant Johnny Kim.
  7. *Care about your people* and support them, and do what it takes to help them flex to the needs of the mission, their families, and CGOC projects. This may occasionally mean working long hours, tackling complex issues, or fielding emotional phone calls at 9pm.
  8. This is part of the job and part of your duty as an officer. If your people follow you because they *have* to and not because they *want* to, you are failing!

## Products, Processes, Projects, and Meetings

* 1. Do you need to have meetings every week? Do you need to have detailed processes for everything? Do you need to develop, maintain, and sign off on calendars with events projected out for the next two years? NO!
  2. Documenting significant things—bylaws, financial transactions, major decisions, staff changes—that’s important.
  3. But defining complex processes to achieve approval, when a simple, “yep, go for it!” email will do instead… that may be a waste of time.
  4. Meetings are important too, but only to a point. A monthly telecon is probably more than enough; if people can be productive and get things done via emails, don’t make them carve out time to meet.
     1. POs should not really use official resources and are inherently *not* official or governmental duties! Remember to stay out of trouble.
     2. Some suggest a regularly-scheduled monthly meeting, as flexing each meeting does not seem to increase attendance. Do what makes sense to you.
  5. Determine your priorities, and have a plan
     1. Not an inflexible plan, nor a plan that generates more work in creating than it saves by existing, but an idea of what you’re going to do, when you’re going to do it, and most importantly, what it takes to do it.
     2. Some events and ideas are going to take a lot more legwork than others, and should therefore have more time and manpower resources.
     3. On the other hand, it’s trivial to organize a meet up for a burger or beer.

## Write a CGO-centered guide to your base

* 1. This should be a living document that exists on top of official checklists.
  2. Have links and pointers to resources—like this StOpMan does—instead of storing resources owned by other orgs. That way, you always point to the most updated resources, instead of inadvertently archiving obsolete stuff.
  3. These are especially important for “weird” bases—those which are OCONUS, remote, or in deployed locations—since there is a lot of important corporate knowledge.
  4. Use these to socialize information that is otherwise buried, hidden, complex, or ambiguous. Level the learning curve and save people time and heartburn.
  5. Leverage those who are arriving, departing, and those who have been at the base for years. They will know the sticking points and the hidden gems—which is what needs to make it into your guide.

## Spur innovation projects

* 1. Many CGOs are tech-savvy, and there are problems AF-wide that can be solved with a little bit of software and ingenuity.
     1. For example, the vehicle registration process at Ramstein AFB often required people to show up at 4am, and stand in line for 6-8 hours.
     2. An enterprising young Lt implemented the “2Meters App” virtual line solution and saved Airmen HUNDREDS of man-hours—each day!
  2. Network, talk about problems, and be creative.

## Event Suggestions

* 1. Below are just a few things your CGOC can do. Feel free to take these ideas, adjust them, and run with them at will. For additional assistance or advice, contact your Regional CGOC team or the National CGOC!
  2. Professional Development
     1. Bullet writing seminars
     2. Senior leader town halls
     3. Mentorship with FGOs
     4. Top Three involvement
     5. Shadow Program
        1. No, this isn’t special ops type stuff (though maybe it can be!)
        2. Have CGOs shadow squadron or group commanders for a day or two, and be involved with some key decisions or meetings. Then, provide round-table feedback at the end of the day or week.
  3. Social
     1. Dinner and/or drinks in the local area
     2. Bonfires, local (or not so local!) trips
     3. Piggybacking onto Outdoor Rec events
  4. Community Service
     1. On-base blood drives
        1. These are organized by ASBP: <https://www.militaryblood.dod.mil/>
        2. OneBlood and other organizations often have base access already, or can be granted base access.
        3. Be creative, make sure everything is taken care of (access, advertising, parking, approvals, sign ups, etc) and these can be VERY successful.
     2. Collection Bins
        1. There are always charities that need goods. Setting up collection bins is a good way to get participation that isn’t too demanding.
  5. Fundraising
     1. Before fundraising, check the AFI and any approval processes your PO Monitor and base may have. As discussed below, money can be a danger zone!
     2. You may need several months to successfully, legally plan a fundraising event—so engage early and stay on top of things.
     3. Shirts and Coins
        1. Most CGOCs have shirts and/or coins that they design and then buy in bulk, and sell for a small profit.
     4. Base-wide events
        1. Some bases do massive events once or twice a year which can be great opportunities for POs to volunteer or make some money.
        2. Talk to your champion, keep your ears open, and talk to folks who have been on station for a long time to see what’s out there.
        3. Bear in mind that anything that may involve preparing or serving food is likely to require participants to take some food safety coursework. These may be offered by the Med Group on a quarterly or bi-annually basis, so be proactive!

## Get Awards and Recognition

* 1. Your servicing Regional CGOC will solicit for awards each quarter.
  2. If a rockstar CGO deserves additional recognition, contact your Regional CGOC ASAP.

## Maintain Records for Posterity

* 1. Keep track of what you have done and how successful it was, and how you did it. This assists with transition and also acts as fodder for bullets.
  2. Also, retain election records, significant decisions, and other important documents.
  3. Store logs in the digital location you created when starting your CGOC.

## Beware: Pitfalls and Danger Zones

* 1. Staff Changes and Elections
     1. It’s important to switch out staff approximately once a year, and to give others a chance at leadership. Having a President and Vice swap roles for two or three years at a stretch is a very bad image, and prevents other ideas and leadership styles from being tested out.
     2. Elections, advertised some months out, are the best way to fairly onboard new CGOC leaders.
     3. Graduated CGOC leaders can certainly stay involved to offer advice, but avoid making decisions—let go so a new generation of leadership can take the reins.
  2. Money
     1. This is the one thing that can easily get well-intentioned people into trouble.
     2. Be aware of the AFI! Know the limits of what you can and can’t do, especially in regards to lottery events, alcohol, fundraising, and activities off-base.
     3. This is why it’s VERY important to have a good Treasurer, with minimal “pots” of money. Keep things simple, keep documentation, and stay safe.
     4. Use your organizational bank account and be responsible.
     5. Note that at least one CGOC has decided AGAINST having or maintaining funds of any sort. This sidesteps a lot of potential trouble areas (not to mention legwork and administrivia) and while they don’t have money to spend on events, they are able to work around that just fine.
  3. Supporting the Enlisted Force
     1. CGOCs should assist the enlisted force—especially by providing information and guidance on commissioning opportunities.
     2. This is especially important in the Guard and Reserve world, because commissioning is especially esoteric and difficult to navigate.
     3. Reach out to the Top Three, junior enlisted orgs, and create events to network and create mentors for enlisted members… and for officers. Remember, SNCOs are charged with growing and maturing CGOs!
  4. Bridging the Rated/Non-Rated Divide
     1. This is an Air Force-wide problem.
     2. Do your level best to include both rated and non-rated members. Work with the Ops Group commander, and leverage your champion!

# Conclusion

* CGOCs have the capability to foster unparalleled career opportunities, lifelong friendships, and much, much more. Starting and running one does not need to be difficult and can be very rewarding for all those involved.
* We in your Regional CGOC and National CGOC are always prepared to assist and support however we can. Contact us at any time—we *want* to help!
* Go forth and carpe diem!