



# BRANCH HANDBOOK



## INTRODUCTION

Participating in a professional organization helps a person grow professionally, and participating at a local level not only supplements benefits available at the national level, but offers additional benefits. Through a Branch, you can regularly exchange ideas with fellow industry professionals, impact local public policy, tour private properties you might not otherwise see, and give to the local community.

At regular meetings, guest speakers and branch members discuss topics of local interest, such as management techniques, new plant introductions, new products, and weather related issues. Branch meetings enable members to gather with fellow professionals and their families for social events such as picnics, holiday socials, etc. Branches serve as a united voice in local legislation impacting our industry such as water use, noise reduction, pesticide application, and other regulatory matters. Branches are also able to establish scholarships to be given to local horticulture students, participate/organize clean-up events, and build community gardens.

**PGMS® is organized with a national headquarters and local branches. We exist to help you grow within your profession – the Green Industry.**

## HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY

Throughout its more than 100-year history, PGMS® and its predecessor organization have been marked with remarkable purpose and resilience, even in difficult times. Always, there were several strong reasons for being: providing broad-based leadership in the "Green" movement, professional education, and networking with fellow professionals.

Gardeners and seed men held meetings in almost every county as early as 1898, usually at beer gardens in conjunction with flower shows, which were then very popular. In 1902 and 1903, respectively, meetings were held in the Smith and McNeil Hotel and the Grand Union Hotel in New York City. The first reading of by-laws was in the Gardener's Chronicle, the official publication of the then fledgling National Association of Gardeners (N.A.G.), PGMS®' direct predecessor organization. The first N.A.G. conference was held in 1905, where, according to the Chronicle, "nearly a thousand gardeners came together for mutual improvement, and not just from New York but from 18 states."

The N.A.G. grew steadily from 1905 to 1911, and on July 22nd, 1911 in New Jersey, the organization received its official certificate of incorporation. From the beginning, it established Branches, which grew steadily. In 1911, the organization started a school garden movement and began advertising the gardening profession. In

1921, a campaign was waged to combat the signboard along the highways. Many years later, the Society gave its "Gold Medal Award" for the same effort to First Lady Ladybird Johnson.

In 1926, the Society sponsored the planting of 13 trees in Independence Square in Philadelphia in commemoration of the then 150 years of American Independence, and as living monuments to the 13 original states. In 1928, the nearby West Chester, PA Branch hosted the conference, which had 468 registrations, a record at that time. The following year, the annual conference was held in Canada, with the banquet, counting 652 in attendance, designated as "International Night." An emotional highlight of the evening was the announcement of the International Peace Garden. Following three more years of hard work and many dollars, the garden was dedicated on July 14, 1932.

The years just prior to World War II saw a very stable organization. Following the war, attention was paid to rebuilding the Society, as the membership had been severely depleted, and members were steadily added through considerable effort.

On January 1, 1949, the first issue of the organization's Professional Gardener publication was sent to members. Meanwhile, the Peace Garden was growing well, and the

Society had purchased 2,000 roses for it, and numbers of other organizations were stimulated to donate money and time to help with the effort. In 1953, the national office was moved to Mineola, New York, and in 1957, a bronze plaque was erected at the Peace Garden in the Society's name. In 1960, the word "professional" was added to the organization's name, and N.A.G. became the Professional Gardeners Association. In 1970, the name Professional Grounds Management Society® officially replaced the National Association of Gardeners.

Another big change took place in 1976, when the office of the Executive Director was established, with that year's President, Allan Shulder, taking on the task on a part time basis. He would later become the Society's first full-time Executive Director in 1985.

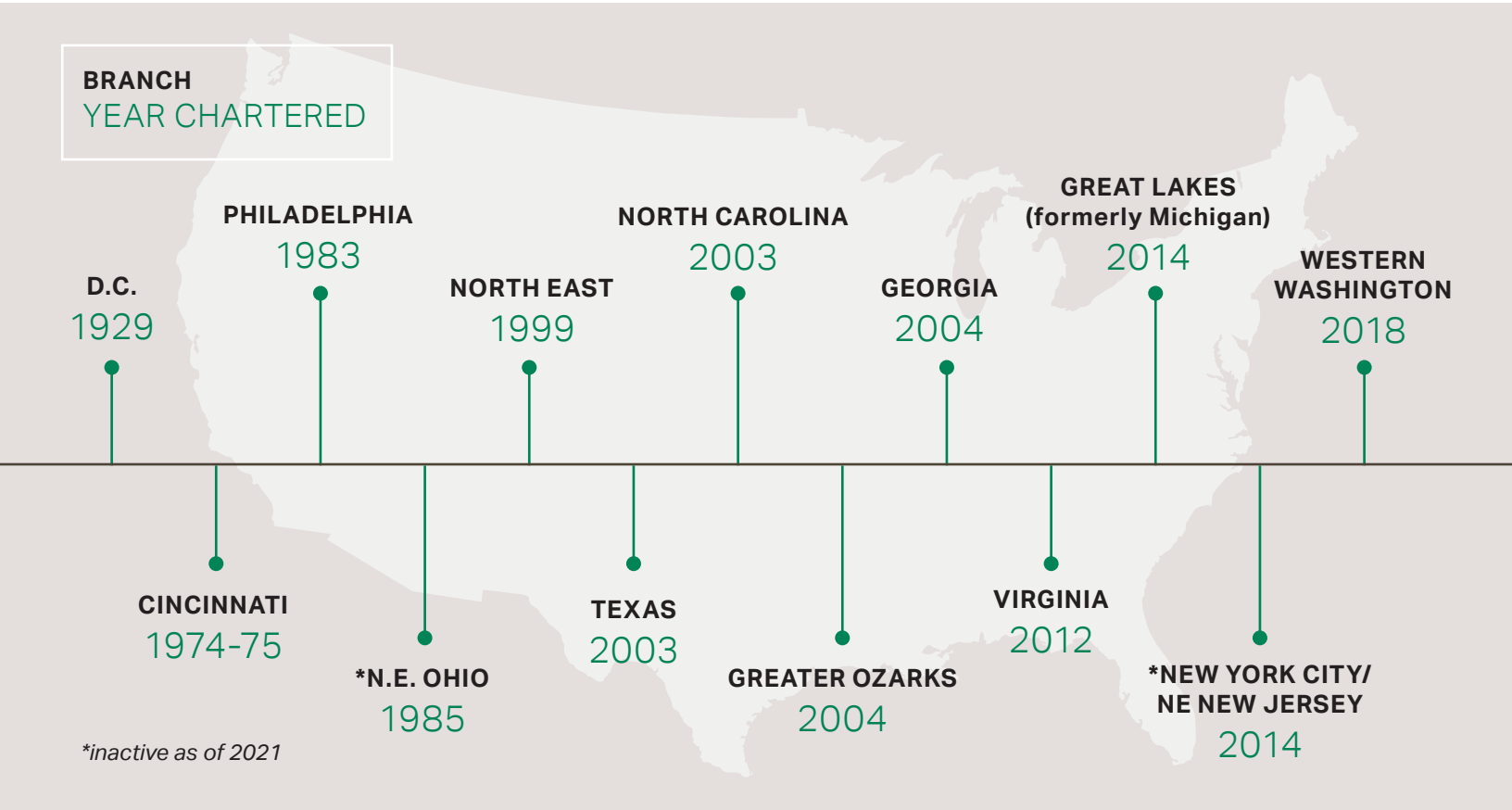
By the early 1990s, membership topped 1,200, with members in all 50 states, Canada, and several countries worldwide and became about equally diverse between independent contractors and on-staff grounds professionals. In 2000, another change occurred with the hiring of an association management firm, the Joseph E. Shaner Company, to assist the Board of Directors with the operation of the Society. The Society is currently managed by Stringfellow Management Group (SMG), following the retirement of the former management firm's owners.

Indicative of its leadership, in 2007, PGMS® became associated with the Sustainable Sites Initiatives and is working to advance sustainability in grounds management programs. In 2014, the Society's Landscape Management and Operations Accreditation program recognized its first accredited campus, the University of Delaware (2-star).

## ■ BRANCH HISTORY

Branches have been a vital part of both the National Association of Gardeners and the Professional Grounds Management Society® over the years. Although we do not have the exact charter dates for three of our branches, we do know that the Washington, D.C. Branch is more than 50 years of age. It also has the distinction of being part of the original gardening group.

During the history of both societies, there have been active branches located across the U.S. The list below indicates those that are in existence today\*.



## ■ DEVELOPING A BRANCH



Congratulations! You have taken the first steps in creating a new PGMS® Branch by taking the initiative to contact PGMS® headquarters. In addition to this handbook, PGMS® will supply you with a list of members in your geographic area, and membership brochures. There are many members who will be available as a resource while your Branch grows.

The following is an outline of suggested steps to become a PGMS® Branch.

- ✓ Contact PGMS® Headquarters for support. PGMS® Headquarters will contact the appropriate Regional Director so they may provide additional support. Headquarters will also forward promotional pieces and a listing of local PGMS® members.
- ✓ PGMS® will financially support development. \$1,000 will be provided to the Branch once chartered (funds managed by headquarters) to help assist in the development of initial meetings.
- ✓ Send out a questionnaire to the local membership and anyone else you know that might be interested in joining PGMS® and participating in their local PGMS® Branch.
- ✓ Create a steering committee of PGMS® members to lead the group through the development process.
- ✓ Send a letter of intent to PGMS® Headquarters requesting a Branch Charter. This petition should be signed by at least eight (8) PGMS® members.
- ✓ At the first public meeting, include an educational session and election of the Officers of the Branch. Include a pre-printed ballot with names of potential candidates (selected by the steering committee) for Officer positions and listing of potential committees. Sample ballot is enclosed.
- ✓ At the second public meeting, include an education session or tour and present the proposed Branch Policies and Procedures.
- ✓ Submit list of elected Officers and adopted Policies and Procedures for acceptance by the PGMS® Board and issuing of Branch Charter.
- ✓ Branch Charter to be presented at the PGMS® Annual School of Grounds Management.
- ✓ Enjoy networking, education and collaboration with local grounds professionals!

## ■ MAINTAINING A BRANCH

- ✓ Comply with all PGMS® National Bylaws and Policies as adopted by the members and Board of Directors.
- ✓ At least 15 Active Members. (A requirement for the establishment of a Branch, this minimum number may be waived by the National Board of Directors for a period of not more than one year based on special circumstances in a particular Branch area.)
- ✓ Take minutes of all Board and general membership meetings of the Branch and file of copy of same with the National Headquarters Office.
- ✓ Report the results of elections for officers and/or directors (or any special appointments of officers and or directors) to the National Headquarters Office within 15 days of the election or appointment.
- ✓ Conduct at least three (3) general membership meetings (education programs, etc.) annually.
- ✓ At least one member of each Branch must attend that PGMS® School of Grounds Management Annual Conference (held in conjunction with Equip Exposition in Louisville, KY and attend the PGMS® Branch Development Session which will be held during this event. (It is desirous, although not required, that the person who will be president of the Branch in the ensuing year be the individual who represents the Branch in meeting this requirement. As such, PGMS® Headquarters will pay the registration fees for this President should he or she be the Branch's representative designee.)
- ✓ Promote among all the members of the Branch attendance to the PGMS® School of Grounds Management (Annual and Summer).



## ■ SAMPLE ORGANIZING SURVEY

Dear PGMS® Member or potential member,

\_\_\_\_\_ has expressed interest in forming a PGMS® Branch in your geographic area. We would like your feedback. Please respond to the questions below by \_\_\_\_\_. Responses can be emailed to \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Would you attend at least 3 meetings a year?
2. Are you interested in becoming an Officer, attending all regular meetings and board meetings in order to determine the direction and priorities of the Branch?
3. Would you work on a committee, such as the scholarship, social, refreshments, or newsletter committee?
4. Would you be willing to host a meeting?
5. Would you be interested in sponsoring a meeting?
6. Would you speak at a meeting regarding your area of expertise?

PGMS® requires 15 member signatures in order to allocate resources to forming a new Branch. If you are interested in seeing a Branch formed in our area, please sign below.

Signature:

Full Name:

Company/Address:

Email:

Phone:

## ■ FIRST “REGULAR” MEETING STRATEGIES

Finding enthusiastic, informative people to speak on interesting topics is one of the most important items in maintaining an active membership. This can also attract persons wishing to increase their knowledge and contacts within our trade. Vendors, extension specialists, members, local merchants, and educational professionals, can all be excellent resources. The main thing to remember is to keep it current. This will maintain an active interest in the subject, as it remains pertinent to your membership.

### Possible Meeting Topics

Bulbs and Annuals	Safety in Working around Electricity	Golf Courses
Snow and Ice Removal	Motivation and Team Effectiveness	College and Universities
Ornamental Shrubs	Selecting Plant Material	Estates and private homes
Invasive Plant/Insect Update	Yard Waste Recycling	Stadiums and Sports Complexes
Computer-aided Design for Landscapes	Public Safety	Parks
Sports Turf Maintenance	Landscape Photography	Nurseries
Outdoor Lighting	Urban Soils	Community Gardens
Long-term effects of Drought	Ornamental Diseases	Cemeteries
Computers in Turf Management	Weather	Vendor sites
Spring Garden Preview	Native Plants	Historic Locations
Pesticide Safety and Regulations	Hardscapes	Test plots
Campus Management	Perennials	New or renovated facilities
Disposal of Waste Oil and Solvents	Tours of Special Sites	Municipal Maintenance Facilities
Communication, Leadership	Sustainability Issues	Composting Facilities
Environmental Issues	Possible Meeting Locations	Corporate Campuses
Tree Pruning and Maintenance	Local Garden Centers	Other local places of interest

### Possible Meeting Locations

Local Garden Centers	Nurseries	New or renovated facilities
Golf Courses	Community Gardens	Municipal Maintenance Facilities
College and Universities	Cemeteries	Composting Facilities
Estates and private homes	Vendor sites	Corporate Campuses
Stadiums and Sports Complexes	Historic Locations	Other local places of interest
Parks	Test plots	

### Hosts

PGMS® meetings are generally hosted by member companies. The Board can help you find a location for the meeting if you don't have a location available to you. You may present a program of your own, or you may enlist the assistance of the Program Committee. Meeting hosts usually provide the beverages and food. This can be anything from snacks to a full-fledged meal depending on your resources. Manufacturers or suppliers often are willing to help supply the food for a promotional opportunity.

## Meeting Notice

It is now time to produce and email out your meeting notices. Pick your time, set your date and market your meeting. All branches are provided a webpage on the PGMS® website along with the ability to set up their own online events to market the event and track registration. If necessary, insert an alternate date or a contact in case of the need to cancel or postpone to an alternate date. Also remember to notify your meeting site and speaker in case of cancellation. You may want to use the cancellation policy for the schools in your area. Headquarters can also assist in helping to email branch members and setting up the event online to manage RSVPs and helping to promote the event.

### **SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER -**

*"The meeting of the \_\_\_\_\_ branch of the Professional Grounds Management Society® will now come to order."*

#### **2. PROGRAM - INTRODUCTION BY PROGRAM CHAIRMAN** (typically the Vice President).

#### **3. SUBMISSION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING.**

*"Are there any additions or corrections to these minutes?" (If not) "The minutes stand "accepted" as submitted. (Note – PGMS® Headquarters can assist in providing a minutes template if needed).*

#### **4. TREASURER'S REPORT**

*Note – The Treasurer will need to contact PGMS® Headquarters for updated financials with at least 10 business days' notice prior to the report being needed.*

#### **5. CORRESPONDENCE**

#### **6. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND NEW MEMBERS**

#### **7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **8. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- A. Standing Committees
- B. Old Committees

#### **9. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **10. NATIONAL PGMS® UPDATE –**

Upcoming conferences/webinars; program deadlines, such as Green Star Awards® and Scholarships, etc.

#### **11. PROGRAM FOR NEXT MEETING**

#### **12. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING**

#### **13. THANK HOSTS AND SPONSORS AND PROVIDE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE BRANCH.**

#### **14. MOTION TO ADJOURN**

## First Meeting Check List

Below is a list of items, which you can check against, for the organization of your meeting. You may wish to add or delete items in order to personalize your meeting:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm the time and place with the speaker for the meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Have a meeting agenda or program.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure someone is assigned to food and drinks.           | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up area after meeting.                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a host welcome guests and members.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Send out thank you letters to host, speaker, etc. |

# ■ ELECTIONS OF BRANCH LEADERS & BOARD MEMBERS

The election process is probably the single most important and repetitive act that transpires, based upon the Branch's policies and procedures. Selection of candidates for the leadership of your organization will determine the goals and future progress of the entire group. These are recommended steps after the first year of Branch operations.

## Appoint Search Committee

Prior to any election, the Chairperson should appoint a search committee that will organize the upcoming elections. This group will be responsible for the solicitation of names and presentation of those names who have accepted nomination for offices, and board positions. Nomination forms are usually distributed through your newsletter or meeting notices. Important: all candidates must have memberships in good standing with PGMS®. The committee can contact [info@pgms.org](mailto:info@pgms.org) to verify member status.

At this point the committee must confirm the acceptance of nominees to run for the designated office. At this same time the list of nominees can be presented with a brief description of their background, prior offices held and other pertinent information. Enough time should be allowed for members to review and become familiar with the various nominees.

E-voting is allowed, if unable to attend the meeting, and the email should include how the members are to be notified of the outcome.

The ballots should be kept sealed, until the committee convenes to tabulate the votes. At this time the committee notifies the membership as to the outcome of the vote. There may be a motion to destroy the votes, which would take place at this time.

Election at a meeting requires notification of members as to the date and time of the election. The ballots, should include areas for write-in votes and be distributed to members present. The process for the actual meeting and voting will vary with each branch but should be controlled by Robert's Rules of Order.

The last item that needs to be attended to is that of marketing the election of officers in trade papers, magazines and local newspapers. This may not be the responsibility of the committee, but is important for the promotion of the organization and those persons holding office.

## Election of Officers / Nomination Ballot

The following have expressed an interest in serving on our board. Please take the time to review the candidates and if there is anyone else that you feel would be an asset to our organization, we would encourage your write-in vote for that position. Please take the time to vote.

President (Candidate's Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

Vice President (Candidate's Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary (Candidate's Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer (Candidate's Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Write-in \_\_\_\_\_

Directors (Candidates Names) \_\_\_\_\_

Write in \_\_\_\_\_





## ■ IMPORTANT BRANCH POLICIES

### To Remain an Active Branch

#### Branch Board

1. Branches must submit their Board of Directors no later than February 1 of each year, which will be updated on the PGMS® website by staff.
2. In the event that there are vacancies on a Branch Board, the positions of President, Vice-President and Treasurer will be prioritized as mandatory filled seats.

#### Meetings

1. Branches must hold at least three meetings per year (in person or virtual). PGMS® strongly encourages each Branch to participate in a community service event.
2. Branches must submit their scheduled meetings no less than one month prior to the event to [info@pgms.org](mailto:info@pgms.org) so that the webpage can be updated.
3. For virtual meetings, Branches are encouraged to have their own Zoom accounts, which can be purchased utilizing branch funds.
4. Branches may partner with other Branches, green industry and/or non-profit organizations to offer educational opportunities and events to Branch members. Please note that any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or similar agreement with a third party entity should be presented to the Regional Director Representative for appropriate approval.

#### Branch Membership

1. Branches must have a minimum of fifteen (15) members in good standing at all times.

#### When A Branch is Considered In-Active

It is the Society's goal that Branches remain active year-round but circumstances occur where a Branch may no longer meet the criteria of an active branch. One of following criteria may render a branch "inactive," placing the Branch on suspended status:

1. Branch does not have active leadership:
  - a. Board of Directors does not have a President, Vice-President and Treasurer and/or;
  - b. President, Vice-President, and/or Treasurer are not members in good standing with PGMS® (failed to renew).
  - c. Officer names are not submitted to [info@pgms.org](mailto:info@pgms.org).
  - d. Board reports are not submitted. Failure to submit two (2) consecutive board reports upon the request of the Regional Director will result in the Branch being placed on inactive status.
2. Are not holding a minimum of three (3) meetings a year;
3. There are less than fifteen (15) members in good standing in the Branch.



### Inactive Branch Procedures:

A Branch will be notified in writing (via email) by the appropriate Regional Director that their Branch has been identified as not meeting the criteria needed to be an active Branch. At that time, the Branch will be given three (3) months to:

1. Identify suitable leadership to serve in a Board capacity; and/or
2. Schedule a meeting (either virtual or in-person); and/or
3. Recruit new members and/or encourage lapsed member to renew to meet 15 member criteria.

If there is no action or acknowledgement of the Regional Director's email within three (3) months of the initial notification, the Regional Director shall notify the National Board of Directors at the next meeting of the Board that the Branch is recommended to be placed on suspended status based on outlined policy. At that time, the Branch will be placed on suspended status for one (1) year, during which time they are given the opportunity to meet the active Branch requirements.

If the Branch's leadership acknowledges the Regional Director's email, a plan to bring the Branch back to active status will be created in conjunction with the Branch and Regional Director. The time period to correct deficiencies cannot exceed six (6) months. If the Branch is not brought to active status within six (6) months after the plan is finalized and agreed upon, the Regional Director shall notify the National Board of Directors at the next meeting of the Board, that the Branch is recommended to be placed on suspended status based on outlined policy. At that time, the Branch will be placed on suspended status for one (1) year, during which time they are given the opportunity to meet the active Branch requirements.

At the beginning of the suspension period, all Branch members of the affected Branch will be notified of the suspension by email detailing the actions needed to regain active status. During the period of suspension, the appropriate Regional Director shall have the authority to search for, and replace any leadership in the Branch in an effort to bring the branch back to active status. They may also schedule meetings during this time and use Branch funds in an effort to host meetings, gain membership, and recruit leadership. Any leadership spots appointed in this manner will be up for election of a full term before the next February reporting period. It is expected, but not required, of the Regional Director to contact previous Branch Leadership in this effort. All changes will be announced to the branch through their email addresses filed with PGMS®.

If at the end of the one (1) year suspension, the Branch does not meet active Branch requirements, the Branch shall not be listed on the Society's annual dues invoice for dues allocation and shall remain suspended for an additional year (not to exceed two consecutive years) during which time they are given the opportunity to meet the active Branch requirements.

Should a suspended Branch still not meet the active Branch requirements by the end of their second year of consecutive suspension, the Branch's funds will be absorbed into the Society's National Branch Development Fund and the Branch's charter will be revoked.





## ■ MISCELLANEOUS

### PGMS® Branch Funds

PGMS® National shall provide a one-time sum of \$1,000 to aid in the development of a branch. Additional branch revenue may come in twice a year from member dues (approximately April 1 and October 1).

Each participating branch member shall have a portion of their dues allocated to the branch: Active Member -\$50; Affiliate Member - \$25; Institutional Membership - \$75; Branch Local Supplier - \$50; Corporate Memberships will have half the regular member portion allocated to a Branch.

Branches can also charge a reasonable fee to attend branch meetings and the cost for a non-member to attend a branch meeting should be higher than the member rate.

### PGMS® Branch and Logo Usage

PGMS® is a registered trademark and use of the trademark is permitted by Branches for the purposes of email signatures, promotional attire and signage. For the use of the PGMS® logo on external conference promotions, please consult with PGMS® headquarters. Branches may develop their own logo. Please contact PGMS® headquarters for further information on logo development as it is subject to board approval prior to use.



### PGMS® Branch Webpage

Each PGMS® Branch has their own webpage. Please email branch information and upcoming meeting information to [info@pgms.org](mailto:info@pgms.org).

### Questions?

Please contact [info@pgms.org](mailto:info@pgms.org) or your Regional Director with any questions, comments or concerns. We are here to help!







professional grounds  
management society®

P: 443-966-3852

[info@pgms.org](mailto:info@pgms.org)

[www.pgms.org](http://www.pgms.org)