



Regional Coordinator Handbook



Contents

- Contents1
- Purpose of this Handbook1
- 2019-2020 Regional Coordinators2
- Roles and Responsibilities2
 - Definition2
 - Job Description2
 - Time Commitment.....2
- First Steps: Things to Do After You’re Elected3
- What am I supposed to Do?4
 - Member Outreach and Engagement4
 - Chapter Maintenance4
 - Evaluate Annual Reports5
 - Plan a Spring Conference.....5
 - Administer the Mark of Excellence Awards.....5
- General Calendar6
- Spring Conference Planning.....7
- Mark of Excellence Awards.....7
- Regional Fund Oversight.....7

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is to guide and inform you during your time as a regional coordinator. At any point, should you have questions about something not listed, please contact SPJ HQ for direction. Or, reach out to another regional coordinator or the former director in your respective region.

2019 – 2020 Regional Coordinators

- Region 1 Coordinator – Jane Primerano
- Region 2 Coordinator – Stephenie Overman
- Region 3 Coordinator – Michael Koretzky
- Region 4 Coordinator – Paul Kostyu
- Region 5 Coordinator – Amy Merrick
- Region 6 Coordinator – Joseph Radske
- Region 7 Coordinator – Leah Wankum
- Region 8 Coordinator – Kathryn Jones
- Region 9 Coordinator – Ed Otte
- Region 10 Coordinator – Donald W. Meyers
- Region 11 Coordinator – Deb Krol
- Region 12 Coordinator – Jennifer Ellis

Roles and Responsibilities

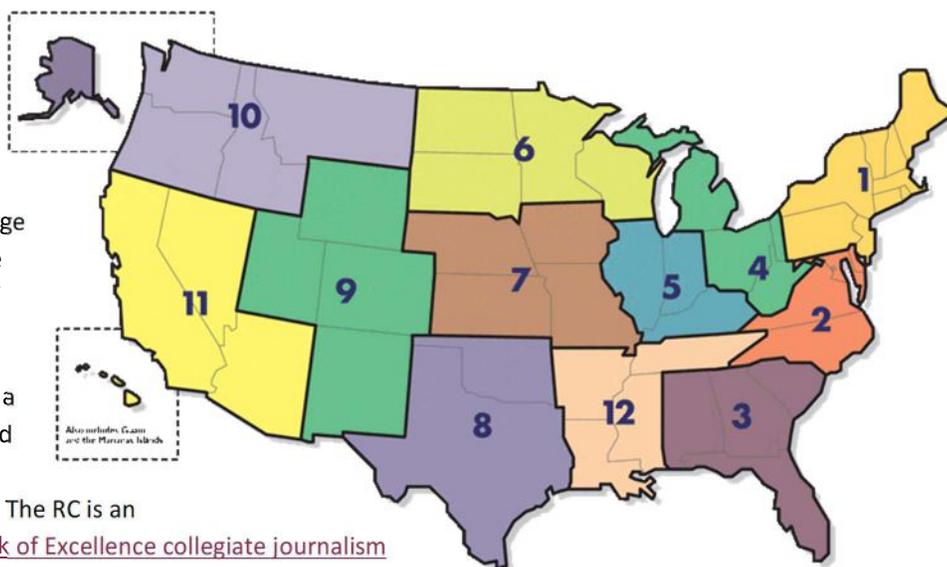
Definition

A regional coordinator (RC) is an elected leader who oversees one of SPJ's 12 regions; maintains the health of chapters and works to connect with members in the region; and serves on the national board of directors.

Job Description

RCs are elected by members of their region to a two-year term. There is no term limit imposed on an RC, but it is healthy to encourage interest in the position amidst the region for the long-term health of the Society.

During that term the RC serves as a liaison between the national board and the members, along with chapters, within his or her region. The RC is an administrator of the regional [Mark of Excellence collegiate journalism contest](#), the coordinator of the regional conference, reviewer of chapter Annual Reports within the region and a national board member who must fulfill the requirements as such.



Time Commitment

Be prepared for a varied time schedule. For example, you might go a few weeks without anything SPJ-related. Other times, such as during Mark of Excellence Awards, Regional Conferences and Annual Reports, you'll be spending several hours per week on planning or coordinating.

A yearly calendar is included in this handbook but isn't written in stone and should just be used as a resource. In general, the times of heaviest activity are: immediately following the election in the fall (see below – First Steps), preparation for the Regional Conference and Mark of Excellence Awards coordinating, and a late-Spring review of chapter Annual Reports.

Bottom line – you drive the ship. The time you put into your position – planning programs, reaching out to members and chapters, answering questions and providing support, engaging in SPJ on different levels like committees or communities – will be reflected in the success of your region.

First Steps: Things to Do After You're Elected

For new RCs, there's a steep learning curve. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Call your predecessor.** Speak with the person who held the position immediately prior to you to pick their brain. Get info about:
 - Members in the region
 - Chapters in the region
 - Events that are held on a regional level
 - Regional bank accounts
 - Regional conferences
- **Appoint a deputy or associate regional coordinator.** Seriously, some of this stuff is hard work and can be time consuming (regional conferences, Mark of Excellence Awards)
 - Assign someone to be your regional conference chair
 - Assign someone to be your Mark of Excellence coordinator (SPJ pays \$300 for this position)
 - Thank them in advance
- **Get a roster from HQ.** Your most important job is to connect with the members in your region. You can't do that without a list of who those people are. Until we have an easy way to yank that off the website, just ask Caroline Escobar, manager of membership and chapters for that information. cescobar@spj.org
- **Plan programs.** Part of your gig is being able to take SPJ's message and spread it far and wide in your region. Chapters have some of your territory covered, so spend time seeking out desolate areas in need of SPJ and go do something awesome.
 - Work with a local newsroom in an area that doesn't have a chapter. Then do a brown-bag session over lunch.
 - Find a few enthusiastic members who will help you plan a program in an area where there is no chapter.
 - Work with a chapter to create a "traveling program," where you help with resources and the chapter makes two or three stops around the state.
 - Host a happy hour for local journos who aren't served by a chapter

- **Set goals.** You can't accomplish everything in two short years, so make sure you start off by setting measurable, realistic goals for your term. If you're unsure of whether something has been tried before, consult HQ or your predecessor.

What am I supposed to Do?

Member Outreach and Engagement

You're representing all the members in your region, so the heart of your work as an RC should be focused on connecting with them, providing them with tools and training and sharing the core missions of SPJ. Give them a link to the Society and a reason to become and stay members.

- Make it a point to have frequent, regular communication with members in your region. Use whatever format works for you – from BuzzFeed list style to a traditional newsletter – to get out ideas and keep in constant contact.
- Talk to people in your region. Reach out ASAP. Find out what they need and want. Seek out areas without strong SPJ presence like a chapter and do something great there.
 - Send an email (use things like [MailChimp](#), [Constant Contact](#), etc., to keep your database and mailing list straight)
 - Start (or takeover) your region's social media
- Travel to areas without a local chapter to meet with members, host programming or meet-ups. As an RC you have a stipend to use for travel (see Stipend Information) to these locations. Use it!
- Ask questions of your people. Find out what they need, what struggles they're facing, if there's something your region needs to speak out about. You're then able to set your goals and work toward making sure that all members of your region feel served well by SPJ.
- Use your roster list for all the members in your region to reach out.

Chapter Maintenance

Chapters are also important to you as an RC. Though the manager of membership and chapters at SPJ HQ is in frequent contact with the chapter to assist with all needs, you've got boots on the ground right in their backyard. Because of this, you're able to assist them with location-specific needs, provide seed money (if applicable) to new chapters and be a guidepost for programming, outreach and member recruitment.

- Keep in close contact with your chapter leaders. If you notice a change in leadership, let SPJ HQ know so things can stay up to date.
- Make some regular visits to chapter events. Putting a face to the name is critical and will give chapter leaders the notion that they can lean on you for support.
- Help chapters make contacts with other national SPJers for programming purposes. Use your large national network to provide key resources to chapters.
- Remind your chapters of important information – annual reports, etc.
- Make sure you're working with chapters to help them meet [the minimum requirements](#) to remain in good standing.
- Provide support and advice to those who would like to start a chapter. Information about forming a chapter, along with the requirements, [can be found here](#).

Evaluate Annual Reports

Each year, every SPJ chapter is required to submit an annual report using the form provided by SPJ HQ. This report gives us important information about the chapter: if they're still alive, how their finances are doing, what programs they're hosting, any struggles or challenges and successes that they're proud of. These reports are also used to determine if chapters met [the minimum requirements](#) to be in good standing with the Society and, in turn, have authorized delegates at the national convention.

The Process

Annual reports are usually due in the Spring (think early May) and are sent to SPJ HQ electronically. Once they have been processed, reports are shared with RCs via Google Drive.

Once you have access to the files, you'll review each report and make nomination selections for chapter awards.

*A small chapter is less than 75 members. A large chapter is more than 75 members.

Plan a Regional Conference

A [conference for members in your region](#) is all your show. Time, date and programming are up to you or someone you appoint as coordinator (can be an individual, committee or chapter). Use the Regional Conference Guide to assist you in your planning purposes.

If you remember nothing else about regional conferences, please pay careful attention to your dates. Because most regions honor the Mark of Excellence Award winners during their conferences, you'll need to make sure there's enough time to process entries, coordinate judging and have certificates ready to go. What we're really saying is: **avoid March for regional conferences.** And, **avoid the spring board meeting, usually in April.**

One last thing to stress before you move on: **appoint someone or a group of someones to help you with the conference.** It's a win-win. You're getting the assistance you need, which makes you less stressed and overworked, and you're showing someone else the ropes, which can lead to better retention and perhaps a future board member.

Administer the Mark of Excellence Awards

The [Mark of Excellence Awards](#) is the annual contest for collegiate journalists. Each region appoints a contest coordinator, has entries judged (preferably outside the region) and determines regional winners. A few fun facts:

- Entries and judging are completed online.
- Regional winners are announced in the Spring and typically honored at regional conferences.
- First-place winners in each region go on to compete in the national Mark of Excellence Awards judging.
- National winners are announced in May and honored during the Student Union at the national convention.
- All MOE entry fees are processed/retained by SPJ HQ.

Don't worry – SPJ HQ won't leave you flying blind. Our awards coordinator, Matthew Kent, will be in touch with plenty of time to provide you with details and task lists, as well as be available during the whole process for support.

General Calendar

Don't quote any of this – your SPJ timeline will vary depending on what other activities you're involved in, the timing of the national convention and other factors. Use this as a guide to shape your year, know what's coming and plan ahead.

September and October

- Contact members in your region, as well as chapter leaders, to let them know what happened at convention and that you're available to help.
- Appoint an assistant. Really, it's so helpful.
- Review the regional conference planning guide and appoint a coordinator.
- Check on the status of chapters in your region and talk with HQ about their health.
- Work with your MOE coordinator to start finding judges for the contest.

November and December

- Finalize Mark of Excellence judges list and work with SPJ HQ awards coordinator on the official timeline, making sure to keep your judges informed about dates and turnaround time.
- Start early promotion of regional conference, secure speakers, reservation information finalized.
- Relax a little before the heavy lifting starts.

January

- Deadline for Mark of Excellence contest will be this month.
- Have a website and/or social media accounts for the regional conference.
- Remind chapters in your region about the deadline for annual reports.

February

- Work to make sure your MOE judges are meeting their deadlines.
- Prepare to run your regional meeting during the regional conference. This should offer ample opportunity for you to get feedback from members and chapters about issues they are facing in your region.

March and April

- If your term is up and you don't plan to seek reelection, be sure you're working to try and find someone interested in the position. Use your knowledge from constant contact with members and chapters and perhaps tap into people you met at the [Scripps Leadership Institute](#) in your region (if applicable).
- Be sure you're sharing deadlines for nomination for [SPJ Awards](#), like the [Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Pro Member Award](#) or the [Julie Galvan Outstanding Graduate in Journalism Award](#).

- Give out your MOE Awards at your regional conference, or in another way. Browse your attendee list and follow up with non-members and encourage them to join.
- It sounds painful, considering the current conference isn't yet in the grave – but start working with coordinators or a host chapter to organize next year's Regional Conference.
- Continue reminding chapters about annual report deadlines.

May and June

- Once you have received the annual reports from SPJ HQ, start working through them to make nominations for chapter awards. Be sure to pay attention to deadlines from SPJ HQ.
- Be sure you're registered for the national convention.

July and August

- Remind chapters to send their new board information to SPJ HQ and you.
- Pass along award deadlines and other opportunities to both chapters and members.
- Share information about the conference with members in your region. Send reminders about registration and exciting highlights, encouraging them to come.

Regional Conference Planning

SPJ HQ has lots of resources to help with your planning. Have a question about a contract for your venue? Call us. It's better to ask for a second set of eyes than realize you're locked in to paying fees before your registration money hits the bank account.

And, not every way is the right way. You know your people, you know your location, you know you (and your conference coordinator). In order for your conference to be successful, you have to do what works for all those people and in all those scenarios. Just because it's suggested in the guidebook doesn't mean it's a hard fast rule. That said, if you're planning on doing something super different, it might be helpful to make a call to SPJ HQ or the previous RD to see if it's been tried before – and if it worked or didn't.

Mark of Excellence Awards

Remember to have a coordinator by your side for the Mark of Excellence Awards. The two of you (or more, if you have a group of people willing to help) will want to be familiar with the Regional Director's Mark of Excellence Award Guide. Be sure to browse it early so you're prepared when the time comes and direct any questions to the Awards Coordinator at SPJ HQ.

Regional Fund Oversight

Each region has varying traditions for raising and spending regional funds. Determining how regional funds can be used is left up to the regions on the understanding that regional funds may be used only for SPJ purposes and not for anyone's personal benefit.

- (1) Within 30 days of his or her election, the regional coordinator (RC) shall appoint a treasurer from a chapter in his or her region to the position of regional treasurer.
- (2) The RC shall notify SPJ headquarters, all chapter presidents of the region and the incumbent treasurer of the name and chapter of the new regional treasurer and the amount of regional funds.
- (3) Regional funds shall be held in a separate regional checking account or the chapter of the regional treasurer's primary checking account.
- (4) If an incumbent regional treasurer is to be replaced, then he or she shall promptly transfer the entire amount of all regional funds by check to the new regional treasurer. The ledger and other bank records should also be transferred. If the replacement regional treasurer is associated with the same chapter and bank account, new signature cards will suffice to affect the change.
- (5) The RC shall request disbursement of funds in writing to the treasurer, with a clear explanation of the purpose of their use. Either letter or email requests showing date and time the request was sent shall be acceptable support. If the RC is requesting reimbursement for expenses already incurred, then an expense report supported by original, itemized receipts must be submitted to the regional treasurer. SPJ has a sample expense report that can be used.
- (6) All payouts of regional funds shall be made by check. There shall be no cash payments.
- (7) The RC or RC treasurer shall make a monthly report of regional income, expenses and fund balance, including monthly bank statements, to all chapter presidents in the region.
- (8) If the treasurer is not satisfied that an expense request is legitimate, then he or she shall notify the RC and schedule a conference call with the national executive director to resolve the issue.