



EAST

CHARTING THE NEXT CHAPTER: HONORING THE PAST, SHAPING THE FUTURE

CSG East Members, Partners, and Colleagues,

It is an honor to be entrusted with the responsibility of serving as the new Director of the Council of State Governments, Eastern Regional Conference (CSG East). Our purpose – to help public officials across the region learn, connect, and better serve the public good – is as needed today as it was when CSG East was first formed in 1937. For nearly 90 years, CSG East has helped strengthen the institutions and leaders that underpin effective governance in our region. That mission remains as important today as ever.



This is a moment that calls for both stewardship and renewal. Stewardship of an institution with a remarkable history and enduring purpose; renewal in ensuring that the work of CSG East, its members, and its staff continues to meet the needs of today's leaders. Following a period of significant organizational transition, I believe we have an opportunity to strengthen continuity, clarify priorities, and position CSG East for sustained success in the years ahead.

Yet, we are also operating in a moment that demands urgency and evolution. Forces such as rapid technological change, waning public trust in government, growing fiscal pressures, and increasing national partisanship are changing how public officials in states, territories, and provinces must govern. CSG East must preserve what has made our organization indispensable in the past while adapting to better serve our members in the years ahead.

To chart our future course, I am taking the time to fully understand where we are today. The future of CSG East should be shaped by the full range of perspectives, backgrounds, and needs of the members, partners, and stakeholders who invest in our organization and rely upon it to advance their work. I am eager to learn from the long-tenured members whose vision and leadership have shaped CSG East's success across generations. I am equally interested in hearing from those whose perspectives may be less familiar to us today and whose experiences can help us see new possibilities.

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Matthew Lyons, *Director*

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Listening, however, is not an end unto itself. In the coming months, we will engage in thoughtful examination of CSG East's strengths, opportunities, challenges, and aspirations. We will ask important questions about who we serve, how we create value, and where we can have the greatest impact. The goal is not simply to determine what CSG East should do next, but to clarify our identity and align around how we can best serve the evolving needs of our community.

This work will culminate in the development of a new five-year strategic plan, created in partnership with the CSG East Executive Committee and informed by the voices of our broader community. More than a planning document, it will provide a shared vision for the future and establish the priorities and accountability needed to guide our work in the years to come.

Below, I have outlined some of the key areas of focus that will be explored in our work ahead. These are not intended as predetermined answers but rather as invitations to dialogue.

I invite you to get involved in this process early and often. As a member-driven organization, there is a role for you to play in charting our future as a region and an organization. Today's CSG East is the product of today's leaders and those that came before them. If you are dedicated to regional collaboration and the cause of good government, I hope you will read this as a call for your leadership and your involvement in writing the next chapter of our regional organization.

To begin that conversation, in the coming days we will release a CSG East Member and Partner Survey and will be conducting numerous individual and group discussions with members, staff, consultants, and partners. Together, these efforts will help ensure that our future direction is guided by the voices and experiences that make our community so strong.

I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead to make that future a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Lyons', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matt Lyons
Director, CSG East



Charting the Next Chapter: CSG East Areas of Exploration and Key Questions

The areas below will guide our listening, engagement, and strategic planning efforts as we work together to build a member-driven vision and roadmap for the future

Area of Exploration	Purpose / Key Questions
Who We Are	
Mission & Vision	• How does our current mission continue to reflect the needs of today's public leaders and articulate the value CSG East provides to members? • What does success look like over the next five years and beyond?
Organizational Identity	• What distinguishes CSG East from our peer associations? • How can we build upon our unique strengths while adapting to emerging needs and opportunities? • How can we best collaborate with CSG National to have regional focus and national impact?
Who We Serve	
Next Generation Engagement	• How do we attract, engage, and develop the next generation of public leaders? • What do emerging public leaders need from CSG East?
Multi-Branch Participation	• How can we foster greater dialogue and collaboration across branches of government? • What are ways we can better serve our executive and judicial branch members in complement to high-quality engagement of legislative members?
Provincial Engagement	• At a period of strained national relations, how can our regional model help maintain and strengthen ties between U.S. states and territories and Canadian provinces?
Private Sector and Strategic Partnerships	• How do we create meaningful opportunities for private sector engagement while preserving the trust, independence, and integrity that our members expect? • What other partnerships with philanthropy, research, and peer organizations can help to expand our impact on behalf of members?



Area of Exploration	Purpose / Key Questions
How We Convene	
Annual Meetings	• Our Annual Meeting is our flagship event that brings members and partners together in peer connection and learning. What is most important that we preserve, change, start, or stop to create a premier and unique in-person meeting experience?
Leadership Development	• Our Eastern Leadership Academy (ELA) has incubated many of our most engaged members over the years and been a critical space for networking and skills development. What opportunities are there to sustain and expand this model? • How can we better maintain connection once members complete ELA? • Do leadership development needs differ across staff, elected officials, and years of experience that merit more nuance to our ELA programming? • How can our regional efforts better align with national efforts (i.e. Toll Fellows)?
Committee Engagement	• How do we foster greater engagement and meaningful year-round programming within our Policy Committees? • How do we maintain fidelity to our appointments process while promoting broader participation and engagement through our committees? • What is the right balance of breadth and depth as it relates to the number of policy committees and how we staff them?
Future Relevance	• How can CSG East help leaders not only respond to change, but help shape it? • How do we help our members confront emerging issues, technologies, and societal trends affecting their communities, while considering the deeper forces reshaping governance, democratic institutions, and public expectations of government?
How We Govern and Operate	
Governance	• Are our governing rules consistent, clearly understood, and aligned with how the organization operates today?



Area of Exploration	Purpose / Key Questions
	• How do we balance broad representation with the practical realities of effective organizational governance? • How can governance reform support – not precede or constrain – the broader strategic vision we are just beginning to define together?
Staff Development & Culture	• How do we create opportunities for professional growth and career progression that help attract, develop, and retain exceptional talent? • How can we continue building a culture of trust, collaboration, and shared ownership across the organization? • How should we align internal talent, organizational capacity, and external resources to maximize our collective impact?
How We Sustain and Amplify Impact	
Revenue Diversification	• What risks and opportunities exist within our current revenue model, particularly as members face growing fiscal pressures? • What should our regional private sector sponsorship strategy look like that complements and aligns with broader CSG National efforts? • Where can we pursue mission-aligned philanthropic and public resources while preserving our independence and member-driven focus?
Storytelling & Reach	• How do we better communicate the unique value CSG East provides to public leaders, institutions, and jurisdictions across the region? • How should we adapt our communication and engagement strategies to reflect changing member expectations and emerging forms of information sharing? • How can we better spotlight member leadership, foster connections across jurisdictions, and strengthen a sense of shared community within CSG East?