

## Interdependence: Councils & the National Organization



### Introduction

The beginning of Girl Scouting in this country is unique in that it started as a national organization and then, a few years later, chartered Girl Scout councils. This relationship creates an interdependence between Girl Scout councils and the national organization (Girl Scouts of the USA or GSUSA).

Collectively, the national organization, Girl Scout councils, and the National Council are responsible for sustaining the existence of Girl Scouting in the USA. In addition, GSUSA maintains a global relationship as a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (commonly referred to as “WAGGGS”). This briefing paper describes the leadership responsibilities and accountabilities of the national organization and Girl Scout councils.

All parts of the Girl Scout organization in the USA may act independently within the authority defined in the basic documents of Girl Scouts of the USA. [See *Blue Book of Basic Documents, 2016 edition*.] The national organization was first incorporated back in 1915 under the corporate laws of the District of Columbia. A **Congressional Charter\*** was conferred upon Girl Scouts of the United States of America in 1950 by a special act of Congress. Only Congress may amend the Congressional Charter.

The **Constitution** of Girl Scouts of the USA defines and interprets the responsibilities and the authority of the National Council and the National Board of Directors. The Constitution also defines the purpose and responsibility of Girl Scout councils.

#### \***Congressional Charter** § 80303. Governing Body

(a) (1) There shall be a National Council of Girl Scouts. The number, qualifications, and term of office of members of the Council shall be as provided in the constitution of the corporation, except that members of the Council must be citizens of the United States.

Girl Scout councils and GSUSA work together to carry out the Mission of Girl Scouting as set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the U.S. A., but each has specific authority and accountability within the federated structure:

## National Council

- Elects a National Board of Directors and National Board Development Committee
- Amends the Constitution
- Establishes requirements for credentials
- Acts on proposals
- Influences the strategic direction of the Movement by providing guidance to the National Board

## National Board of Directors

- Establishes and charters Girl Scout councils
- Provides strategic leadership and direction to the Girl Scout Movement
- Manages the affairs of the corporation between National Council Sessions
- Appoints a national CEO

## Girl Scout Councils

- Elects delegates to the National Council
- Leads, administers, and supervises Girl Scout program within local jurisdictions
- Promotes and delivers Girl Scouting locally
- Positions council within its jurisdiction for branding, funding, and partnership opportunities

## GSUSA

- The national CEO directs the management functions of the national staff
- Develops Girl Scout program and resource materials
- Provides guidelines for program delivery by councils

## Communication with Girl Scout Councils

A critical element of the interdependence between Girl Scout councils and GSUSA is a process of ongoing communications to exchange ideas, share issues or concerns, and determine how to work together to best serve Girl Scouts. This is established in a variety of ways:

### ➤ **Ongoing communications between councils and National Board:**

- National conference calls initiated by the National Board and National CEO
- National Board member visits to councils

- **Communications between national staff and councils:**
  - National meetings of Movement leadership, including:
    - ✓ Board Chair/CEO Retreat—meeting for all council board chairs and CEOs
    - ✓ Leadership Summit—meeting for GSUSA leadership and council CEOs to convene in person over several days (sometimes other council leaders are invited too, as determined by the strategic topics at hand)
  - National task groups/committees—comprised of national and council leaders (sometimes National Board members or National Volunteer Partners also serve) to explore Movement-wide challenges and opportunities and co-create strategies and plans to address them
  - National Leadership calls—GSUSA leadership and council CEOs convene monthly and share important strategic updates and best practices
  - National CEO's Kitchen Cabinet
  - Periodic and regular calls/webinars/meetings for staff across the Movement by function or initiative—council and GSUSA staff convene by function (e.g., Fund Development, Girl Scout Merchandise retail sales) or per their involvement with a major initiative (e.g., Digital Cookie) to discuss updates and share learnings and best practices
  - GSUSA staff visits to councils and council staff visits to GSUSA

### **National Governance Meeting:**

The National Council Session is designed to provide an opportunity for discussion, deliberation and action on National Council proposals. (It is held every three years.)

The National Council is the linchpin between Girl Scout councils and the national organization. This relationship forms a solid foundation for collaborative action in the development of Girl Scouting from a local, national, and global perspective.

Girl Scout councils work to promote Girl Scouting locally, make the Girl Scout program accessible to all girls (in kindergarten through 12th grade), create consistent, yet flexible, short-and long-term volunteer opportunities that enhance the experience, provide support to volunteers, provide pathways in which girls can participate in Girl Scouting, and provide services to girls and adult volunteers as they participate in the Girl Scout experience

## **Girl Scout Councils' Areas of Work:**

- Promote Girl Scouting locally; make the Girl Scout program accessible to girls in kindergarten through 12th grade
- Recruit and retain adult volunteers
- Provide support to adults delivering the Girl Scout Leadership Experience
- Provide flexible pathways in which girls can participate in Girl Scouting
- Provide funding for the council's work
- Position Girl Scouting as the premier voice for girls and an expert on their healthy growth and development

The national organization's work is to develop the Girl Scout program in order for Girl Scouting to be the premier leadership experience for girls, develop and establish high capacity Girl Scout councils, and provide resources, guidelines, and tools to promote the Girl Scout brand.

## **Girl Scout National Organization's (GSUSA's) Areas of Work:**

- Develop the Girl Scout program/Girl Scout Leadership Experience
- Conduct research/develop long- and short-term outcomes
- Provide guidelines, tools, and resources for volunteer training
- Establish and support high capacity councils
- Provide services and support to councils
- Position Girl Scouting as the premier voice for girls and an expert on their healthy growth and development