

IMPLEMENTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

I N G I R L S C O U T I N G

Combining Our Voices



GIRL SCOUTS®

1999

CONTENTS

PAID BY THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF DEMOCRACY



**IMPLEMENTING THE
DEMOCRATIC PROCESS
IN GIRL SCOUTING:
COMBINING OUR VOICES**

**Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10018-2798**



GIRL SCOUTS OF THE U.S.A.®

Elinor Johnstone Ferdon, *National President*

Marsha Johnson Evans, *National Executive Director*

Inquiries related to *Implementing the Democratic Process in Girl Scouting: Combining Our Voices* should be directed to Planning and Administration, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10018-2798.

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First Impression 1999
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 0-88441-497-3

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many councils and individuals contributed to the development of the three monographs in the Democratic Process in Girl Scouting Series by sharing their ideas and experiences in implementing the democratic process. Our thanks go to the National Task Group on the Study of the Democratic Process and its final report delivered at the 1996 National Council Session, which provided us with much of the basis for the monographs. Special thanks go to the council and national members of the Democratic Process in Girl Scouting Monograph Task Group, who used all of the information on the democratic process accumulated during recent years to develop the original drafts of the three monographs, and to those council presidents, executive directors, and National Board members who served as reader reviewers, giving valuable feedback to those involved in completing the writing of the three monographs: *Essentials of a Girl Scout Corporation*; *Implementing the Democratic Process in Girl Scouting: Combining our Voices*; and *Reviewing and Changing Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in Girl Scouting*.

INTRODUCTION

The monograph *Implementing the Democratic Process in Girl Scouting: Combining Our Voices* is designed to assist councils in developing or modifying their own decision-influencing systems, and in implementing the democratic process. It should be used in conjunction with *Essential Elements of a Girl Scout Corporation* and *Reviewing and Changing Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in Girl Scouting*. This monograph will also help council task groups that are working on possible new ways for the membership to influence major governance and management decisions, and will assist those who are developing and working on bylaw revisions and amending articles of incorporation. It is also a valuable resource to be made available to council boards of directors, board committees, parliamentarians, and staff working with board committees and task groups.

From the beginning of Girl Scouting, the democratic process and participation in a democratic way of life have been basic beliefs that characterize the Girl Scout movement. An early *Blue Book of Policy* states:

The way of work in Girl Scouting is that of democratic participation. Democratic methods are as important for adults in the movement as

they are for girls. The Girl Scout organization has, from its inception, believed strongly that democracy means not only the right to vote, but the responsibility of voting for the good of the whole rather than for purely local interests; that, while the majority might prevail, there is an unfailing obligation to consider the minority and to find ways of reconciling differences; that people working democratically develop not functional decisions nor sterile compromises but new plans and new solutions growing from the merging of individual points of view.

Additional resources to be used in conjunction with this monograph are the current issues of the *Blue Book of Basic Documents* and *Council Performance Assessment in Girl Scouting*. Other GSUSA resources related to the democratic process in Girl Scouting and the interdependent relationship of Girl Scout councils and the national organization are the booklets *Interdependence: Councils and the National Organization* and *Partners in Stewardship: Girl Scout Councils and the National Organization*.

Over the years, the structures to support the democratic process have changed to accommodate the growth in councils' membership and geographic size. While the fundamentals of the democratic process are always at the base of Girl Scouting, methods of implementation vary. There have always been several well-known structures that most councils adopt, and individual councils have been able to adapt these structures to meet their own local needs. However,

with a changing profile of those who constitute the adult membership of Girl Scout councils today, the advent of technology as a means of mass communication, and the increasing need to involve other "stakeholders" in decision-influencing, it is necessary to provide more options and more flexibility for councils in finding a decision-influencing structure that best suits the needs of their membership.

DEFINING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

In Girl Scouting the democratic process is defined as the various means or avenues through which the membership can influence decisions and activities in matters of governance (policy) or management (operations), and have access to those responsible for decision-making at the individual, troop/group, service unit, council, or national level. The democratic process in the Girl Scout organization has three primary functions:

- Meeting the legal requirements of the corporation.
- Providing effective ways to actively seek input from the membership and encourage the free exchange of concerns, issues, and ideas among all segments of the Girl Scout membership and the community.
- Ensuring that decisions affecting the membership are made in ways consistent with and in furtherance of the purpose of the organization.

Two basic kinds of decisions—governance and management—are made through the democratic process, which encompass all levels of the Girl Scout organization.

Core Beliefs of the Girl Scout Movement

Three of the core beliefs of the Girl Scout movement—voluntary leadership, democratic process, and responsibility of volunteers—are delineated on the following pages. These beliefs provide the foundation for the democratic process in Girl Scouting. They emanate from the Preamble to the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, reflect the vision of our founder, Juliette Gordon Low, and permeate day-to-day activities in the delivery of Girl Scouting throughout the country and in conducting the official business of the Girl Scout organization at the council and national levels.

Voluntary Leadership

We maintain that the strength of the Girl Scout movement rests in the voluntary leadership of its adult members, in the cooperation and support of the community, and in the affiliation with Girl Guide and Girl Scout movements of other countries throughout the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (*Blue Book of Basic Documents*, page 7).

What does voluntary leadership mean? How does it relate to the democratic process? Individuals who become members of Girl Scouting do so voluntarily and because of a strong personal commitment and belief in the core values of the Girl Scout organization. Along with that commitment goes the responsibility of adult members to participate in the decision-influencing process used in their local Girl Scout council, or at the national level.

“In the cooperation and support of the community” means that the Girl Scout program is provided by Girl Scout councils to meet the needs of girls 5–17 years of age and enhance the communities within their jurisdictions. Girl Scouts throughout the country engage in service projects for improving the quality of life of people in their communities. In order to carry out its purpose within the community, a Girl Scout council receives funding and other kinds of support from the community through United Ways, foundations, business and industry, and collaborative efforts with other organizations with compatible goals. Councils, in turn, have a responsibility to account to the community on how their resources are being used to benefit the lives of girls.

The Democratic Process

We declare that the democratic way of life and the democratic process shall guide all our activities (*Blue Book of Basic Documents*, page 8).

How do we ensure that the democratic way of life actually does guide all of our activities at the adult level? Following is a quick checklist to help determine how effective the Girl Scout organization is today in implementing the democratic process:

- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do councils have a truly democratic process as evidenced through the policy-influencing groups and the annual meeting? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Are appropriate topics discussed at council annual meetings? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do councils make provisions for adult members to participate in decision-influencing discussions at times other than at the annual council meeting? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do council delegates really know what the critical issues are that can have a positive or negative effect on the future of the council? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Does the national organization provide a variety of ways for councils to communicate their needs and ideas other than at the National Council Session? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Is the National Council Session truly democratic in its ways of work? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Are National Council delegates well-informed and able to discuss critical policy issues with respect to the future of the Girl Scout movement in the United States? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. In discussions and debates, do we have respect for minority opinions? Do all parties have the opportunity to voice their opinions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

YES NO

9. When a final decision on a major issue is made by the board of directors or executive director, does it reflect the predominant opinion as determined to be in the best interest of the Girl Scout movement in the United States?

Responsibility of Volunteers

We hold that the ultimate responsibility for the Girl Scout movement rests with volunteers (*Blue Book of Basic Documents*, page 8).

This means that, after listening to volunteers about the pros and cons of the issues involved, the volunteer leadership of the board of directors (at both council and national levels) makes all Girl Scout policy decisions. This is done with advice and support from staff who provide continuity, expertise, knowledge, and skills to aid the board of directors in making the best possible decisions for the organization.

The ultimate responsibility for making policy-level decisions rests with the volunteer board of directors, and the process of influencing policy decisions is accomplished primarily through levels of volunteers in each council and at the national level.

The Interdependent Relationship of Volunteers and Staff

One of the most unique characteristics of the Girl Scout movement—and one of its greatest strengths—is the interdependent relationship between volun-

teers and staff that exists throughout the organization. In councils and the national organization, volunteers and staff work together, sharing each others' expertise, experience, ideas, skills, and a common commitment to girls, in carrying out the day-to-day work. This interdependence exists at every level, and is inherent in the partnership of the president and executive director. It extends to the governance activities of the board of directors, the nominating committee, board committees and task groups, and in the decision-influencing process by the staff who provide support and guidance to volunteers. It is this interdependent relationship that makes it possible for the Girl Scout program to reach so many girls, at such a high level of quality.

Volunteers bring experience, skills, diversity, and commitment to Girl Scouting, and executive staff "provide managerial and specialist expertise, research capability, and continuity to support the delivery of the Girl Scout program to girls through volunteers."* Staff are expected to act as resource guides and provide clarification of information in the decision-influencing and decision-making processes. Staff are also collectors of information gleaned from various operational and decision-influencing meetings, which is used to help make operational and governance decisions.

Although staff are not eligible to be elected as delegates to the corporation at the local level, executive staff are eligible for election as delegates to the National Council, provided that the number of staff does not exceed the number of volunteers elected from the council.**

* *Blue Book of Basic Documents*, page 20.

***Blue Book of Basic Documents*, page 9.

Levels of Participation in the Democratic Process

Participation in the democratic process happens at every level in the Girl Scout organization, from a Daisy Girl Scout troop to the National Council Session. Many parallels can be drawn on how the democratic process guides a council's day-to-day activities and how it is implemented at all program age levels for girls. Girl members in troops begin to learn the process of group decision-making when they are Daisy Girl Scouts

in the Daisy Girl Scout Circle; Brownie Girl Scouts conduct their business in the Brownie Girl Scout Ring; and girls in troops beginning at the Junior Girl Scout program age level through Cadette and Senior Girl Scouting may choose any one of three different forms of governance—the patrol system, the executive board system, or the town meeting. Older girls have further options for governance on councilwide girl planning boards, and for participation in decision-influencing groups with adult members.

PEOPLE AND GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

People are involved in the democratic process in Girl Scouting either as decision-influencers or decision-makers.

Decision-makers are groups and individuals empowered to make final governance and management decisions. (See pages 24–25 for further discussion of decision-makers.) The board of directors is the only policy-making body in a Girl Scout council with the power to establish councilwide policies and standards, which determine the parameters within which operational (management) decisions are made. (For more detailed information on policies and how they are formulated, see *Essential Elements of a Girl Scout Corporation*.)

The executive director, based on policy decisions made by the board of directors, establishes councilwide operational procedures and provides guidelines and ways of work that are used by volunteers and staff in carrying out their responsibilities of delivering the Girl Scout program to girls.

Decision-Influencing Groups

Decision-influencing is defined as the process by which the opinions and feelings of a variety of groups are sought and

considered by those who will be in a position to make a decision. Most individuals in the Girl Scout organization participate in the democratic process as decision-influencers. They influence governance and operational decisions by being involved in groups such as associations, constituencies, or service units; by serving as council delegates participating in discussions at the annual meeting; by serving on standing board committees and task groups; through operating units; and as staff and operational volunteers.

A comprehensive decision-influencing process is a planned communication system designed to ensure broad-based participation in the direction-setting (governance) and management (operations) activities of the council. The process provides for the solicitation, integration, and thoughtful consideration of all views that are central to the democratic process in Girl Scouting. Issues raised by individuals and groups need to be considered so that they can ultimately be addressed at the appropriate governance or operational level. Although participation in the decision-influencing process—whether it is a governance decision or a management decision—gives individuals a voice in that process, they do not vote for or actually make the decision. (See Exhibit 1, “Calendar of Information-Gathering Activities,” and Exhibit 2, “Developing a Proposal for the Annual Corporate Meeting Agenda.”)

Such a process for both governance and management should include:

- Adult volunteers and older girls making their feelings and opinions known on key issues that affect Girl Scouting.
- The council board of directors or council management considering the information before making a decision.
- Feedback being provided to the council membership about the final decision and the process used in making the decision.

It is essential that governance and management decisions that have potential for broad impact not be made until the decision-makers have actively sought input from outside the decision-making body. Such a process will:

- Foster a more open attitude in terms of understanding and participating in the decision-influencing process.
- Enable decision-makers to anticipate the full impact on those affected by major decisions.
- Ensure that decisions are not made without decision-makers having all the necessary facts.

- Enable a wide variety of ideas to emerge.

Major decisions include but are not limited to those that:

- Significantly affect all or a major portion of the membership and require the active support of the members and the community once they are made.
- Are likely to raise highly charged, emotional issues for the membership and/or the community.
- Require major capital expenditures.

An example of a highly charged, emotional issue might be a council board of directors making the decision to sell a Girl Scout camp that has belonged to the council for many years, without first informing the membership of its intention, and not sharing with them the reasons why the camp must be sold. Prior to making such an important decision, the board of directors needs to actively seek reactions and ideas from the total membership.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFLUENCING DECISIONS

Individuals participate in the democratic process in two different kinds of ways—formal and informal—as members of decision-influencing groups throughout the council.

Formal Decision- Influencing Groups

Certain decision-influencing groups in Girl Scout councils are considered to be formal because they are a part of the corporate structure defined in the council bylaws, which can only be changed or amended by the members of the corporation at an annual meeting. These groups are typically the following.

The Annual Meeting and Special Meetings of the Corporation

Members of the corporation (council delegates, board members, and members of the nominating committee), in meeting assembled, influence both governance and management decisions when they elect the board of directors and council nominating committee, vote to amend the articles of incorporation or bylaws, and act on proposals from the council membership and board of directors on issues that will have a long-term effect on the council. Members of the

corporation may also be called together for special meetings which have a defined purpose, and which must be called in accordance with the council bylaws.

Associations and Constituencies

Associations and constituencies are established by the board of directors, are defined in the councils bylaws, and fulfill two major functions of the council's democratic process. They provide for: (1) the structure for the election of delegates, formation of the corporation, and a formal channel of communication from the board of directors to the membership; and (2) the membership participation in council business, enabling them to influence governance decisions and the council's strategic plan, react to and give input on matters that may be referred by the board of directors, and initiate proposals to the board of directors on matters of importance to the total membership.

Most councils have adopted procedures that allow for the submission of proposals to the board of directors for consideration for placement on the annual corporate meeting agenda. (See Exhibit 2, "Developing a Proposal for the Annual Corporate Meeting Agenda," and see *Reviewing and Changing Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in Girl Scouting*.)

Council Delegates

Council delegates influence decisions through their participation in the annual meeting of the corporation. Some councils form delegates into a separate decision-influencing group. Council delegates at the annual meeting, voting with other members of the corporation, have significant influence on governance decisions in the council because of their responsibility for electing the officers and the board of directors and nominating committee, and amending the articles of incorporation and bylaws. The process of electing those who will govern the council, set policy, and provide leadership to the council, and those who will make judgments about the best possible way to carry out these responsibilities, is one of the most crucial aspects of decision-making and influencing in a Girl Scout council.

The importance of the council delegate as a member of the corporation. Those persons who are elected to represent associations, constituencies, service units, or other decision-influencing groups assume the responsibility for giving direction for Girl Scouting within the council's jurisdiction. In addition to their regular responsibilities, council delegates, during the annual meeting, receive the stewardship report of the board of directors, hear financial reports, and participate in discussion and debate on issues of concern that will have an impact on the future of Girl Scouting.

While delegates have very important responsibilities, they are actually required to vote on very few business items. Rather, their discussions on major issues are critical in fulfilling their

responsibility of giving broad general direction to the board directors as it strives to make the most appropriate policy decisions.

Persons who are elected delegates should be familiar with the democratic process as practiced in the council, and should be given the opportunity to participate in this process as soon as possible after they have been elected. The council should have a well-coordinated plan to ensure that all delegates receive a thorough training in their responsibilities. This can be done centrally or at several locations around the council. (See "Guidelines for Effective Training of Council Delegates," pages 26-27.)

It is preferable that this training be conducted by corporate officers, members of the board of directors, association chairs, or constituency conveners, who are most likely to have experience in policy-making and are also familiar with current issues.

Council delegates are not to be instructed on how to vote; rather, they need to be thoroughly conversant with the system and methods utilized by the council that enable the board of directors to hear about matters of concern to the membership, and how proposals or possible discussion items are placed on the annual meeting agenda. This responsibility empowers the delegates as they deal with conflicting opinions of their constituents, weigh their own opinions and attitudes, and remember that a decision made by the delegates at the council annual meeting will have an impact on Girl Scouting throughout the jurisdiction.

Delegates need to know the council's corporate planning cycle and be familiar with any deadlines set by the board of directors for the submission of proposals or discussion items for policy-influencing group meetings and for the annual corporate meeting agenda. It is helpful for the council to provide members of the corporation with a calendar or chart of the council's cycle of meetings. (See Exhibit 2, "Developing a Proposal for the Annual Corporate Meeting Agenda," and Exhibit 3, "Proposal for Annual Corporate Meeting Agenda.")

The Council Nominating Committee

It has been said that the council nominating committee is one of the most important groups in any Girl Scout council. The nominating committee, in carrying out its responsibilities for presenting the slate of officers, members-at-large, and the succeeding nominating committee, has great power to affect the future direction of the council, perhaps more than any other group. The nominating committee is a committee of the corporation, elected by and accountable to the corporation. The responsibility for searching out and recruiting the best-qualified individuals to carry on the work of the corporation, and meet the challenges and priorities of the future, is a serious one, and one that can have enormous impact—either positive or negative—on the council's future. In carrying out its responsibilities, the nominating committee should request input from other policy-influencing groups on the future needs of the council, as well as requesting referrals of qualified nominees.

Board Committees, Board Task Groups, and Operational Task Groups

Board committees and task groups play a vital role in the decision-making performed by the board of directors, in that they bring to the board the necessary data, recommendations, and rationale on which it can make the best decisions for the total organization. It is important that the charges to board committees and task groups include provisions for obtaining input from those who will be affected by the outcome of the board's decision, as appropriate.

Board committees. These committees, which are usually appointed by the council president and approved by the board of directors, are major players in the decision-influencing process. The formation of board committees is provided for in the council bylaws. Board committees are composed of both board members and non-board members. The chair of a board committee is appointed by the president with approval of the board of directors.

The board of directors establishes board committees to assist it in carrying out major pieces of its governance responsibilities. The work of board committees covers specific areas of ongoing responsibility of the board, such as financial decisions.

Board task groups. These groups are appointed by the president with approval of the board of directors to research particular issues and propose recommendations to the board, and are usually of short duration. They are composed of board and non-board members, and may also include staff or

members of the community who have experience and skills in the topic area being studied. Board task groups work within a definite time frame, and after making a report and recommendations to the board, they are disbanded.

Board task groups are very effective in studying a particular issue that is important to the entire constituency and needs immediate attention. Examples of short-term tasks performed most effectively by board task groups are the council performance assessment, reviewing the council's jurisdiction, reviewing personnel policies for volunteers and staff, and studying council property.

Operational task groups. Task groups may also be appointed by the executive director to carry out shorter operational projects such as planning a wider opportunity. Operational task groups are comprised of operational volunteers and staff.

The Role of Older Girls in Decision-Influencing

Being given an opportunity to work with adults to address councilwide concerns significantly expands the skills of older girl members and helps them to develop a broader organizational perspective. Older girls can also bring valuable insights and ideas to the decision-influencing process. They are often creative and bring a fresh perspective on current trends and issues. They can also deepen their own understanding of the complexity of budgets and the legal and financial parameters that guide decision-making. Senior Girl Scouts are given genuine responsibility by:

- Actively participating in decision-influencing groups.

- Serving as elected delegates to the annual corporate meeting.
- Serving as appointed members of board committees and task groups.
- Serving as elected delegates to the National Council Session.

It is recommended that girl members under the age of 18 serve only as members of board committees and task groups and not hold a position as a board member or officer. Most states do not allow non-adults in these positions or may require them to be filled by adults because of the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of a board member.

The Role of Girl Scout Volunteers and Staff

The corporate planning/management system provides regular opportunities for volunteers and staff to influence governance and management decisions. Through discussions and debates in association and constituency meetings, staff meetings, and other decision-influencing groupings, volunteers and staff:

- Provide information for compilation of the internal and external data report used by the board of directors in formulating corporate goals.
- Participate as determined by the president in the formulation and/or review of the corporate goals.
- Provide input to the formulation or revision of policies and strategies for the acquisition, development, or disposition of critical resources, as requested.

- Participate in the annual organizational performance appraisal as determined by the board of directors.
- Participate as requested in the council performance assessment.

Informal Decision-Influencing Groups

In addition to the formal groupings mentioned above, the board of directors and the executive director have a variety of options for involving the Girl Scout membership in the decision-influencing process. These options allow for flexibility and creativity in reaching the total membership, and generally are not defined in the council bylaws.

Focus Groups

These groups offer a qualitative research technique using group interviews during which attitudes, beliefs, opinions, motivations, and the reactions of various constituencies in relation to particular problems or issues can be explored.

A focus group involves a limited number of people (8–12) selected because they have common characteristics and an interest in the topic to be discussed. The group should be led by a skilled moderator using a discussion guide. Discussions in focus groups are usually concentrated on one particular topic. Data gathered through these discussions can be used in making a decision about an important policy or operational issue.

Focus groups provide an advantage in that they:

- Are inexpensive.
- Are a fast means of gathering a lot of information.
- Promote interaction.
- Generate many ideas.

The disadvantages of the focus group method are that it:

- Limits individual participation.
- Is not statistically valid.
- Is subject to moderator bias.
- Has a tendency to promote conformity.

Focus groups can be effectively utilized as an ongoing method for gathering information needed by the board of directors and the executive director, with meetings scheduled at the same time every year. Focus groups can be used in many different ways, such as:

- The decision-influencing system in councils that choose to make all members 14 years of age and older voting members of the council.
- In addition to regularly scheduled decision-influencing (association, constituency, etc.) meetings, to interpret a proposed major change that will affect the entire membership, and get reactions and ideas at the same time.
- To gather input and learn of concerns when a problem arises that needs immediate attention and does not fit into the council's normal cycle of decision-influencing meetings.

It is appropriate to conduct focus group discussions in conjunction with the annual meeting. However, if using focus groups is the main method used for implementing the decision-influencing process, it is strongly recommended that the focus group discussions take place at a different time than the annual meeting. This makes it possible for more members to participate in reacting to and giving input to major decisions being considered by the board of directors.

Town Hall Meetings

Town hall meetings can be held by geographic area, or by any other division of the membership that best suits the council's needs. It is recommended that this term not be used by councils that adopt the "town meeting" form of annual meetings, since this could become confusing to participants. Town hall meetings can be used to discuss a variety of issues on which the board of directors or the executive director needs information before making a policy or operational decision. Town hall meetings need a skilled facilitator who can organize the discussion and obtain results that will be helpful in making decisions, and, at the same time, ensure that all sides of the issue are heard.

Annual Council Forums

An annual council forum can be planned to coincide with the council's annual corporate meeting, and can have a much broader focus than issue-oriented town hall meetings. A forum supports broad participation in planning and provides an outlet for expression on all council issues. Annual council forums

can be used as the main method of decision-influencing and can be held in geographic areas established by the board of directors at the same time and location every year. They can also be used in addition to the formal decision-influencing structure.

Written Communication

In seeking input on issues to come before the board of directors, the council president may wish to write a letter to all adult members or to a specific group such as association chairs to get information and input on a certain decision. The letter should contain no more than five paragraphs, including (1) a statement of the issue or problem, (2) background facts, (3) specific questions about the issue or problem, (4) the proposed solution and how the information will be used, and (5) the method for gathering information and the time frame within which the information is needed.

Surveys

Depending on the constraints of time and budget, surveys are a very effective way to gather a lot of information, and if necessary, in a very short time.

Questionnaires. These may be open-ended or scaled. Although open-ended questions allow recipients to answer in their own words, this very feature makes them more difficult, time-consuming, and expensive to analyze. Scaled responses are more commonly used, and technology that is often provided by local businesses or educational institutions makes data collation more manageable. Most councils use scales like those on page 21, often in combination.

SCALE	RESPONSE	EXPLANATION
2-point scale	Yes, no	Simple dichotomy
3-point scale	Yes, neutral, no	Same as above with a middle category
4-point scale	Much, some, little, none	3-point and 5-point are more useful in most cases
5-point scale	Very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied	Most commonly used because it measures intensity

Surveys may be either face-to-face, by telephone, by mail, or by the Internet, depending upon how soon the information is needed and the scope of the subject being considered. All types of surveys have advantages and disadvantages.

Face-to-face surveys

- Can observe, probe, and clarify issues.
- Flexible.
- Can show visuals.
- Good sampling control.
- Costly.
- Time-consuming.
- Possible interviewer bias.

Mail surveys

- Wide distribution/low cost.
- Eliminates interviewer bias.
- Anonymity.
- Respondent can answer at leisure.
- Accurate lists not always available.
- Limited length—not timely.
- Clarifying and probing not possible.
- Question order bias.

- Unable to guarantee specific total sample.

Telephone/fax/Internet surveys

- Inexpensive compared to personal survey.
- Minimizes interviewer bias.
- Wide geographic reach.
- Limited length.
- Difficult to reach busy people.
- Can be expensive compared to mail.
- Excludes those who do not have computers or are not on the Internet.

Regardless of the type of survey conducted, the following points should be considered when the survey is in the design stage.

- What is the major purpose for doing the survey?
- What is the primary focus of the survey?
- Do all questions gravitate to the purpose?
- If there is more than one major area to cover, the survey should be broken into subsections.
- Omit extraneous questions.

- Remember that shorter is better. The longer a survey, the less likely that people will complete it.
- Since there is no chance for a two-way dialogue in a written survey, all instructions, answer choices, etc., should be as clearly written as possible.
- Are the questions and language used appropriate to the audience?
- Make the language simpler than you think it should be.
- Each question should focus on one specific idea.
- Whenever possible, ask fixed-format questions in which the answer choices or rating scales are already given. These questions make the survey faster to complete and make it easier to enter the data. Fixed-format questions work only when the range of possible answers is known.

Public Hearings

A public hearing can be held when the council is faced with an issue that will have an impact internally as well as in the external community, such as selling or not renewing the lease on a piece of property that has been supported by the community for a long period of time. The agenda (items to be discussed at the hearing) should be circulated to interested parties in sufficient time for people to become informed on the issue and be able to prepare arguments. A small panel of impartial individuals should be appointed by the board of directors to hear both sides of the issue in question. The composition of the panel will depend upon the level of the decision to be made.

All parties are allowed to present their views of the issue under consideration. Following the hearing of all sides, the panel reviews the information received and informs participants of the next steps in the process. Parliamentary rules are usually followed during discussions.

TYPES OF DECISIONS MADE

Two categories of decisions are made in the Girl Scout organization—governance decisions and management decisions. Both types of decisions are based on the belief that people should have a voice in major decisions that will have an effect on all or a large part of the membership.

Governance Decisions

Governance decisions are broad policy decisions made by a board of directors to provide stability within a council and to give direction for the way Girl Scouting is implemented in the council jurisdiction. Governance decisions relate to strategic planning, fund development, fiduciary oversight, selection and performance evaluation of the executive director, policy-influencing systems, and organizational performance appraisal. (For more detailed information on the policy-making function of the board of directors, see *Essential Elements of a Girl Scout Corporation*, pages 24–26.)

Management Decisions

Management decisions are made by the executive director and are concerned with the organization and management of all operational work within the framework of the council's goals. They are based on governance decisions made by the board of directors, as well as reflecting input from volunteers and staff who bring ideas from their experience. Management decisions relate to tactical planning; budgeting; the selection, placement, and supervision of operational volunteers and employed staff; the development of systems to ensure the effective delivery of Girl Scout program to all girls within the jurisdiction; oversight of fiscal and physical resources; and the implementation of policies and standards established by the board of directors.

DECISION-MAKERS

The Board of Directors

Although the responsibility for governance decision-making rests with the council board of directors, the board needs to hear diverse views before acting. The board also has the responsibility to provide pertinent information in advance and to clearly report nonconfidential aspects of its decision(s) after action is taken.

Many council boards arrange for decision-influencing meetings to be held in conjunction with the annual meeting. Still others use a variety of methods throughout the year, such as forums and town hall meetings, to provide for decision-influencing. This allows more individuals to participate and will help members better understand the importance of their involvement.

A variety of methods can be used for communication with various audiences, including but not limited to council newsletters, neighborhood forums, telephone, fax, and computer technology (See Exhibit 4, "Communication Methods Planning Chart.") Regardless of the method used, care should be taken to ensure that all members have access to information.

The council board of directors needs to choose a method for implementing the democratic process. Ideally, the procedures chosen should be those that best meet the needs of the council. Examples include the formal structures described on pages 15–18, and the informal decision-influencing groups described on pages 19–22. In addition, the following methods may be utilized by the board of directors or the executive director to obtain reactions and input to major decisions:

- Open forums.
- Roundtables.
- Meetings held in conjunction with the annual meeting.
- Interactive meetings using computer technology, television, telephone, fax, etc.

The board of directors should provide for regular opportunities, at least one a year, for members of the Girl Scout family to come together, share ideas or concerns, debate issues, share suggestions for improvement, and initiate and develop issues for the council leadership to consider. These opportunities could be offered in separate geographic areas, if appropriate.

Care should be exercised so that members of various groups, particularly older girls and lifetime members, feel free to participate. Any issue should be heard, whether it involves an operations matter or a policy concern. There should be an early focus on identifying and clarifying issues rather than on determining where and when the final decision will be made. All issues presented that are not immediately resolved should be forwarded to the appropriate leadership group and a report on the disposition of the issues should be made available.

In addition, formal structures contained in the bylaws may be utilized by the board of directors to implement the democratic process and to obtain reactions and input to major decisions.

The Corporation

The members of the corporation make governance decisions when they vote for the officers, the board of directors, and the nominating committee, and amend the articles of incorporation and bylaws. Proposals voted on by the members of the corporation give broad general direction to the board of directors and the executive director for the delivery of the Girl Scout program within the council's jurisdiction.

The Executive Director

The executive director makes all management (operational) decisions that affect the ongoing work of the council. These decisions also require involvement of individuals who will be impacted

by the decision. Many management decisions may be made during the tactical planning process. These decisions should be based on guidance provided by the board of directors, especially through the strategic plans, and on input from operational volunteers. Throughout the year, operational volunteers and staff in all functions should be listening to the ideas and concerns expressed by those adults who are responsible for providing Girl Scouting through program activities, councilwide events, summer outdoor programs, and training sessions. The development of integrated operating objectives each year—or every three years—by the executive director and staff should reflect information that has been gathered by operational volunteers and staff, as well as reflecting operational issues raised in formal and informal decision-influencing groups.

Other Decision-Makers

Someplace, sometime, on any day in a Girl Scout council where the Girl Scout program is being delivered, decisions are being made by volunteers and staff at all levels—troop, service unit, training, program event, resident, and day camp. The councilwide policies and standards established by the board of directors provide the parameters within which decisions can be made at all levels of the council at the point at which they occur. Without such governance and management decisions, each time an incident occurred, it would need to be referred up to the executive director for a decision, or, in some cases, to the board of directors.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Involvement in the democratic process is an intrinsic part of volunteer participation and development. It is critical to the success of the democratic process that all adult members understand their responsibility, rights, and role in carrying out a democratic form of government in a Girl Scout council. All voting members of the council (elected delegates, board of directors, nominating committee, etc.) should have a written description of their roles and responsibilities in the democratic process. All adult and Senior Girl Scout members should also receive information, education, and training on how to initiate and influence change regarding policy, practices, and procedures in the council jurisdiction and in the national organization.

While elected delegates receive training regarding their roles and responsibilities as voting members of the corporation, and board members receive training regarding their corporate responsibilities, other adult members should also receive training about how to influence major governance and management decisions, both as members of decision-influencing groups and as individuals. These same members also need to understand the specific accountabilities of the board of directors and the nominating committee, and how corporate planning serves as the vehicle for councilwide decision-influencing. Delegate training should be available to all registered adults and older girls who are interested

in learning more about the democratic process in a Girl Scout council.

Guidelines for Effective Training of Council Delegates

Because delegate training is so important, in most councils it should be provided at several accessible locations during different time slots to ensure that every delegate can attend a training event. Training teams may include the council president, vice presidents, members of the board of directors, and decision-influencing chairs who can bring experience and familiarity with current issues before the board. They are also able to help delegates to differentiate between governance issues and management issues, and can inform the membership on how the democratic process works in the council.

Training should cover:

- The responsibility of the delegates as members of the corporation.
- The ways in which delegates become informed about the issues to come before them at the annual meeting of the council.

- The process by which the board of directors refers issues to designated council policy-influencing units for reaction.
- How proposals may be originated by individuals and groups and submitted to the board of directors for action, or placed on the annual meeting agenda, or referred to the executive director.
- Ways in which delegates get input from their constituency and report back.
- How delegates, in meeting assembled, acting upon proposals and participating in discussions, give general direction to the board of directors.
- Information about delegates as members of a deliberative assembly overview of parliamentary procedures and standing rules of the annual council meeting.
- A review of the corporation's planning cycle, emphasizing any deadlines set by the board of directors for the submission of proposals or discussion items for designated unit meetings and for the annual council meeting agenda, and providing each delegate with a calendar of the council's cycle of meetings.
- Any other duties that will be required of delegates throughout their term.
- The fiscal and fiduciary role of the board of directors.
- The areas of accountability of the executive director.
- The process by which the nominating committee puts together its slate of nominees for elective office and deadlines for referrals for candidates.

- The council's bylaws and strategic plan, including the corporate goals.

Communication

Good two-way communication is critical to the success of any decision-influencing process. Clear, unequivocal communication between the board of directors and the membership on important governance issues and concerns, and communication between the executive director and her operational volunteers and staff, is effective only when it works two ways.

In the cycle of decision-making, the board may initiate a topic on which it wants reactions and input from the membership before making a decision. After it gets the input and makes the decision, the board should then communicate the decision to the membership, along with the rationale for that decision. The rationale should set forth data gathered in the decision-influencing process.

Conversely, the need for decision-making often originates at the "grassroots" level and is communicated to the board of directors or executive director. In both cases feedback must be given. (See Exhibit 5, "Sample Suggestion/Request Form," and Exhibit 6, "Burning Issues.")

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN GIRL SCOUT COUNCILS

As councils begin the process of evaluating their current system for carrying out the democratic process and determining which form of decision-influencing might best suit their needs, they should ask the adult membership in their jurisdiction the following questions:

- Is the board of directors consistently seeking guidance from the membership on major issues and policies affecting the total council?
- What decision-influencing structure that is flexible and meaningful to both the grassroots volunteers and the council board of directors is best for our council?
- Does the system for electing delegates ensure broad-based participation and representation?
- Is there a more effective way to implement the concept of representative government in this council?
- Do delegates understand and carry out their corporate responsibilities?
- Does the way the council annual meeting is conducted represent a wise investment of human and financial resources?
- Is the council's nominating process effective?

In the past, Girl Scout councils have organized to carry out the election of delegates and the decision-influencing function in two or three basic structures— associations, constituencies, and neighborhoods. Many variations of these three basic designs have been adopted by councils throughout the country. Some councils have opted to elect delegates through service units or other program delivery systems. These councils use various methods for providing the adult membership with opportunities to engage in discussion and debate on critical issues and concerns, and for giving reaction and input to the board of directors in making governance decisions.

Following are general descriptions of a variety of formal decision-influencing structures currently in use by councils across the country, as well as some that have been utilized by councils in the past. Models of these structures can be found in *Reviewing and Changing Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in Girl Scouting*.

Associations

Associations are the most widely used formal policy-influencing structures within the Girl Scout organization. Generally speaking, associations are most effective in councils that have large girl memberships, cover large geographic areas, and include multiple kinds of delivery systems. Associations have two general functions:

- To elect delegates to the council (corporate body), based on the registered girl membership in each association according to a formula established by the board of directors.
- To give reactions and input concerning major policy decisions being considered by the board of directors prior to the decisions being made that will affect a majority of the membership, involve major changes in program delivery, involve the spending of large sums of money, or represent a major policy change.

Delegates Elected by Service Units

Electing delegates by service units, which can be authorized in accordance with the council bylaws, is not a new concept. Some councils already use this method to elect delegates. If the service unit is used as the place where delegates are elected, care needs to be taken so the executive director is not prohibited from changing service unit boundary lines. Councils adopting this model need to have a well-defined process for membership participation in major gover-

nance and management decisions, other than the service unit. This process may or may not be spelled out in the bylaws. Whatever the decision-influencing system decided upon, it must be broadly and consistently publicized among the council's adult members.

Membership Constituency

The word "constituency" is used here as it applies to a group of citizens residing in an electoral area and entitled to elect representatives to a legislative body, in this case the council corporate body. Delegates elected by the constituents are authorized to act for those who elected them. The membership constituency is similar to the area association in that the responsibilities are the same, and both are based on geographic subdivisions. This plan is in use, with many variations, by a large number of councils.

With this option, rather than an association chair recommended by the association and appointed by the president to serve a specific term (two or three years), a constituency convener is appointed by the president for only one year, and need not reside in the area that is to be convened. The constituency convener should be a member-at-large or an officer of the board of directors. The constituency convener has no responsibilities other than convening the meeting and presenting an agenda approved by the board to the constituency members.

This system eliminates the nominating committee at the geographic subdivision level (association, constituency, service unit). Members of the constituency elect delegates and a delegate convener by

making nominations from the floor at the first meeting of the constituency after the annual meeting. The delegate convener is responsible for convening the elected delegates, as necessary, to keep them informed about issues to come before the corporation at the annual council meeting, and, when requested, to obtain their reaction and input concerning major governance decisions that arise between annual meetings.

Delegates-at-Large

In addition to delegates elected by geographic subdivisions established by the board of directors, delegates may be elected or selected from operational groups or from the council at large. The total number of delegates is determined by a formula based on girl membership and approved by the board of directors. The method and process for nominations for the election of delegates-at-large must be included in the council bylaws. To receive nominations from various groups, the council may appoint a delegate selection committee to review nominations and present a slate of "nominees to be elected by the council" at the annual meeting, at which time the nominees would take their seats as members of the corporation. This type of structure may be used when councils wish to make sure that all segments of the population throughout the council jurisdiction have the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. This could include groups of adult members who may not be filling operational positions directly related to girls, such as communities with a small girl membership and few registered adults.

Neighborhood Associations

The neighborhood association plan is used in a variety of ways by many councils. It differs from the area association and constituency plans in that it includes the planning and review functions as well as the council operations, in the same unit. In some councils this involves only those volunteers working with troops; in others, all registered adult volunteers residing in the neighborhood are members.

The neighborhood association has the same functions as large association and constituencies—to elect delegates to the corporation, to give reactions and input concerning major policy issues being considered by the board of directors, and to initiate proposals to the board of directors for possible placement on the annual meeting agenda. In this process, it is important for members to be able to distinguish between their role in influencing major governance and management decisions, and their role in day-to-day operations.

Town Hall Meeting (Annual Meeting) of the Corporation

In the town meeting plan, all registered adults, girls 14 years of age and older, and lifetime members comprise the voting membership of the corporation. This form of government was used in the early days of the Girl Scout organization

when all councils were small in membership and geographic size. The town meeting is a direct or “nonrepresentative” form of government where each member is entitled to vote her or his opinion on any item on the agenda as opposed to a representative form of government where delegates are elected to represent a specific constituency and are informed of the opinions of the constituency before the vote.

Councils considering this plan need to ensure (1) that it is legal within the state of incorporation; (2) that it includes a specific quorum to protect against totally unrepresented action in the name of the body by an unduly small number of persons; and (3) that it has a well-defined approach for implementing the policy-influencing process. The council board of directors needs to ensure that there is a system to get reactions and ideas on major policy issues prior to making decisions; to provide a forum for adult members to discuss and debate critical issues and concerns; and for the free and open exchange of ideas, other than at the annual meeting.

Community Involvement

This is an approach by which councils can increase the involvement of local individuals and organizations, giving back some of the decision-influencing power in Girl Scouting to the community. It is suitable for councils with widespread jurisdictions, and for those that may have a large number of United Ways.

This concept centers around two major elements—the community and the appointment of delegates—which provide for grassroots participation in the decision-making process, and for the board of directors to get reaction and input from the membership and the community on a regular basis in deciding key issues.

THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS: COUNCILS AND THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

All parts of the Girl Scout organization in the United States, which include the National Council, the National Board of Directors, and Girl Scout councils, are interdependent elements of a total organization. None of these elements are completely autonomous; all of them are dependent upon one another for sustaining their existence. The National Council is the major link binding Girl Scout councils and the national organization together. This relationship forms a solid foundation for collaborative action in the development and delivery of Girl Scouting in the United States, as well as for the involvement of councils in influencing major governance and management decisions made by the national organization. See Exhibit 7, "Interdependence: Councils and the National Organization."

Within the interdependent relationship of Girl Scout councils and the national organization, there are many opportunities—both formal and informal—for councils to influence major decisions made by the national organization. Some of the more formal systems for influencing policy at the national level are the following.

The Cycle of National Meetings

The cycle of national meetings, adopted by the National Council, provides for two major national meetings during the three-year triennium: the National Meeting of Presidents and Executive Directors, and the National Council Session. Each meeting has its own specific purpose and provides opportunities for free and open exchange of ideas and concerns, and for a channel of communication between council representatives and the National Board of Directors and staff.

The National Meeting of Presidents and Executive Directors

The National Meeting of Presidents and Executive Directors, the first meeting in the cycle of national meetings, brings together the volunteer and staff leadership of councils and the national organization, and plays a critical role in GSUSA's strategic planning. Participation in this meeting provides the opportunity for free and open discussion between the National Board of Directors and the top leadership teams in councils

about the critical issues affecting the future of the Girl Scout movement. A major focus of this meeting may be the consideration of topics that will be included on the agenda of the next National Council Session.

The National Council Session

The second meeting in the national cycle of meetings is the National Council Session, held in the third and final year of the triennium. The National Council Session, which ends one triennium and begins the next, is mandated in the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., and brings together the largest representation of individuals who deal with the governance of Girl Scouting. The National Council, in meeting assembled, demonstrates the democratic process in Girl Scouting at its very highest level. The National Council is the major link between Girl Scout councils and the national organization. The members of the National Council are: delegates elected by Girl Scout councils, members of the National Board of Directors and the National Nominating Committee, and other persons who may be elected by the National Council. They come together as a deliberative body; elect the National Board of Directors and National Nominating Committee; vote on proposals; and discuss major issues that will affect the immediate and long-range future of Girl Scouting. Actions taken by the National Council every three years provide broad, general governance direction to the National Board of Directors and give guidance to the National Executive Director on major operational projects.

Establishing the agenda for the National Council Session is the responsibility of

the National Board of Directors. Approximately two years prior to the National Council Session, all councils receive official, written notification from the National President that the opportunity for councils to participate in the development of the agenda for the National Council Session is officially open. One year prior to the National Council Session, councils are notified of the number of National Council delegates they are entitled to elect, based on the girl membership as of September 30 of the year preceding the National Council Session.

A National Council Agenda Committee is appointed by the National Board of Directors to review all proposals and suggestions received. The committee also:

- Corresponds with councils as necessary.
- Prepares recommendations related to the appropriateness of each proposal, if the subject warrants.
- Refers proposal(s) to a National Board standing committee for study and recommendations.
- Builds a proposed agenda to include all required business items, proposals deemed appropriate, and other recommended topics in order of priority.

The National Board of Directors takes action on the recommendations of the National Council Agenda Committee pertaining to each proposal, including those considered not appropriate for the National Council Session agenda, and approves all action items for placement on the agenda. Each Girl Scout council that submitted a proposal is notified of National Board action regarding placement on the National Council Agenda.

The National Council elects the National Board of Directors and National Nominating Committee; establishes requirements for GSUSA credentials; determines the general lines of policy direction of Girl Scouting by acting on proposals submitted to the National Council by councils and by the National Board of Directors; and amends the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

In conjunction with the National Council Session, members of the National Nominating Committee may meet with National Council delegates for the purpose of discussion, education, and understanding the referral process of the National Nominating Committee. National Council delegates subsequently explain the National Nominating Committee referral process as they report back to their councils. This same explanation may be made to prospects for nomination to the National Board of Directors and National Nominating Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities of National Council Delegates

Individuals who accept nomination and election from councils as delegates to the National Council assume one of the major rights and one of the most serious responsibilities in Girl Scouting. As members of the GSUSA corporation, while at the National Council Session, they hear:

- The National Board of Directors report on its stewardship of Girl Scouting during the past triennium.

- Detailed reports of sources of revenue and expenses and the status of GSUSA's financial position.
- Reports on the results of organizationwide surveys.
- Reports on innovation and progress in major areas of work.

Delegates to the National Council Session, along with other National Council members, carry the responsibility for determining the direction Girl Scouting will take throughout the country. Individuals are elected as National Council delegates for a term of three years, beginning when the person is elected and ending three years later when new National Council delegates are elected by each council. Although participation in the business of the National Council is the major focus of National Council delegates, there are definite responsibilities that they must fulfill prior to the National Council session, and they have an important role to play during the triennium.

Preparing for the National Council Session. Preparation of National Council delegates to fulfill their responsibilities at the National Council Session is the responsibility of each individual council. Providing the National Council Workbook and other information about proposals and events at the National Council Session is the responsibility of the national organization.

Although the council is responsible for providing training and preparing its delegates to the National Council on the proposals that are on the agenda of the National Council Session, delegates are not to be instructed on how to vote. Each individual member of the National Council should vote according to her or his own conscience, and in the best interest of Girl Scouting.

Each individual elected by the council as a delegate to the National Council Session should take personal responsibility for:

- Studying all business items on the agenda, background information, and recommendations of the National Board of Directors.
- Studying the entire contents of the National Council Session Workbook in order to be well-informed on procedures and the appropriate conduct while at the National Council Session.
- Attending briefing meetings conducted by their councils; participating in council, board, and association meetings; and participating in council forums and focus groups as requested.
- Obtaining a broad view of the opinions of adult and Senior Girl Scout members from all parts of the council.
- Becoming thoroughly informed on the facts about their council.
- Becoming thoroughly informed on facts about the national organization.
- Being familiar with the contents of the current *Blue Book of Basic Documents*.
- Knowing parliamentary procedure and *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

While attending the National Council Session, each delegate is responsible for:

- Attending all meetings and participating in the proceedings.
- Being fully prepared on all business items.
- Planning (with the council president) the information to be gathered at the National Council Session and the kinds of reports that will be made to the council when the National Council Session is over.

Responsibilities between National Council Sessions. In addition to fulfilling their official responsibilities while attending the National Council Session, National Council delegates should be sure to participate in all nonbusiness meeting events. In this way, they experience the full benefit of coming together with such a large group of individuals from all over the country and the world who share a common purpose and the same values and beliefs. Upon returning from the National Council Session, the National Council member has an obligation to:

- Report on the National Council decisions and the reasons for such decisions at the council's annual meeting, to the council board of directors, and to as much of the council's constituency as possible.
- Share insights on information gained at the National Council Session.
- Assist the council as it prepares to participate in the next National Council Session.

COMMUNICATING NEEDS AND IDEAS

In addition to the major decision-influencing meetings mentioned above, the interdependence of Girl Scout councils and the national organization is well demonstrated in the various ways in which councils and the national organization interact to exchange ideas and identify needs and concerns. In order that the total organization benefits from the skills, creativity, and capability found throughout the Girl Scout organization, continuing efforts are made to encourage a positive and constructive relationship between councils and the national organization. Following is a listing of some of the means and methods by which councils and the national organization communicate and share ideas with one another:

- National Board members may be identified by the National President to serve as a channel of communication and a policy link between the National President and council presidents.
- Newsletters, updates, correspondence, telephone calls, faxes, e-mail, GSUSA Information and Referral Center (1-800-GSUSA-4U), and information available on the GSUSA Web site (<http://www.girlscouts.org>).
- Proposals submitted for action at a National Council Session. Joint participation on National Board task groups.
- Participation in the development of national resource materials and projects through focus groups, council/national teams, surveys, pilot projects, serving as reader/reactors, and field testing.
- Participation in GSUSA national educational opportunities and special symposia.
- Sharing successful practice models for dissemination nationwide.
- Participation of National Board members, national operational volunteers, and national staff in significant council activities.
- Council performance assessment as an integral part of the chartering process.
- Submission of reports requested from GSUSA, involving cooperation in studies and projects of mutual interest.
- Sharing of external trend data and corporate goals for furthering council and national planning.

Calendar of Information-Gathering Activities

Primary Task	Assigned to	Deadline	Support Task	Assigned to	Deadline
Determine groups to contact					
Determine feedback methods					
Draft script for telephone interviews					
Organize and conduct groups					
Develop questionnaires or surveys					
Conduct surveys					
Tabulate					
Analyze results and recommendations					
Communicate results					

Developing a Proposal for the Annual Corporate Meeting Agenda

STEP ONE

Concerned constituency or individual develops proposal using council-designed form. Form includes title of proposal; statement of proposal in the form of a motion; and the reasons for the proposal. See Exhibit 3 on page 39.

STEP TWO

Proposal is sent by post, e-mail, or fax to board of directors c/o the council service center. Supporting documentation, including letters of support from other units or individuals, is included with the proposal document.

STEP THREE

Submitted proposals are reviewed by the president's team to determine appropriateness of the proposal for the annual meeting agenda and whether the proposal should be scheduled for board review and discussion. All proposals must be received no later than _____ months (whatever period is designated by the board of directors) prior to the annual meeting. Those proposals not appropriate for consideration at the annual meeting are addressed through the council's tactical planning process or, where appropriate, acted upon by the board of directors.

STEP FOUR

Each proposal accepted by the board for the annual meeting agenda is sent to voting members of the corporation with the call (legal notice) of the annual meeting, giving them an opportunity to acquaint themselves with relevant information and giving those voting members who are delegates sufficient time to gather input from their constituency.

STEP FIVE

Each proposal is presented in the form of a motion at the annual meeting and acted on in accordance with parliamentary law.

Proposal for the Annual Corporate Meeting Agenda

**Name of Council Unit or
Individual Presenting Proposal**

TITLE OF PROPOSAL

STATEMENT OF PROPOSAL *(in the form of a motion)*

That...

REASONS:

_____ *(signature of unit leader or individual)*

Date _____

List of Attachments

This form is to be submitted to the Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of _____
at least _____ months prior to the council annual meeting.

(If additional space is needed, please attach a separate page.)

Communication Methods Planning Chart

Goal of Communication _____									
Group	Telephone	Mailed; Written Survey	Small Group Interviews	Unit Meetings	Focus Groups	Forum	Training Event	Targeted Mail	
Delegates									
Girl members									
Community leaders									
Lifetime members									
Donors									
Board task groups									
Employed staff									

Sample Suggestion/Request Form

This form helps the _____ Girl Scout council to record and respond to recommendations from, or concerns of the membership. Each form submitted is carefully reviewed and directed to the appropriate recipient, who will respond to the writer.

Directions: Complete Section I of this form, and Section III if desired, and either present it at the next group meeting you attend, or mail it directly to the council service center to the attention of _____. If the form is given to the facilitator of a group meeting, that person will fill in Section II.

SECTION I

Suggestion/request: *(please use other side if more space needed)*

Situation that prompts suggestion/request:

SECTION II

Type of meeting where suggestion/request is being made or submitted:

Date of meeting:

Meeting facilitator:

Response of others at meeting to recommendation/request, if shared:

SECTION III *(optional)*

Name:

Postal Address:

Telephone Number:

E-mail Address:

Fax Number:

(continued)

Interdependence: Councils and the National Organization

AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

National Council

- Promotes and directs the Girl Scout movement in the U.S.A.
- Determines the general lines of policy of the Girl Scout movement and program.



Girl Scout Councils

- Further the development of the Girl Scout movement in the U.S.A.
- Establish local responsibility for leadership, administration, and supervision of the Girl Scout program.
- Develop, manage, and maintain Girl Scouting within the terms of the charter.

National Board of Directors

- Manages the affairs of the corporation between National Council Sessions.

GLOSSARY

Articles of incorporation. The chief self-governing rules of a corporation, also known in some states as a certificate of incorporation. Articles of incorporation are filed with the designated government agency of the state in which incorporation is to occur, usually the state in which the organization carries out its operations.

Associations/constituencies. Geographically defined membership grouping established by the council board of directors, as provided for in the council bylaws, to provide the means for members 14 years of age and over to influence decision-making, to elect delegates to the council, to initiate discussion of issues related to direction-setting and policy-making, and to give input to the council's board of directors regarding major issues.

Blue Book of Basic Documents. Contains the official basic documents of Girl Scouts of the United States of America: Congressional Charter; Constitution; bylaws; policies; procedures for issuing credentials; and the criteria and standards for an effective Girl Scout council. The book is revised in accordance with actions taken by the National Council and the National Board of Directors, and is published following each National Council Session.

Board committees. Board committees are established by the council board of directors, as authorized in the council bylaws, to assist it in carrying out its many ongoing responsibilities. These committees are comprised of board members and non-board members who are appointed by the president and approved by the board of directors. Each board committee may be involved in the gathering of internal and external data in preparation for corporate goal formation. Staff with appropriate expertise and experience are assigned by the executive director to provide support to board committees.

Board of directors. *See* corporate board of directors.

Board resolution. A significant, formal written expression of intent (motion) approved by the board of directors.

Board task groups. Board task groups are established by the board of directors, as authorized in the council bylaws, to assist the board in carrying out short-term projects in specific areas of work. They are comprised of board members, non-board members, and community representatives with expertise in the area in which the task group has been charged. Board task groups are set up at a particular time for a specific, limited purpose and work within a defined time frame. Upon completion of their task, and submission of recommendations to the board, a task group is dissolved.

Bylaws. The rules and regulations made by a corporation to manage its affairs and to define the rights and obligations of its members, directors, and officers in the corporation and among themselves.

Consensus. A situation in which all can live with and support the group decision, even though they might not agree with every detail of that decision.

Corporate board of directors. A board that is elected by the corporate membership body of a council and is accountable to the membership for governance of the council and stewardship of the council's critical resources, to the National Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. for compliance with charter requirements, and to the state in which the council is incorporated for adhering to the state corporate laws. The board of directors is accountable to the federal government in matters affecting nonprofit corporations.

Corporate body. Those individuals holding voting rights in meeting assembled as defined in the council bylaws. This includes members of the board of directors, members of the nominating committee, and either delegates elected by council decision-influencing units defined by the board or all members 14 years of age and older.

Corporate business records. All official records and correspondence that relate to the sound administration of the business affairs of the corporation. Examples of corporate business records are minutes of board meetings and annual meetings, financial statements, annual audits, and records pertaining to employed personnel.

Corporation. A body created by law and authorized to carry out stated purposes. A Girl Scout council becomes a membership corporation when it is incorporated in the state. The membership of the corporation in Girl Scouting usually consists of the delegates elected by constituencies, associations, and/or service units; members of the board of directors; and members of the nominating committee. At times the corporation may include other persons designated as ex officio members of the corporation, or additional persons may be elected as members at the annual meeting.

Council nominating committee. The council nominating committee is elected by and accountable to the corporation. The sole responsibility of the nominating committee is to prepare a single slate to fill vacancies of officers, members-at-large of the board of directors, and succeeding members of the nominating committee each year, and every three years, delegates and persons to fill vacancies should vacancies occur among delegates to the National Council Session.

Criteria and standards for an effective Girl Scout council. Measures for effectiveness that are established by the National Board of Directors to delineate the ways in which Girl Scout councils are expected to manage their ongoing work and to fulfill their charter requirements. The criteria and standards also provide an ongoing management tool.

Critical priorities. Outcome-oriented units of measurement that determine how well a council is achieving the standards for effectiveness.

Decision-influencing. The process by which the opinions and feelings of a variety of groups are sought and considered by those making the decision before the decision is made.

Decision-making. The process of making a final decision, after all of the pertinent facts have been gathered.

Delegate (council). Any registered Girl Scout member, 14 years of age or older, elected as a voting member of the council (corporation) by a specific geographic area or other entity established by the board of directors to represent them at the council's annual meeting. Delegates are elected for a specific term that is defined in the council bylaws. The number of delegates that geographic areas are allowed to elect is usually based on the total number of girls registered through the council as of a specific date.

Delegate (National Council). Person elected by a Girl Scout council as a member of the National Council (GSUSA corporation). Each council is entitled to elect one delegate and, in addition, one further delegate for each 1,800 girls under its jurisdiction who are members registered with Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. as of September 30 of the year preceding the regular session of the National Council. Girl Scout lone troops collectively are entitled to the number of delegates according to the same formula prescribed for local councils. The prescribed number of 1,800 girls shall be adjusted up or down by 300 or multiples thereof when necessary to keep the total number of local council and lone troop delegates as close as possible to 2,000 but not in excess of 2,000. National Council delegates serve as members of the National Council for three years from the date of their election or until their successors are elected.

Delegate-at-large. Any registered Girl Scout member, 14 years of age or older, elected as a voting member of the council (corporation) not representing any particular geographic area, to ensure that all girl members are represented in the council's democratic process. Nominees to become delegates-at-large are selected by a board-appointed committee and are seated by a vote of the members of the corporation at the beginning of the next annual meeting.

Deliberative assembly. An independent or autonomous group of people meeting to determine, in full and free discussion, courses of action to be taken in the name of the entire group, usually of such size that a degree of formality is necessary in its proceedings. Members of a deliberative assembly are ordinarily free to act within the assembly according to their own judgment, and the opinion of each member present has equal weight, as expressed by vote, in the decisions made. Failure to concur in a decision of the body does not constitute withdrawal from the body. If there are absentee members, the members present at a regular or properly called meeting act for the entire membership, subject to such limitation as may be established by the body's governing rules. (See *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, page 1.)

Democratic process. A basic belief of the Girl Scout movement, defined as the various means or avenues through which the membership can influence decisions and activities in matters of governance and management, and have access to those responsible for decision-making.

Ex officio. A member, by virtue of office or other position, who has all the privileges of a regular member of a specific board, committee, council, or other group for as long as the office is held. A member ex officio may also have privileges limited by the bylaws. For example: The executive director shall serve as a member ex officio of the board of directors without the right to vote and make motions.

Executive session. Any meeting of a deliberative assembly, or a portion of a meeting, at which the proceedings are secret. A motion to go into executive session is a question of privilege and therefore is adopted by a majority vote. Only members, special invitees, and such employees or staff members as the assembly or its rules may determine to be necessary are allowed to remain in the room. *The minutes or record of proceedings of an executive session must be read and acted upon only in executive session.*

Focus group. A qualitative research technique for exploring attitudes, beliefs, opinions, motivations, and reactions of people. A focus group uses a small-group interviewing technique. It requires a trained facilitator. The results are not statistical but interpretative.

For-profit corporation/partnership. A form of business organization where profits are shared or distributed. If a for-profit organization is a corporation, it has owners known as stockholders to whom the profits are distributed. If it is a partnership, the partners hold the equity in the business and share the profits.

Girl Scout council. The title given to the local council jurisdiction and membership, including the corporate body, the council nominating committee, members of the council board of directors, its committees and task groups, employed staff, and all girls and adults registered with the Girl Scout movement through the council.

Girl Scout council (corporation). The membership body of the corporation in meeting assembled. It includes delegates who are adult members elected by associations, constituencies, or other units; the council nominating committee; the council board of directors; its committees and task groups; and such other members as may be prescribed by the council bylaws.

Girl Scout council charter. A credential issued by the National Board of Directors of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. to an organization

exclusively devoted to the Girl Scout movement in the United States, granting it the right to develop, manage, and maintain Girl Scouting in a specified area of jurisdiction, which is established by the National Board of Directors, and to call itself a Girl Scout council. A Girl Scout council charter is issued for no more than four years.

Girl Scout national organization. Includes the National Council, National Board of Directors, national committees and task groups, and all national staff members.

Girl Scout organization in the U.S.A. Includes the national organization, chartered Girl Scout councils, and licensed groups.

Girl Scouts of the United States of America. The official name of the corporation, incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia, and chartered by the Congress of the United States of America.

Governance. The practice of a board of directors, who are the ultimate authority, to collectively control and foster an institution in fulfilling the purpose for which it exists, and to direct the making and administration of policy that will ensure organizational stability and give direction for the future.

Management. The provision of leadership, management philosophy, and continuity to the planning, organization, and supervision of all operational work within the framework of the organization's goals and the staffing required to carry it out.

Management-influencing. The process by which opinions and feelings are sought and considered by the executive director prior to a major management (operational) decision (for example, a significant change in the service delivery system).

Meeting. A meeting of an assembly that is a single, official gathering of its members in one room or linked together by telecommunications, so each can hear one another, to transact business for a length of time during which there is no cessation of proceedings

and the members do not separate, unless for a short recess. Depending on the business to be transacted, a meeting may last from a few minutes to several hours. Meetings may be held through electronic means so long as they meet the legal requirements of a meeting within the state of incorporation.

National Council. The membership body of the national corporation in meeting assembled. It includes delegates elected by councils, members of the National Board of Directors and National Nominating Committee, and such other members as may be elected by the National Council.

Nonprofit corporation. An organization, such as a corporation or trust, that is organized and operated for purposes other than the economic advancement of those who provide its capital. A nonprofit organization is permitted to generate a profit (surplus) but may not pass it on to persons as equity owners. Any surplus must be used for promoting the purposes of the organization.

Operational-influencing. See management-influencing.

Policy. An established course of action that must be followed.

Policy-influencing. The process by which the opinions and feelings of a variety of people are sought and considered by the board of directors before a policy decision is made (for example, changing the process by which delegates are elected).

Policy-making. A major responsibility of the board of directors that cannot be delegated to any other group.

Proviso. An amendment to bylaws that goes into effect upon adoption, unless there is a proviso—a change that is added to the sentence, or a section stating “provided that the amendment shall not go into effect until (a specified time).” A proviso should not be included with bylaws when printed. A footnote should indicate the proviso.

Quorum. The minimum number of members entitled to vote who must be present at all times for the legal transaction of business.

Recess. Strictly speaking, a short intermission within a meeting that does not end the meeting or destroy its continuity as a single gathering, and after which proceedings are immediately resumed at the point at which they were interrupted. A recess frequently has a purpose connected with the business of the meeting itself—such as to count ballots, to permit consultation among members, or the like.

Rules of order. Written rules of parliamentary procedure, formally adopted. Most organizations conform to an adopted parliamentary authority, such as *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, then adopt only such special rules of order as are needed to supplement or modify those in the parliamentary authority.

Service unit. An ongoing service delivery system in which appointed operational volunteers support troop/group activities in a specific geographic area. A service unit director is an operational volunteer. A service unit may also be used as the area designated by the board of directors where council delegates are elected. (See *Reviewing and Changing Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in Girl Scouting*.)

Session. A session of an assembly, unless otherwise defined by the bylaws or governing rules of a particular organization or body, that consists of a meeting or series of connected meetings devoted to a single order of business, program, agenda, or announced purpose, in which—when there is more than one meeting—each succeeding meeting is scheduled with a view to continuing business at the point where it was left off at the previous meeting. For example, the regular session of the National Council is held every three years, and consists of a series of meetings that are devoted to discussion and debate related to the overall improvement of Girl Scouting, the election

of the National Board of Directors and National Nominating Committee, and amendments to the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

Special rules of order. Written rules of parliamentary procedure that supplement or modify rules contained in the parliamentary authority. These supersede any rules in the parliamentary authority with which they may conflict. Special rules of order are adopted separately from the bylaws as resolutions. They should be distributed with the bylaws under their separate heading. They may be suspended or amended by a two-thirds vote.

Stakeholder. Any person who has a stake in Girl Scouting: all adult members, girls, parents, funders, the community.

Standard. An established level of quality or achievement for measuring and judging a council's performance in delivering Girl Scout program to girls.

Standing rules. Those rules related to the details of administration rather than to parliamentary procedure. Examples are: the hours meetings will begin, or maintenance of a register of guests at meetings.

Task groups. See board task groups.

Volunteer. An individual who voluntarily becomes a member of the Girl Scout movement because she or he believes in the basic values of Girl Scouting.

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. A voluntary educational organization based on spiritual values and open to all girls without distinction of creed, race, nationality, or any other circumstance. The Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. is a member of the World Association. Through this membership, each girl and adult are a part of the Girl Guide and Girl Scout world movement.

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GIRL SCOUTS®

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10018-2798

ISBN 0-88441-497-3

