

Regional Delegate Governance Proposals to the Board of Directors

Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts (Council) operates under a unique governance structure where youth members (14) years of age or older, volunteers, Council staff, and the Board of Directors (BOD) all contribute to the direction of the Council. Through a series of checks and balances all groups work together to ensure the Council meets the needs of its constituency. The BOD sets the strategic direction, establishes policy, hires the CEO, and governs the Council. Regional Delegates (RDs) represent distinct geographic regions, elect the board slate, and influence the decision-making process. Council staff implement and carry out the strategic plan and the operational business of the Council.

This guide will help RDs fulfill their role in the governance process by outlining the method for bringing a proposal to the BOD for consideration.

Influencing Policy: A Guide for Regional Delegates

Introduction

The process of decision influencing is rooted in the way in which opinions and feedback from a variety of groups are sought before decisions are made. Providing input and influencing decisions is not limited to voting. Decision influencing can be as simple as asking clarifying questions, providing comments about the likelihood of success or failure of particular initiatives of the BOD, or actively listening to the information provided. Decision influencing can be as complex as participating in surveys, debating particular points of view, or making a formal proposal to the BOD for consideration.

In the Council, the RDs are well positioned to influence governance decisions. RDs are knowledgeable about the Council's mission, vision and goals. RDs are kept apprised of council activities and are provided with information about the strategic planning process and outcomes, as well as areas of upcoming major discussions and decision-making.

Governance Authority

The BOD is ultimately responsible for all policy and fiduciary decisions. The BOD is the body responsible for the governance of the Council and for acting on any governance issue.

The Board of Directors:

- Provides strategic direction and leadership for the Council
- Directs the making of policy that protects the Council
- Ensures the achievement of the mission through resource allocation
- Is responsible for the care, custody and oversight of Girl Scouting within Council jurisdiction
- Hires a Chief Executive Officer to carry out the operation of the Council; and
- Has fiduciary and legal oversight

Regional Delegates:

- Attend the Council's Annual Meeting and vote in person (or by proxy)
- Attend the annual Regular Meeting of RDs to elect new RDs as outlined in Article V of the Council bylaws
- Suggest general lines of direction for Girl Scouting within the jurisdiction of the Council by receiving and responding to reports and information from the BOD
- Initiate and submit to the BOD proposals directed toward the fostering and improvement of Girl Scouting within the Council
- Become familiar with the bylaws and policies of the Council
- Serve as liaison between Council membership and BOD
- May attend service unit meetings within designated region
- May serve as a non-board member on committees
- Perform such other duties as may be delegated by the Facilitator and/or BOD

Distinguishing an Operational Topic from a Governance Topic

Operational topics are matters that:

- Affect the procedure of how a policy is carried out within the Council
- Determine the day to day operations of the Council

Governance topics are matters that:

- Affect policy for the entire Council
- Reflect a documented trend that broadly affects girls and volunteers
- Affect the business of the organization
- Affect the Council bylaws

Moving Good Ideas Forward

When one or more RDs determine there is an idea, concern or opportunity that the BOD should be apprised of, there is a formal process that should be followed to ensure that all members of the Council have the opportunity to provide input. The first step is to think through the idea and present the topic for discussion with all the RDs. *Consider: What needs to be addressed? What is the desired outcome? Will the issue affect the overall Council, i.e., all girls? Is this a safety issue? Is it an issue that the RDs have the authority to change as outlined in the bylaws?*

Methods for gathering input may include delegate meetings by region, evaluations and surveys, email, phone calls, etc. If a decision to pursue is reached, the next step is to consult with the Regional Delegate Facilitator.

Preliminary Proposal Submission Process

Proposals for consideration by the BOD must be submitted to the Regional Delegate Facilitator:

1. Drafting the Proposal
 - Define the outcome: identify a single issue to be addressed. Ensure it is only one issue, not several linked together.
 - Ensure that the proposal addresses a governance issue that affects the entire Council and that all information is complete.
 - Assess how the change will affect others: consider what affect this change might have on individual service units or on the Council
 - Write a clear rationale for the change and indicate the effects the recommended change would have on the membership and the Council. Include any information that has been researched and documented. The proposal should not exceed 250 words.
2. Sharing the Proposal with the Regional Delegates
 - The proposal should be forwarded to the Regional Delegate Facilitator for review.
 - A proposal must be approved by majority vote at a meeting of RDs with at least 35% of RDs in attendance. The meeting will be scheduled and lead by the Regional Delegate Facilitator.
 - Delegates do not have to agree with, or believe in, the proposal being submitted. By moving the proposal forward, RDs are indicating that they are aware of the proposal and believe the matter to have governance implications.
 - If the proposal gains the required support, the Regional Delegate Facilitator will prepare a communication to be forwarded to the Board Secretary/Clerk via board@gsema.org.
3. Submission of the Proposal to the BOD Secretary
 - The proposal will be reviewed to determine if it requires action by the BOD, or if it should be referred elsewhere, i.e., council leadership for operational matters.
 - The Board Secretary/Clerk will inform the Regional Delegate Facilitator of the decision and timetable for discussion by the BOD, if applicable. The BOD has final decision and votes on all policy matters.
 - The Regional Delegate Facilitator will be notified of any action taken by the BOD.
 - The Regional Delegate Facilitator will inform the regional delegate body as to the outcome.