



Feature articles in this edition provide information about how the Realignment Team at GSUSA is expanding and how we are talking with national partners about this important project. We also include early information on the Board Chair & CEO Work Session in Orlando and are providing two attachments to support your communication with external partners: first, a copy of Kathy Cloninger's letter to Brian Gallagher, President and CEO of United Way of America, and second, a Realignment Fact Sheet.

The next edition will include detailed information about the agenda for the Board Chair and CEO Work Session and a brief report on the January 17 meeting with CEOs from councils serving large rural populations. The feature article about the Realignment Team also contains information about the meeting with CEOs serving rural populations.

ITEMS OF INTEREST ➤

Moving Forward with Realignment—Building the Teams

Kathy Cloninger brought to her role as National CEO a commitment to share leadership with all segments of our organization: the Core Business Strategy was fashioned by teams of national and council volunteers and staff; the National Council Session provided unprecedented opportunities for engagement through Open Space; and the new GSUSA staff structure was designed to include "Advisory Groups" of council volunteers and staff working in partnership with GSUSA staff throughout the organization. As realignment evolves, that commitment to engage others is being carried out in several ways.

On January 17, a group of CEOs from councils who serve primarily rural areas convened for a "listening session" to discuss the challenges and opportunities that are unique to populations who may be widely distributed over a council's jurisdiction. Councils providing service in Montana, Utah, Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, and Florida took part in this day-long exchange with very positive results. A brief report will be included in the next edition of *Realignment News* and a more complete report will be shared at the Work Session in Orlando.

As a next big step, the GSUSA Realignment Team, directed by Sol Magay, will more than triple in size on January 31 when National Operational Volunteers, current and former Board Chairs, current and former CEOs, and subject matter experts from GSUSA meet at Macy for a four-day Work Session. This group will identify and prepare materials to support realignment and, ultimately, partner with GSUSA staff to support the work of councils in various stages of realignment implementation. More information on the Realignment Team will be available at the meeting in Orlando.

We have been delighted to hear from volunteers and staff throughout the country who are interested in working in various roles to support realignment. We know that the Realignment Team will further expand in the months and years ahead and would love to know if you are interested in serving. Please alert us of your interest at vwright@girlscouts.org.

Talking with our National Partners about Realignment

GSUSA is taking the lead in communicating with our national partners about realignment. Kathy Cloninger and other leading members of the national staff have shared or will be sharing information about realignment with our partners at Mutual of America, Mutual of Omaha, and Palmer and Cay, as well as ABC Interbake, Little Brownie Bakers, QSP/Reader's Digest, Ashdon Farms, and Trophy Nut Company.

Kathy has communicated with Brian Gallagher, President and CEO of United Way of America to set the stage for local council CEOs to initiate conversation with local United Way partners; a copy of her letter to Brian is attached. Kathy has also had conversation about this project with many of our national agency partners who are part of the "Leadership 18." A fact sheet, developed to help councils communicate about realignment with external audiences, is also attached to this edition of *Realignment News*.

Early Information on the Board Chair & CEO Work Session

In one month and four days we will convene in Orlando for the first-ever national Work Session for Board Chairs and CEOs. Our work will be collaborative, as together we take our first steps toward implementation of the Core Business Strategy.

Council boundary realignment will be the focus of our meeting. The GSUSA demographer team will introduce their initial map of council boundaries based on external data. Materials to support realignment will also be introduced, and state/regional teams will have several opportunities to meet together to continue with their consideration of realignment options.

We have had many questions about the demographers' map and what will be expected of councils on-site in Orlando. Councils will have the opportunity to engage in substantive conversation about realignment options but will not be expected to make boundary decisions at the meeting. If you have any questions about this, please communicate directly with Jan Verhage at jverhage@girlscouts.org or Vicki Wright at vwright@girlscouts.org.



1. What happens when a council with a qualified charter merges with a council that doesn't have a qualified charter? Answer: When a council with a qualified charter combines with others, it does not mean that the new council will begin with a qualified charter. Each newly formed Girl Scout Council will be issued a charter for the new

corporation. Areas of improvement may be identified in some or all of the merged councils; they will become part of the work of the new council.

2. What happens if your charter is ending just before you move into the merger process? Answer: As we have done with mergers and consolidations in the past, a council whose charter is due to expire within 18 months of the board vote to proceed with a merger will have its charter extended until the merger is complete. We are developing a policy for National Board consideration that will address other charter options in this time of transition.

3. I am concerned that the demographers' map will be based entirely on demographic data and won't reflect the "humanity" that is so much a part of Girl Scouting. Is that true? Answer: We have asked our GSUSA demographer team first and foremost to present a map that addresses demographic and economic indicators and trends and respond to the criteria prioritized by councils. The purpose of their map is to provide the first-ever view of jurisdictions based entirely on external factors. We know that this map will not be the final map. Local councils, working in state and regional groups, will have the opportunity to add "Girl Scout reality" to the map as they develop their proposals for submission to GSUSA on June 1.

4. How is this going to help girls? Answer: The goal of nation-wide realignment is to strengthen our ability to deliver on our promise to girls. We want a girl to have the fullest possible array of opportunities during her Girl Scout experience.

When we look at the cost per girl comparison in different size councils, on average, the cost per girl in smaller councils is higher than the cost per girl in councils that serve larger numbers of girls. These larger councils—whether in compact urban areas or vast geographic areas—are able to spread their administrative costs further, ultimately making more resources available for girl program.

While we recognize that quality programs exist throughout the country in small and large councils, in rural as well as urban and suburban councils, the scope of program options available to girls will be increased in the realigned council structure. Girls will have greater opportunities to see themselves within a larger perspective as they interact regularly with a larger network of girls. Resources and opportunities for volunteers will also be enhanced, which will ultimately enable us to provide better program and serve even more girls.

5. What about all the business support staff? Is anyone watching out for them? Answer: Yes. The goal of council realignment is not to reduce the number of staff or lessen our community presence. With multiple office/program locations in council jurisdictions, support staff will always be needed to fulfill the many critical administrative responsibilities that are essential to the success of every council. Positions in new councils may be different than they are now, but we know that a talented pool of dedicated staff will be needed in many different roles to support Girl Scouting throughout the country.

Questions related to retirement plans, severance recommendations, and the challenge of merging differing health plans are all being researched by GSUSA. Our target is to have as many specific answers as possible at the Board Chair/CEO Working Session.

6. How much is being spent on consultants by councils and by GSUSA to support this project? Answer: While we do not have specific information from councils or council groups on costs related to local efforts, we do know that many groups have been able to secure demographers from universities and government sources pro bono or at minimal costs. Many groups have utilized facilitators, and GSUSA has provided National Operational Volunteers as well as GSUSA staff to support state/regional discussions. Council groups have been meeting in central locations to help defray the travel costs for group meetings, but we know that multiple meetings, particularly in large geographic areas, have been an expense for councils.

For GSUSA, our major contract has been with our demographer team, who will be working with us through the summer. Other consulting costs have been kept to a minimum thanks in large part to our knowledgeable and experienced group of National Operational Volunteers who have been traveling throughout the country to support the process.
