

Interests Assessment Questionnaire: Return to Amy@amygordon.com by Jan. 26

General Questions:

1. Describe how your Council keeps the needs of the girls as its first priority.

Everything we do with our time, talent, technology and treasure is for girls. We survey girls to discover their interests, evaluate events and programs to be sure they are what girls want, analyze registrations for events and for camp sessions to determine if they are still meeting the needs of girls, look to other agencies and studies to determine needs and interests, and talk to the girls directly.

2. Describe at least three strengths of your Council.

Staff, empowerment of volunteers, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars including the prison segment, the post-release segment and the mentoring segment, Camp Singing Hills, and our partnerships with Maltby Nature Preserve and Amicus, Anti-bullying program, membership growth, and fund development growth

3. Describe at least three areas of improvement you would suggest for your Council.

We are focusing on improving the infrastructure of Camp Singing Hills, we could do more outreach groups and expand the Beyond Bars to the fathers incarcerated, and do better with the Native American population.

4. Describe at least three positive aspects of the realignment process.

This area will benefit from grants that previously we would not be eligible for due to area restrictions, we can take advantage of the Equestrian Academy that Rochester has, and that is about all I can think of.

5. Describe at least three things that make you nervous or anxious about the realignment process.

The one-on-one relationship we hold with our volunteers and communities, the equity in program delivery to rural areas, and realigning structures before we know what the new program is going to be. I have always gone to the girls to drive program and program to drive facilities and structure. This feels backwards to me, and I am greatly concerned about the continuation of Girl Scouting.

Governance:

1. What qualities are important in the new council's leadership? CEO? Board of Directors?

Ability to take calculated risks and think beyond the status quo, ability to put girls needs first, ability to bring lots of money to the new council, ability to see the future and the big picture, the ability to turn vision into reality, ability to build trust and be trustworthy, ability to integrate five different ways of work into one, ability to value rural and city cultures and work within both equally and easily, ability to communicate clearly and tell the Girl Scout story. On top of this the CEO must be able to manage a wide-ranging organization with multiple locations, and ensure all locations are fully funded.

2. At the annual meeting, what voting procedure (in person, email, polling stations, etc) do you use and why? What are the benefits and drawbacks of this procedure?

Delegates in person as defined by our bylaws

3. At the annual meeting, what representation method (one member-one vote, delegates, etc.) do you use and why? What are the benefits and drawbacks of this method?

2 delegates and two alternates from each service unit are appointed – at the meeting one delegate one vote – benefit is simplicity and not needing to recruit large numbers of volunteer delegates

4. What challenges are there to effective alumni involvement? How have you addressed these challenges?

When approached they are all concerned that all we want is their money, and finding staff time to bring them together.

5. Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen governance structures of the new council.

If the committee considers new ways of governance and multiple ways to participate the governance can be strengthened. If not, it will be difficult to recruit board members and delegates.

Communications

1. On a very general level, what are the most important messages that you strive to communicate? Girl Scouts is the premier organization delivering a leadership development program that is second to none. That the realignment will strengthen Girl Scouting, and the girls will be the beneficiaries of the new structures.

2. Describe at least three general messages that you want to convey to internal audiences during the alignment process (either to specific internal audiences or to internal audiences in general). Why are these messages important?

We are keeping the girls at the forefront of all planning, we are informing them every step of the way as things happen, and we want their input into the new council we are building. Keep membership numbers up, keep volunteers reregistering, and keep funders hearing good things from vomunteers

3. Describe at least three general messages that you want to convey to external audiences during the alignment process (either to specific external audiences, or to external audiences in general). Why are these messages important?

The new council will be more effective and efficient, the girls will have greater opportunities, and service delivery will be closer to them. So we don't loose funders.

4. In the past, what communications strategies have you found most useful and successful and why?

Methods that tie the message to the community and identifies what is in it for that community.

5. Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen communications. Less contradictory information – right now each council has different cookie companies, different prices, different fees for programs, different everything – this will standardize info in the lower half of Minnesota

6. Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about the realignment process with regards to communications. The promises made about efficient and effective will not hold water, or funders will stop giving because they see the new council as “not in my towhn”.

Programs

1. What qualities make your Council's programs successful? They are challenging, meet the interests of girls, are innovative and meet the needs of girls at risk – are seen by the public as quality approaches to girl leadership development

2. What kinds of programs are especially valuable for attracting new members to the Girl Scouts? Why? See # 1 answer

3. Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen your programs. Get us more money and staff to do outreach to girls at risk

4. Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about the realignment process with regards to programming. Because we are less densely populated program delivery and

services to volunteers will be directed more at the densely populated areas – greater membership return potential for the cost and effort

Finance

1. **What do you like best about your current payroll, accounting, and financial reporting systems? What could be improved about these systems?** Ours are outbased and I like that experts are handy to respond to any questions.
2. **What factors are most important to you in determining the contribution of assets and facilities by individual councils?** Equity of services to all girls, locations closer to the community
3. **What works well about your current budgeting process? What would you do differently? Why?** Each department submits a budget based on their determination of the needs of girls and the cost of delivering services.
4. **What factors currently motivate your budgeting decisions? What are your primary considerations in determining how to allocate your budget?** We budget for what we need, then go after the money to get the job done. We do not look at what we think we will raise, and budget down to that level. We have always been able to raise the money we needed.
5. **Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen your finance structures.** I don't think it can.
6. **Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about the realignment process with regards to finance.** . Because we are less densely populated program delivery and services to volunteers will be directed more at the densely populated areas – greater membership return potential for the cost and effort. We have a rich resource population that could be drained to serve the more dense populations.

Fund Development

1. **What are your most successful fundraising activities? What do you think makes these activities successful?** Strong Girls ► Strong Women Breakfast Ask event raising \$40,000 each year, and grants for the Beyond Bars program. They tell the story of Girl Scouting very clearly and from the mouths of the participants.
2. **What approaches are most effective for maintaining good relationships with your donors? Why?** Making sure their dollars go as they direct, and reporting the successes of the programs. Donors want to know that they are spending their discretionary dollars appropriately and where they will do the most good,
3. **What do you view as the most important factors (ex. sending a message about the importance of Girl Scouts, cultivating a list of donors, etc.) in deciding what type of fundraising activities to employ?** Matching the donor's interest to what we are doing
4. **What problems have you encountered in fundraising? What do you see as the biggest obstacles to successful fundraising?** Lack of Board participation in raising money. It pushes us into the less effective event venue rather than face-to-face asks.
5. **What impact have your fundraising efforts had on your public image?** Good and bad – we are seen as innovative and effective, but we are also seen as always having our hand out.
6. **Do you rely heavily on grants? Why or why not?** Yes – we have a very grant-fundable program that brings in a great deal of money, and frees other moneys up for other causes.
7. **If you have been successful in getting grants, what do you think accounts for this success?** The quality of the program, and matching interests of the foundation to the project.

8. **Are you satisfied with your current staff allocation to fund development?** Why or why not? No, we have one person for events and one person for bringing people to the table. It would be enough if the board also took their role in fund development seriously.
9. **Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen fund development.** Access to foundation and large corporate headquarters
10. **Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about the realignment process with regards to fund development.** People wanting to be sure their dollars are used locally, or not sent to “the cities”. Donors feeling the jurisdiction is too large to be effective.

11. Human Resources

1. **Is learning a core value for individuals, teams and the organization? Give some examples of learning as a core value.**
2. **What are the strengths of your current recruitment process? Your retention processes?** Empowerment of volunteers to do their jobs, and getting the right volunteers to the right position, and retention - the program met the needs and interests of the girls, and the volunteers felt supported and valued.
3. **What factors are most important in determining compensation programs?** The recruitment and retention of quality staff
4. **What factors are important in maintaining high retention rates?** Feeling valued, seeing that the council is worthy of trust, feeling trusted, pay is equitable to the job required, and matching the right person to the right job.
5. **Have you faced any difficulties with staff retention? If so, what do you think caused these problems and what are the most effective approaches for solving them?** No – we compensate them well for their time, we hire people who can do the job and have a passion for it, and we do staff evaluations letting the staff person evaluate themselves for their supervisor. We usually find that a well performing staff person will rate themselves lower than their supervisor, this giving the supervisor the opportunity to heap praise upon their heads.
6. **Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen the human resources program of the new council.** It is supposed to allow for higher compensation packages
7. **Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about the realignment process with regards to human resources.** Loss of connectedness with volunteers

Training

1. **What aspects work particularly well about your current approach to training volunteers? Why do these work well?** Our new training delivery structure because it empowers volunteers to bring training into their community – it is training monitored and delivered to volunteers by volunteers
2. **What could you do differently to improve your approach to training volunteers? What impact, specifically, would these changes have on the quality of the training?** Get GSUSA to focus training on facilitation of girl groups rather than on how the handbooks work, and making it more about leadership development and how to do that
3. **What feedback and suggestions have you received from volunteers about the training?** It takes too long, it is inconveniently located, and it doesn’t help a lot when you have 12 antsy screaming little girls to bring under control.
4. **Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen training.** See #2

5. **Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about the realignment process with regards to training.** That GSUSA will get the program out to leaders before they have the training modules completed, and that the modules will not focus on facilitation skills for the leaders at age level appropriateness

Service Delivery and Operations

1. **What, specifically, are the most important functions that volunteers serve in the delivery of services?** They are crucial to the delivery of quality troop program, training and board leadership. 95% of the work of a council is done by volunteers
2. **What, specifically, are the most important functions that staff members serve in the delivery of services?** To empower volunteers, to match them to the positions, and to provide ongoing support.
3. **What are the most important factors that determine/have determined the structure of your staff?** The work needed to be done in support of volunteers, fund development, programs and camp, and outreach. In other words, staffing is based on the needs of girls and the strategic and tactical plans
4. **What works particularly well about your staff structure?** It is not higherarchical, the office is configured so you just need to step out of your office to integrate your work with the work of others, and we hire quality people who know how to get things don and we let them do it. Empowerment, not micromanagement
5. **What do you like about the locations of your offices? Why do you like these aspects of your office locations?** The location itself – five acres of land with 3 eco systems on the north edge of Northfield, the very close proximity to the two private colleges, it will be central to the new council, it is easy to get to and we are in a growth area of Minnesota.
6. **If you could change anything about your office locations, what would you change? Why?** Make the building bigger to better hold the staff and provide services to the volunteers
7. **Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen service delivery and operations.** If more local offices are established as promised so direct services are closer to the volunteers, if our shop area can be expanded to handle more items, and if the volunteer/ staff relationship can be maintained and strengthened, then realignment will be a positive thing.
8. **Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about the realignment process with regards to service delivery and operations.** If all of the reasons itemized in the previous question fail to materialize, the new council will loose the volunteer's trust. Once lost, it is very difficult to regain.

Information Technology (IT):

1. **What works well about your current IT system?**

The system runs pretty smoothly, we have an IT plan that focuses our efforts, and we have a local service person who can come at almost any time to help with a problem.

2. **What factors influenced your choice of IT systems?**

Quality, effectiveness, and cost

3. **How is IT important to your day-to-day operations?** Communication with the website to volunteers, the e-news letter to volunteers and families, maintaining inventory, tracking sales, tracking membership, tracking fund development efforts.

4. **Describe at least three ways in which the realignment process could potentially improve or strengthen IT.** On-line registration, reduce the needed staff, reduce redundancies, standardize software, etc.

5. **Describe at least three concerns or fears you have about realignment regarding IT.**

That we will spend the new council's money on a system that will be overridden by GSUSA when they get their system up and running and mandate its use by councils.