



In this issue, we have included an excerpt from an article about change that we thought might be helpful. Wende Wilson, CEO of Girl Scouts of DuPage County, shared this article with us following the recent merger of Girl Scouts of DuPage County with Whispering Oaks Girl Scout Council.

This week's Q & A includes answers to some of the questions that were raised during the conference calls with Board Chairs and CEOs on January 27 and January 30 along with other questions that we continue to receive from volunteers and staff.

As always, questions and comments are welcome. Please send them to Jan Verhage at jverhage@girlscouts.org or Vicki Wright at ywright@girlscouts.org.

ITEMS OF INTEREST >

Get a Compass to Navigate the White Water of Change

Jeffrey and Laurie Ford

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“Want to make a positive impact on your mental health during an organizational change? Want to cut down on the upsets and other negative feelings associated with White Water change? Then here's a few tips:

1. Review the key "deliverables" from your office. What do other people really need from you or your group? What do they expect? Keep your eye on those things, and keep the deliverables—products, services, and information—moving out to the people who need them. Revise and improve those deliverables as needed to keep your internal and external customers satisfied.
2. If new people are asking you for things, clarify what they want, what they need, and find out how you can make their work easier. Focus on the deliverable—the product, service or information—that will help new people "set up shop" in their new positions or responsibilities.
3. Mind your business: deliver the goods. Try to abstain from gossip and speculation. We know it's tempting—everyone wants to talk about what will happen to that person, or that program, or that group. But be aware that the speculation stirs things up too. As people share their opinions they can inflame things and cause further ripples and potential upsets. Change is stressful enough without adding to it by talking about stuff we can't do anything about.

4. Take your questions to people who can answer them. Take your problems to people who can solve them. And don't try to give someone an answer when you know they need to talk to someone else. Every time you make up an answer to satisfy someone, you risk stirring up more chaos than if you'd just redirect them to the right person.

5. Keep your eye on the goal. Every change is initiated for a reason, even if you don't agree with it. If your organization is in the middle of a major overhaul, this is not the time to second-guess the decision to change. This is the time to accelerate it wherever possible, and plan to deal with the fallout after things settle down. If you don't know what the goal of the change is, ask someone who does know—it's good to get your head on straight about this!

When you focus your attention, and your conversations, on what you are supposed to deliver, to whom, and when, then you can set about doing that. You can update those deliverables as needed to help yourself and others keep pace with the change. We know the white water of change is an invitation to deliver opinions and complaints to people who have only their own unauthorized commentary to give back to you. But if you focus on what others need from you, that can give you a compass or lighthouse to help orient yourself throughout the change. And it will help you keep your head above that white water.”



1. Do local delegates have a role in determining council boundaries? Answer: It is the National Board’s responsibility to determine council jurisdictions as well as issue the council charters. The National Board is partnering with councils to reach agreement on new council boundaries.

Local delegates will be asked to vote in this process. We expect that they will have the same wisdom and foresight that we all must have as we make these important decisions for the future.

2. What about a plan to consolidate “back-offices” (administrative services) instead of a merger? Answer: Efforts to consolidate back offices have been successful for some organizations and not successful for others. Some have found that this effort can take more time and ultimately can cost more money. The biggest concern is always that individual organizations can change their minds, i.e., they can opt in and later opt out of “back-office” agreements. This creates the potential of instability for all partners in the “back-office” arrangement.

3. What if we don’t want to merge? Answer: We hope it doesn’t come to that. We are a Movement of very connected councils. All decisions, particularly those that will be made locally, need to be made in the context of the entire organization. We recently heard from a staff member in a council that has had some struggles. In her message she

applauds successful councils and goes on to say “...this realignment is really not for them it is for the councils like mine that need their help, support, resources, and most of all their kindness through this process.”

4. With all the changes at GSUSA, will the staff in New York be able to handle this project? Answer: The Council Partnership Teams and the Realignment Team are staffed with individuals with extensive consulting experience as well as experience in Girl Scouting. This staff team will be expanded with a growing number of NOVs, current and former CEOs and Board Chairs are working with state/regional groups to support all stages of realignment. Members of this expanded Realignment Team will be introduced in Orlando.

5. Shouldn't we implement the program model and volunteer model before we realign? Answer: Nationwide realignment will create a high capacity infrastructure at all councils so that the organization will be able to fully implement all aspects of the Core Business Strategy including; the new program model, the new volunteerism model, new governance models and the new fund development and brand/marketing models. Work is continuing in all these areas and realignment is the critical first step in implementing the Core Business Strategy.

6. Is there a possibility of a high capacity council that includes only rural areas? Answer: This question has been asked by some state/regional groups that cover large rural areas. The decision point for all proposed jurisdictions will be their potential of becoming high capacity.

7. What happens if we don't agree with the demographer map? Answer: We expect that some proposed jurisdictions will align with the GSUSA demographer's map – and others will not. Remember that this map is just one more step in this process. State/regional groups will be able to use the information provided by the demographer team to help inform the discussion that will follow.

8. What happens if the special task group that is going to develop the final map doesn't agree with the proposal that is submitted by our state/regional group? Answer: We will work in partnership with councils to find the solution.

9. How big is too big? Answer: David La Piana, a nationally recognized consultant in nonprofit mergers tells us that “it isn't about size it is about infrastructure and leadership”. If the design is correct and the leadership is focused on the entire jurisdiction, actual size should not be an issue. Councils need to be organized in a way that insures full connection with all communities both in delivery of services and in governance.