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**Date:** September 14, 2008  
**To:** Board Chairs of Councils Throughout GSUSA  
**Copy:** Patricia Diaz Dennis, Chair Board of Directors, GSUSA  
**From:** Nancy Dawes, Chair, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio; Board, Girl Scouts of Western Ohio;  
Deborah Hughes, Chair, Girl Scouts Shore to Shore  
Linda Babb, Chair, Girl Scouts of West Central Florida; Board, Girl Scouts of West Central Florida  
**Subject:** Cover Memo to White Paper

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Traditional GSUSA-Council partnership has broken down. Girl Scouts of the USA's mission is to build girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place – and its only delivery system is through councils. Yet councils, whether realigned or not, aren't getting what they need from GSUSA. In its zeal to modernize - a challenging and necessary effort - GSUSA has stopped providing a reliable support system for councils; this is in sharp contrast to the national CEO's statement that "GSUSA was holding themselves to high standards of accountability to Councils" (2008 CEO summit).

GSUSA needs to follow through on details essential to realignment and reinvention success. With large numbers of experienced council staff leaving the movement, the advent of many new-to-the-movement CEO's, major reorganization challenges within councils, volunteer base erosion and an extremely challenging funding environment, councils need a GSUSA they can count on as a true partner. Specifically, **the National Council needs a national board of directors that will hold the national CEO accountable to:**

1. Provide outcome measures for program materials by first quarter '09.
2. Deliver a clear blueprint and timeline for development and rollout of a national volunteer system (originally promised by 2007)
3. Offer strong, consistent leadership in branding Girl Scouts as the "best personal leadership development program for girls"
4. Lead the strategic (and necessary) shift to an outcomes-based fundraising model
5. Define and be a role model for a "high capacity/high performing" nonprofit.

Without adequate GSUSA support on these and other basic concerns and faced with relentless demands of constituents and environment, each council is forced to "reinvent the wheel" on too many topics – not a path to high performance functioning nor to a strong brand. In fact, we believe it is a recipe for disaster.

Call to Action:

The attached white paper more specifically provides details of current outages, additional concerns, and suggested courses of action. We encourage you to share this information with your board and national council delegates so that they may fulfill their duties (Blue Book Article V): "The National Council...shall determine the general lines of policy of the Girl Scout movement...by giving guidance to the National Board upon general lines of direction of the Movement and program".

We look forward to constructive action upon which a renewed, mutual commitment to GSUSA – Council partnership will be based.

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**Our Mission**

*Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character,  
who make the world a better place.*

## **A White Paper for the Girl Scouts of the USA**

We are committed to change and embrace the core strategies as the framework that will allow the Movement to deliver a contemporary leadership program to girls. We are motivated by our dedication to the Mission and the desire that girls of our nation will have Girl Scouting in the future. We acknowledge the need for a committed partnership between Girl Scouts of the USA and local councils – a partnership of both paid staff and volunteers who work together to “build girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place”. The intent of this paper is to document important gaps between GSUSA’s intentions and their actual results, so that we can incite national-level actions at GSUSA that will enable the Movement to fulfill its mission.

### **Overview:**

In 2005 two national leaders; Kathy Cloninger, Chief Executive Officer, and Cynthia Thompson, National Board Chair; communicated to Council leaders about work undertaken to address the “Brutal Truths that face Girl Scouting”. The memo told all that “...we must make bold leaps. Incrementalism won’t achieve the Movement-wide transformation that girls need. The status quo really does have to go.”

This communication followed the work done in 2004 by consultant Willie Pietersen to develop a strategy that would address five key areas whose transformation would be pivotal to success of Girl Scouting:

- Program and Pathways
- Volunteerism
- Brand
- Funding
- Governance and Organizational Structure

In the four years that have passed since Pietersen’s work there has been much churning, but little progress:

- While most councils have reorganized, little support has been offered or delivered from Girl Scouts of the USA to achieve the goal of reorganization – the establishment of High Capacity Councils – nor have standards been set to clarify or define “high capacity council”.
- Work has progressed on Program and Pathways, but because of the slow pace of Girl Scouts of the USA, local councils are developing their own program. This has confused both internal and external audiences and has drawn fire from the media, funders and partners.
- Minimal work has occurred for Volunteerism (single entry system), with clearly missed deadlines.
- Partnerships and co-branding programs have been undertaken to heighten the visibility of Girl Scouting, but in the minds of many the visibility achieved has only served to exacerbate perceptions that challenge the brand.

- Funding continues to be an issue at both the national and local levels – as shown by Girl Scouts of the USA's desire to raise dues in the face of declining enrollment and the projected deficit budget in 2008.
- Apart from "measuring" the number of councils that have realigned, Governance and organizational structure has minimal focus from Girl Scouts of the USA.

What follows are more details on the current status and recommended actions for each of the five Program areas that can move national GSUSA from its current state – unfocused and unaccountable – to a high performance, well managed, member- and council-responsive, audience-relevant and financially sound national organization.

### **Issue #1: Program and Pathways**

Gap Team Statement of 2005: Building the best-integrated personal leadership development model that defines activities and outcomes, differentiated by age-level for girls 5-17 and offers flexible pathways.

From the July 12, 2005 Update on Core Business Strategy Gap Team:  
Girls from everywhere in America will be attracted to a unified, nationwide core Girl Scout experience built on a model of personal growth and leadership development.

#### Where we are today:

Excellent (but slow) work on the Program Model has occurred. From the vote at the 2005 National Council Meeting defining the Girl Scout Program ("Girl Scouting is a nonformal, experiential and cooperative education program that promotes girls' personal growth and leadership development") – work has been done to define outcomes (Transforming Leadership book), define the model vetted by youth development experts, and develop "Journeys".

However, Girl Scouts of Arizona Cactus Pines have developed and published their own Program Mission\* built on new age principles "which sustain the biology of love". Girl Scouts of the USA has publically supported this work via Kathy Cloninger's appearance as CEO on a promotional tape. This support of a different program/mission statement than that voted on by the National Council creates clear misalignment and expectations of a unified Program Model for Girl Scout councils across the U.S.

Finally, outcome measurement – a key component to guiding councils in the new program model – will not be available until 2011.

\* Girl Scouts of Arizona Cactus Pine Program Mission: Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place, while helping each girl reach full potential; Releasing the human spirit and our collective human potential; self-organizing systems that support social networks and organizational culture which sustains the biology of love; High quality relationships between people with shared and individual accountability, responsibility and collective collaboration; Individual self-organizing, creating opportunities for deep understanding of oneself supporting leadership and action, sourced from inner "knowing".

## What we need:

1. Clear statement from Girl Scouts of the USA indicating that there is one unified program model, with a message to Girl Scouts of Arizona Cactus Pine that their program model is NOT consistent with the Girl Scouts of the USA's direction. Despite the urgent need presented by our challenges, we cannot waver from our Constitution or our democratic processes.

The Girl Scout Constitution states that, "We govern by an efficient and effective democratic process." The adoption of any proposed amendments to the Constitution or the policy of the Girl Scout Movement or Program are the responsibility of the National Council. Two hundred members present in person constitute a quorum.

If the significant changes represented by the program advanced by Girl Scouts of Arizona Cactus Pine are to be adopted, a Council Vote is required. But before a vote, an organization-wide debate is called for.

2. Outcome measurement available in 2009 – with clear plan on how the information will be acquired, synthesized and shared back with councils; budget information and help from national in coding and tabulating the data.

## **Issue #2: Volunteerism**

Gap Team statement of 2005: Developing a nimble, state-of-the-art model of volunteerism that mobilizes a variety of volunteers committed to the Girl Scout Mission is the goal.

### Where we are today:

The "Barriers to Volunteer Recruitment and Retention" – inconsistent volunteer processes, current culture and volunteer needs – that were presented in January 2005 still exist. Via multiple communications from GSUSA, the national volunteer system (single entry system) was due by Summer/Fall 2007 and has not been delivered. A robust volunteer program is closely tied to an effective Program Model rollout. And without a volunteer development system, chances for success are remote.

### Where we need to be:

1. By Jan 1, 2009, a clear blueprint and timeline for development of a National Volunteer System, including recruitment, selection, preparing (training), support, evaluation, reappointment criteria, and recognition – built on requirements tied to delivery of the Program Model. Specifically:
  - Definitions of competencies needed in a troop leader to effectively deliver the Program Model? How should these competencies be assessed? (i.e. interview process?)
  - Nationally-based, unified criteria defining what precludes someone from being a member/working with girls based on their background check?

### **Issue #3: Brand**

Gap Team statement of 2005: Transforming the Girl Scout image with a compelling, contemporary brand.

#### Where we are today:

Co-branding programs have been developed and opportunistic public relations efforts have been implemented. In each case the overarching message has been on a narrow brand element – cookie sales or badges – rather than promoting a message based on the core brand – building girls of courage, confidence and character.

For instance, in the 2007 Annual Report, it states (p.g10) "The image that we want the words Girl Scouts to bring to mind is leadership". However, later on the same page, it shares the launch of "Groovy Girls Dolls" – without any clear link to our "leadership" message; GSUSA also ran a Dairy Queen thin-mint blizzard promotion – reinforcing the negative aspects of Girl Scout Cookies: Center for Science in the Public Interest published "Thin Mint Blizzard merits a badge of shame for Girl Scouts of the USA and Dairy Queen".

#### Where we need to be:

Immediately....

1. Girl Scouts of the USA should ensure that all co-promotion/branding activities are clearly and explicitly linked to our "girl leadership" message.
2. Focus on delivery of the new Program Model and Volunteer Management structure, because without these basic changes, the brand will remain static.
3. Do not spend advertising money on a new tag line until the Program Model and Volunteer Management structure is underway. A simple change to a tag line is only cosmetic and will not contribute relevance or create a brand experience that has contemporary appeal.

### **Issue #4: Funding**

Gap Team statement of 2005: Substantially increasing contributed income to fund a vibrant Girl Scout organization.

#### Where we are today:

Other than a pilot project on funding, this appears to be essentially a forgotten priority.

In the 2007 Annual report, Girl Scouts of the USA reports funding of \$3.4 million over 5 years – a paltry amount given the overall budget of \$84 million dollar budget. Additionally, "gifts, grants, and bequests" decreased by almost one million dollars between 2006 and 2007. It has not been disclosed to membership the financial benefit of co-branding with Dairy Queen.

From a National Perspective, there appears to be no accountability from GSUSA on value/action steps gained from their use of consultants.

Developing "high capacity" (realigned) councils with better systems is costly: realigning councils have incurred consultant costs because GSUSA was not prepared for the merger – human resource consultants, attorney fees for governance issues, audit firms, etc. Councils have incurred additional travel costs due to the much larger geographical areas as realigned councils start-up. GSUSA was not ready to support councils with technology (Personify, Sage, RMS) and there is not a solid plan to support/training of councils. Councils were expected to have new positions on staff, with higher salary than in the past, yet there is not additional revenue to support these added expenses. A majority of realigned councils will likely have a deficit in year-one in addition to membership loss. Finally, actions taken by a few councils such as Cactus-Pine threaten sources of funding in other areas of the country, putting at jeopardy not only our brand's reputation but our financial stability.

#### Where We Need to Be:

1. Immediately Girl Scouts of the USA needs to recognize that it will likely be operating on reduced budgets for the next several years, given the ongoing decrease in membership. We believe focus and priority needs to be given to the Program Model and Volunteer Management System, because if this is not delivered, we will not reverse the negative spiral.
2. Girl Scouts of the USA needs to give priority funding to council-based pilot funding projects that move the Program Model and Volunteer Management Systems forward in a timely manner (fully operational by 2010)

#### **Issue #5: Organizational Structure and Governance**

Gap Team statement of 2005: Creating an efficient and effective organizational structure and democratic system.

#### Where we are today:

The Organization Structure initiative has been the number one priority, but inconsistent help was provided to realigning councils. The definition and enabling of "high-capacity councils" was never determined – there were never benchmarks provided for defining what a High Capacity/High Performing Council is. Regarding realignment, the messages are not consistent with reality: the talking points from Girl Scouts of the USA were membership growth, increased fund raising and saving money while the realities are membership loss, mergers that cost money and donor confusion (which creates additional expense to communicate with them).

Efficient organizations are, by definition, void of silos. This is not the case with the national staff. If a question asked or a need expressed doesn't fall into the purview of the staff member consulted, finding the appropriate staff member to respond is a tedious process. Additionally, staff appears not to have autonomy – even in their areas of expertise. The result is a sluggish response to requests – even when issues are pressing.

There is not a clear partnership between Girl Scouts of the USA and local councils – council CEO's are not able to communicate openly with the National CEO without fear of reprisal or without being patronized.

Other than the Governance "white paper" presented at realignment trainings, no work on Governance has been accomplished. The result is some realigned council spending time and money developing their own systems. While this has been a necessity, it also contributes to inconsistency and threatens to weaken the organization.

#### Where we need to be:

By Jan 1, 2009:

1. National board should take an active role in setting CEO deliverables and managing accountability in regards to the five program areas. These defined deliverables should be communicated back to councils by Jan 2009.
2. The National Board should require the National CEO/organization to actively partner with councils (i.e. share the national staff structure chart with clear authority/responsibilities of each person; establish an expectation that National Staff returns Council phone calls/emails within 48 hours; create an advisory board of council CEO's to provide input into the operational work of GSUSA; )
3. Allow two Council CEOs and/or Presidents to serve as ex-officio members to the National Board –as a resource to the elected members and as an accountable link to their council peers.