

Self-Perpetuating Board FAQs

What is a Self- Perpetuating Board?

A self-perpetuating board is a governing board in which current members have the authority to select, appoint, and remove future members. This means the board essentially “replaces itself” over time. The structure provides stability and allows the board to choose members with needed skills.

A self-perpetuating board holds legal governing authority: it makes binding decisions, oversees strategy and finances, and selects its own future members. In contrast, an advisory board (see below for more information about operational advisory committees) has no formal governance power it provides guidance, expertise, and perspective but cannot vote, make official decisions, or control membership of the governing board. Advisory boards exist to *advise*; self-perpetuating boards exist to *govern*.

What is the difference between governance and operations?

Boards are charged with oversight, foresight, and insight. Examples of topics related to board governance are bylaws/bylaw amendments, financial oversight, and strategic planning. Operations revolve around the day-to-day tasks of running the council. Examples of topics related to operations are volunteer and girl programming, camp, cookies/fall product, girl recruitment/retention, etc. To maintain a clear delineation of volunteer responsibilities within our council, board members are not eligible to be operational volunteers (such as troop leaders, cookie moms, bank signers, etc.) and operational volunteers are not eligible to be board members.

What are the benefits to moving to a self-perpetuating board model?

Over the past several years, there has been a steady decrease in volunteers applying for the delegate role, and as a result, several communities no longer have representation. In membership year 2026, 4 out of 9 (44%) communities had no delegates, placing the Annual Meeting—and the quorum required to elect board members and approve proposals—at real risk. Without a completed Annual Meeting, our charter as a Girl Scout council is jeopardized.

This decline is partly due to the increasing distinction between **governance roles** and **operational volunteer roles**. As the organization has matured, governance responsibilities have become more specialized focused on fiduciary and

fundraising responsibilities. This role shift has made it harder to recruit and engage delegates who feel connected to or energized by pure governance tasks.

In response, council staff reviewed governance models among other nonprofits and Girl Scout councils across the Movement that have transitioned to self-perpetuating boards. The evidence pointed to a clear trend: shifting governance responsibilities to a board with the expertise, continuity, and capacity to manage them allows volunteers to contribute in ways that align more naturally with their strengths and interests.

As a volunteer-powered organization, it is essential that we use our volunteers' time and talents where they have the greatest impact—supporting girls, troops, and communities. Moving to a self-perpetuating board places governance in the hands of a dedicated, strategically recruited body while freeing volunteers to focus on the day-to-day operational aspects of troop and community leadership. This model strengthens oversight, preserves our charter obligations, and ensures volunteers can engage in the meaningful, girl-facing work that fuels our mission.

Have you spoken with any of the councils who have made the transition away from community delegates? What has been their experience?

Yes, our staff has had the opportunity to engage with other councils and tap into their resources. Those councils previously had the same struggles we currently face in terms of delegate engagement. Since transitioning to a self-perpetuating board, their volunteers feel as though their time is better used and communication between the council and membership has improved. The idea of putting together a volunteer operational committee to address pressing operational challenges was modeled, based on their feedback.

Are there other councils who use a self-perpetuating board governance structure?

Currently, there are 12 other councils throughout the movement that operate on a self-perpetuating board structure. There are additional councils who are considering this same structure change, based on feedback from their volunteers.

The 12 councils that operate on a self-perpetuating board structure are:

- Girl Scout Council of Colonial Coast
- Girl Scouts of Alaska
- Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast
- Girl Scouts of Colorado
- Girl Scouts of Heart of Pennsylvania
- Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming
- Girl Scouts of NE Kansas and NW Missouri, Inc.
- Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas
- Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains
- Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida
- Girl Scouts of the Sierra Nevada
- Girl Scouts, San Diego-Imperial Council, Inc.

They represent the entire spectrum of councils large, medium, and small membership; large, medium, and small geography, as well as rural, suburban, and urban footprints.

What is a best practice for governance in other non-profits?

Most non-profit organizations, both locally and nationally, use a self-perpetuating board model. This assigns the governance of the organization to be the responsibility of their board of directors and allows operational volunteers to focus on day-to-day operations. Boards should always have some method of identifying and recruiting new board members with diverse skills, while also implementing term limits, and regularly reviewing the board's effectiveness. At GSGC, the Board Development Committee is charged with these duties.

How would the voices of membership be enhanced?

GSGC realizes that our volunteers are heavily invested in council operations that have a direct effect on the girl experience. By operating the current Program Advisory Committee and Youth Leadership Council, and soon a Volunteer Steering Committee, members will surface challenges, propose solutions, and will have more of an opportunity to provide feedback on operational matters, including Cookie Program, highest awards, programming, etc. Council-wide surveys and current Community Teams will also be utilized to assist council in gaining broader insights from our membership.

Would the process for selecting board candidates change under a self-perpetuating governance structure?

No, this process would remain the same as it is now. The Board Development Committee is responsible for identifying gaps in terms of subject matter expertise and representation throughout the footprint, then identifying qualified candidates. Although the ultimate responsibility for identifying prospective board members falls to the Board Development Committee, they are not the only people who can propose candidates for consideration. Prospective candidates may also be recommended for consideration by any member of the public. Once a candidate is approved by the Board Development Committee, then the candidate is added to the election slate and put forth for a vote during the Annual Meeting. The change under a self-perpetuating board model would be the Board of Directors would be the voting members.

It is important to note that currently, our Board of Directors are already considered delegates and do have voting power during the Annual Meeting. Also, when there is a vacancy on the board between Annual Meetings, the board has the authority to vote in a candidate, using the same process as outlined above, in collaboration with the Board Development Committee.

Will our membership still have the power to put forth governance related proposals for the Annual Meeting?

Yes! The proposal to move to a self-perpetuating board model ultimately comes down to bylaw changes in which language directly related to Community Delegates would be removed. The bylaws would remain the same in regard to membership having the ability to submit a proposal.

Could there be a volunteer focus group for older Girl Scouts?

The voices of older Girl Scouts are presented both from a national and council perspective. Youth members are encouraged to participate in the Youth Leadership Committee at a council level, as well as a National Delegate/Alternate at the national level. Girls aged 14+ are eligible for both roles.

How would this affect National Delegates?

The membership based national delegate system is outlined in the GSUSA Blue Book (bylaws), with GSUSA having no known intention of changing this structure. GSGC will continue to send National Delegates to represent our council. As always, membership is asked to encourage those they feel would be excellent representatives to the council, at the national level, to apply. GSGC will continue to solicit future applicants for consideration by the Board Development Committee; these internal processes would not change. Future recommended slates would then be voted upon by the Board of Directors.

What would be the process for applying for the operational volunteer steering committee?

The [Operational Volunteer Steering Committee \(OV Steer Co.\)](#) will launch recruitment in April, with the inaugural meeting anticipated in June. The standing meeting cadence is projected for June, September, December, and March, with occasional additional sessions scheduled as needed based on scope, timing, and topic urgency. To support accessibility and participation, proposed meeting date groupings will be shared during the application process, allowing candidates to indicate availability and flexibility.