

Winter Delegate Council Meeting – January 2025

January 14, 2025, from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

~ virtual over Zoom ~

Invited: GSEP Board of Directors, Girl Advisors to the Board, Board Development Committee Members, Girl Delegates, Service Unit Delegates & Alternates, 2023 NCS Delegation, and Interested Members

Meeting Opening

Board Chair Nicole LeVine opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. She mentioned that the focus of tonight's meeting is GSUSA's strategic plan. That plan will influence GSEP's local strategic plan. She asked all attendees to change their "Zoom name" by adding their county before their name, since our Strategy Café breakout rooms will be county-based.

Mission Moments

Nicole LeVine asked for volunteers to share a story of seeing or experiencing the Girl Scout Mission in Action. Girl Scout volunteer Leslie M. of Parkland Service Unit talked about how Cadettes recently developed their leadership skills by facilitating a Cookie training program for Daisies and Brownies. Girl Scout Briana C. of Philadelphia then described her participation in the new Calling All Girl Bosses (CAGB) initiative, emphasizing how this program has helped her progress on her Gold Award project. Nicole added that PECO (her company) brought 25 women to a recent CAGB workshop on mentorship; those corporate volunteers reported that they anticipated teaching the girls, but they got so much out of the experience themselves.

National Governance News – Recap & Look Ahead

Nicole Levine first offered a brief recap of the first-ever Special National Council Session, which was held virtually on October 19, 2024. The only issue for that Special NCS was raising the membership dues. She thanked her sister NC Delegates for participating in the 12-hour business meeting and explained that the session was so long because NC Delegates from across the country and around the world had opinions, questions, and suggestions which had to be heard and discussed. Ultimately, the National Council voted to approve raising the girl membership dues to \$65 per year starting in MY27 (with an interim step-up rate of \$45 in MY26) and the adult membership dues to \$30 per year, beginning in MY 26.

Nicole then shared a quick look ahead to the 2026 National Council Session, which will be held next year in Washington, D.C. on July 20-25. She thanked the 51 adults and girls who applied to be National Council Delegates and explained that the Board Development Committee is currently reviewing applications; all applicants will learn their status in February. She also encouraged all attendees to sign up on GSUSA's website to learn more about the 58th National Convention (which includes the business meeting and the girl-centric program immediately following). She announced that the focus of the Spring Delegate Council Meeting will be possible ideas for proposals and discussion topics for the 2026 NCS and asked all Delegate Council members to talk about this concept with their Service Units, troops, and other Girl Scout members.

National Governance News – GSUSA’s Strategic Plan

CEO Kim E. Fraites-Dow explained that GSUSA conducted market research with members and non-Girl Scout families to learn more about our Movement’s strengths and where we need to improve to attract new members. The goal was to define the current state and what the future state of our Movement could look like in five key focus areas: audience, Girl Scout experience, program delivery, our value proposition, and the funding model. MY25’s strategic objectives are 1) attract new members, 2) retain existing members, 3) grow revenue, 4) strengthen technology, and 5) advance core capabilities [which includes DEIRJ, talent & culture, and ERM (Enterprise Risk Management)]. GSUSA also established an overarching strategic objective: “More girls and families choose Girl Scouts.” The supporting objectives for this are to increase diversity, create dynamic ways of belonging and engaging, define a compelling value proposition, and institute financial stability. Kim explained that all these objectives are the building blocks to get to the overarching goal. In addition, these objectives also helped support the reasoning for raising the membership dues. She then described the current state and the projected future state for the supporting objectives.

Strategy Café Discussion

Kim Fraites-Dow reiterated the concept that GSUSA’s strategic objectives and plan would inform and influence GSEP’s local strategic plan. Therefore, she asked that the attendees consider two concepts that would guide our Board as they begin their work in this area: market awareness and current strategy. Specifically, the participants discussed:

- 1) Community perception of Girl Scouts and GSEP
- 2) Key competitors
- 3) Market trends that may impact GSEP (positively or negatively)

Plus, the conversation starters for the breakout rooms also included a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). These small group discussions were county-based, since perceptions of our organization may differ by town, community, or region. Kim reminded the participants that the information provided should help steer us toward our Movement’s overarching goal that more girls and families choose Girl Scouts.

During the Large Group Report-Outs, these major themes emerged of the Market analysis facets we need to consider:

- Our brand is well-known, but the perception revolves around cookies and younger girls.
- We need to do a better job at explaining the exciting possibilities for older girls, especially the Gold Award, outdoor activities, travel, Interest patrols, and leadership roles. And, we need to do more proactive outreach to immigrant and culturally diverse communities that may not have a long tradition of Girl Scouting.
 - This can be done through more speaking engagements (girls themselves sharing their experiences) and using social media more effectively.
- We should also focus more on the adult volunteers: recruit alums and grandparents and offer more mentors and training to troop leaders.
- Our key competitors are Boy Scouts, church groups, 4-H, Girls on the Run, and sports (and other extracurricular activities). A concern is that our recent dues increase may impact our membership numbers even more.
- An emerging trend to consider is using social media more effectively by 1) letting the girls tell their own stories, 2) partnering with well-known brands, 3) being present on more platforms.
 - Another recent need identified is to involve families more. E.g., the Y’s allow drop-offs for younger children so that the family activity is in one location.

Many of the county-based breakout rooms also conducted a SWOT analysis of GSEP. This information was shared:

- **Strengths:** strong camp program; financial assistance (in the form of scholarships, camperships, and Cookie Adventure Credits); staff is responsive and attentive; Spark programs (but “could use more”); and our new Calling All Girl Bosses initiative.
- **Weaknesses:** lack of marketing about older girl opportunities; we should connect Juliettes with the Council, Service Units, each other, and programs.
- **Opportunities:** using local businesses to host badge programs; having more county-planned trips; creating Council-own badges; advertising older girl opportunities (travel, scholarships, programs) more; doing more Council-wide community service projects, since we receive such wide and positive media coverage.
- **Threats:** focusing too much on STEM; leader retention; Scouts USA accepting girls (since that organization seems to accommodate family needs more).

Other suggestions for the GSEP Board to consider as they begin the strategic planning process for our Council includes:

- Expand CAGB to other regions
- Focus on establishing more troops in schools, since that is where families are comfortable with participating
- Think about expanding badge programs by offering more opportunities to earn at camp, during Spark programs, and other non-STEM related badges.

Closing

Girl Scout Ambassador Faith G. volunteered another Mission Moment about her love of camp and encouraged all girl attendees to consider registering to join her at camp this summer.

Board Chair Nicole LeVine shared that she is looking forward to the Kickoff of Cookie Season this Thursday. She also asked all attendees to add their cookie booths locations to the online Cookie Booth locator. She then reminded everyone that Early Bird pricing for summer camp ends tomorrow. She invited attendees to the Camp Open Houses, which will be held starting next month through June.

Nicole also reminded older girls and Senior/Ambassador troop leaders that applications to be a Girl Delegate or Girl Advisor to the Board for the 2025-2026 Governance Year are due next week on January 23.

She announced the date of the Spring Delegate Council Meeting has been confirmed: it will be held on Wednesday, March 19. Both virtual and in-person at Shelly Ridge attendance options will be offered. The primary focus for that meeting is possible proposal ideas and discussion topics for the 2026 National Council Session. She asked attendees to please come prepared with thoughts and suggestions. Finally, she reminded the group that this year’s Annual Meeting will be held at Shelly Ridge on Saturday, May 3.

Nicole adjourned the Winter Delegate Council Meeting at 8:32 p.m.

Please email any questions, concerns, or thoughts to governance@gsep.org