

**From:** GSBoardOffice <BoardOffice@girlscouts.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 7:11 PM  
**To:** GSBoardOffice <BoardOffice@girlscouts.org>  
**Subject:** Important Updates on NCS and G.I.R.L. 2020  
*Attachment:* NCS and G.I.R.L. 2020 transitions comms-FINAL-internal FAQ.pdf



Dear Council Board Chairs and CEOs,

Our thoughts are with all of you as you deal with the overwhelming challenges posed by our current health crisis, especially those of you who have been personally impacted. We hope that you have found some inspiration, as we have, in the stories of how Girl Scouts across the country are continuing to serve our communities in creative new ways.

As we've sought feedback from you and other key stakeholders, including delegates, recently regarding the National Council Session (NCS), we shared that we've been assessing and preparing—like Girl Scouts always do—for different scenarios given the extraordinary circumstances we've been operating under because of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Safety remains at the heart of all Girl Scout activities. The top concern shared with us regarding NCS has been the health and safety of participants. As we've continued to monitor public health experts' recommendations and forecasts, it became clear that Girl Scouts could not hold convention in person in October 2020 because we simply can't host a large-scale, in-person event and guarantee the health and safety of participants. There are also no widely accepted models that predict when it may be safe to again hold such events, nor can anyone predict when all restrictions on travel will be lifted. Additionally, the feedback we've gathered made it clear that financial considerations are a concern and that we need to use the Movement's financial resources wisely—the pandemic has already had an immediate and negative impact on many councils' and members' budgets. The board also considered that the sooner it made any decisions, the more time our Movement would have to enact contingency plans while also minimizing the financial impact of canceling closer to the event.

**Given all of this, the National Board held a special meeting on Tuesday, April 21, and voted to hold a one-time virtual session for our 55th National Council Session in October 2020. The board also voted to cancel G.I.R.L. 2020, including the Global Roundtable.**

The board discussed various options and decided this was the best way to enable the business of Girl Scouting to continue in a timely manner and honor the significant business that was brought to the National Council, including four proposals initiated by councils and two that were co-created by councils and recommended to the board, as well as the business of electing the new board. We will be leveraging our councils' learnings, as more than half have already held, or decided to hold, their annual meetings virtually this year. Additionally, numerous governments, agencies, corporations, and other organizations are using virtual technologies to continue to govern during these times.

We know this news is disappointing for the members, alums, and supporters who were looking forward to participating in person at convention, especially the volunteers and staff who have been working hard to plan the events and the many girls and their troops who have been

making plans to participate. Although we can't meet in person, we encourage you and your members to continue to connect with our unbreakable sisterhood via the many virtual events and activities we've recently launched for girls and their families, as well as our volunteers and alums, via [Girl Scouts at Home™](#) and the [Girl Scout Network's Campfire Chats](#).

We want to emphasize our enormous gratitude for the many volunteers, council leaders, and staff who have been working to create unforgettable and inspiring experiences for participants, especially the six Florida host councils and their board chairs and CEOs. Their leadership has been extraordinary:

- Girl Scouts of Citrus—Fred Kosiewski, board chair, and Maryann Barry, CEO
- Girl Scouts of Gateway Council—Ed Rastrelli, board chair, and Mary Anne Jacobs, CEO
- Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida—Richard Cyphers, president, and Mary Anne Servian, CEO
- Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida—Tami Donnally, board chair, and Lisa Johnson, CEO
- Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida—Margaret Wingard, board chair, and Chelsea Wilkerson, CEO
- Girl Scouts of West Central Florida—Laura Webb, president, and Mary Pat King, CEO

We will be refunding in full (100%) all convention registrations that were booked directly through GSUSA (please give us a few weeks to process them all). We also will be seeking additional feedback and support as we plan a virtual NCS, and we ask for your patience as we work through the impact that these decisions have on the many events and activities that were originally planned as part of G.I.R.L. 2020.

Today, we are sharing this important news with you, as council leaders. This evening, GSUSA is briefing the G-TEAM—the 26 brilliant young women from across Girl Scouts and Girl Guides who have played a central role in planning all aspects of our convention. Starting tomorrow morning we will next communicate these updates with your delegate liaisons, delegates, cross-Movement project teams (including the NVPs, CATs, and CSTs), council convention representatives, and council MarComm Leads. We will also be updating the G.I.R.L. 2020 site and sharing this news on social media.

We recognize that you may receive questions from your key stakeholders, including your delegates, volunteers, members, and staff, and so we have attached an FAQ document to help you address those questions. If you have any other questions, please contact [Janet Garretson](#) for NCS-related topics or [Jennifer Wilcox](#) for G.I.R.L. 2020/convention-related topics.

As always, Girl Scouts are innovators and trailblazers—with our pivot to a virtual NCS, we are preserving Girl Scouts' democratic process while propelling our Movement into the future together through an engaging virtual experience.

Thank you for your continuing leadership of our Movement! These are extraordinary times that require extraordinary leadership and effort. Please remain safe and healthy, and we look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours in Girl Scouting,

Kathy Hopinkah Hannan and Sylvia Acevedo



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# National Council Session and G.I.R.L. 2020/Convention Updates April 22, 2020

## *Internal FAQ for Council Leaders, Advisory Teams, and MarComm Leads*

Please note, this document has been prepared to help you speak internally about the recent National Council Session and G.I.R.L. 2020/Convention updates with staff, delegates, and other members. We will be sharing a higher-level FAQ on the G.I.R.L. 2020 site. For any questions that can't be answered with this document, please contact [Janet Garretson](#) for NCS-related topics or [Jennifer Wilcox](#) for G.I.R.L. 2020/convention-related topics.

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## **1. What decisions has Girl Scouts of the USA Board of Directors made regarding Girl Scouts' 55th National Council Session (NCS) and G.I.R.L. 2020/convention?**

The National Board held a special meeting on Tuesday, April 21, to discuss the National Council Session (NCS) and G.I.R.L. 2020/convention.

Given that safety is at the heart of all Girl Scout activities and the continuing uncertainty regarding the spread and impact of this novel coronavirus, the board voted to hold a one-time virtual session for our 55th National Council Session in October 2020. The board discussed various options and decided this was the best way to enable the business of Girl Scouting to continue in a timely manner and honor the significant business that was brought to the National Council, including four proposals initiated by councils and two that were co-created by councils and recommended to the board, as well as the business of electing the new board.

The board also made the difficult, but necessary decision, to cancel all other in-person events that were planned as part of G.I.R.L. 2020/Girl Scouts' triennial convention, including the Global Roundtable.

## **2. Why we can't hold the NCS and G.I.R.L. 2020/convention as planned in person?**

At Girl Scouts, the safety and security of our members remains our top priority. As we've continued to monitor public health experts' recommendations and forecasts, it became clear that Girl Scouts could not hold convention in person in October 2020 because we can't host a large-scale, in-person event and guarantee the health and safety of participants.

## **3. Why don't we postpone until we can meet in person?**

We stated several months ago that the overarching goal for NCS 2020 was "to bring together the Movement to reinforce our shared commitment to girls and build a common vision and continued excitement for our organization's future."

Given how this pandemic has created disruption within our Movement—presenting both challenges and opportunities—gathering delegates virtually during the originally planned timeframe to discuss and debate topics about the future direction of Girl Scouts will be critical to creating a strong and vibrant future for our organization and the girls we serve.

Also, it is unclear when it will be safe to resume large, in-person gatherings again; too much is unknown about the virus's spread and trajectory. We can't postpone NCS indefinitely because the business of our Movement needs to continue.

## **4. Why did the National Board make this decision now? (Why can't the board wait to see how the situation progresses?)**

By making the decision now, we can maximize planning time to deliver an engaging virtual version of our 55th NCS. We understand that our councils, delegates, and those planning to attend NCS and G.I.R.L. 2020 also need time to work through these changes.

Making this decision now allows us to maximize planning time for the virtual version of the 55th NCS while we also minimize additional financial risk that GSUSA and councils might incur by delaying such a decision.

#### **5. What was the process for authorizing a virtual meeting?**

In the event of an emergency that makes it impossible, as we're now experiencing, for the National Council to meet, the National Board is automatically conferred with all the powers of the National Council, other than the power to hold elections. With this conferred power, the National Board determined that it would not act on the proposals brought before the National Council; rather, it would exercise this power to authorize a virtual NCS this year to facilitate the democratic process and allow the work of the Movement to go on.

#### **6. What was the process used for transitioning NCS to a virtual meeting?**

We have been monitoring the latest guidance, recommendations, and forecasts that leading public health experts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have been sharing. In April, we asked delegates and council board chairs and CEOs to provide feedback about NCS. We also sought the input of various staff and volunteer engagement teams, including the NCS Advisory Team and its Dues Subgroup Advisory Team, Council Action Network leads, and COVID-19 Fast Forward Steering Committee. The board used all this information and feedback to inform its decision.

#### **7. The board did not place two council proposals to allow special sessions by electronic means on the NCS agenda, on the grounds that virtual NCS meetings were not feasible. Why has this changed?**

The board assessed several factors in making this decision and determined that a virtual NCS was the best option based on the following:

- The safety of all participants is of utmost importance.
- There is enough time (six months) to prepare appropriately to hold this meeting.
- The work of the Movement must continue to move forward to ensure a strong future.
- The realities of conducting business during this pandemic have quickly created technological innovations and an increased body of knowledge about best practices for virtual meetings to support business across the globe.

#### **8. How will the virtual NCS be run and structured?**

We are working through those details—ensuring that we maintain the integrity of our democratic process as the focus of all the decisions we make—and will continue to do so during the coming months. We are collecting input from councils that are holding their annual meetings virtually, working with our longstanding parliamentarian, and monitoring best practices. With our members, we will continue to co-create both NCS and the preceding education and engagement plan that supports delegates and our Movement's leaders as they prepare to participate in this NCS.

## 9. What is happening with G.I.R.L. 2020 and the Global Roundtable?

Given that safety is at the heart of all Girl Scout activities and the continuing uncertainty regarding the spread and impact of this novel coronavirus, we made the difficult, but necessary, decision to cancel all in-person convention activities, including G.I.R.L. 2020 and the Global Roundtable.

We know this may be disappointing for the members and supporters who were looking forward to participating, especially the volunteers and staff who have been working hard to plan the events and the many girls and their troops who have been making plans to participate.

We are excited to share that the Global Roundtable Hosting Program between councils and member organizations is continuing. Additionally, over the next several weeks, we will be working with key stakeholders, including the G-TEAM, to collaborate with GSUSA and councils as we create additional engaging, Movement-wide virtual experiences for girls and adults, such as those recently launched via [Girl Scouts at Home™](#) and the [Girl Scout Network's Campfire Chats](#).

## 10. What happens with my registration? What is the refund policy?

GSUSA will refund all registrations in full (100%) for NCS, G.I.R.L. 2020, and other convention-related events and activities made directly through GSUSA via registrants' original payment method. You do not need to do anything. Please give us a few weeks to process all refunds.

For any reservations that you made with airlines, hotels, etc., you will need to contact those organizations directly to cancel.

## 11. What about the Disney packages I purchased?

For Disney's Family Trendsetter and Magical Add-Ons, GSUSA will refund 100% of the package price via your original payment method. If you purchased tickets through Disney, you must contact Disney directly to inquire about its refund policies.

## 12. My girl earned a trip to convention for her cookie rewards, what do we do now?

We know this news is incredibly disappointing for you and that your council now finds itself in a challenging place because this cookie reward is now not possible. We are working with councils to brainstorm alternative options for the girls.

**13. My troop has been saving for this for three years, will there be an alternative event?**

We know this news is disheartening for you, your girl, your troop, and your council friends. We also recognize that you have been working hard to plan for this event and that many girls and their troops have been making plans to participate for several years.

Currently, we are not planning an alternative in-person event. Given how this pandemic has created an enormous and severe disruption to our ways of life, it is unclear when it will be safe to resume large, in-person gatherings again.

Although we can't meet in person, we encourage you and your members to continue to connect with our unbreakable sisterhood via the many virtual events and activities we've recently launched for girls, their families, volunteers, and alums via [Girl Scouts at Home](#) and the [Girl Scout Network's Campfire Chats](#).

**14. What about the G-TEAM? How will their work be used?**

The G-TEAM—26 brilliant young women from across Girl Scouts and Girl Guides who have played a central role in planning all aspects of our convention—will continue to work with GSUSA as thought partners about programming for older girls through the end of 2020. We are so appreciative of their efforts to bring the vision of G.I.R.L. 2020 to life, and we look forward to continuing to use their insight to create meaningful experiences for girls.

**15. Will the next convention (in three years) be in Orlando?**

Right now, we are focused on ensuring that the 55th NCS is a productive virtual meeting with our delegates. Decisions about our next convention will be announced in due course.

**16. Will the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) be hosting its World Conference, scheduled for July 2020, as planned?**

WAGGGS [announced on April 9](#) that it will postpone its 37th World Conference from 2020 to 2021 (new dates to be decided, but before November 2021). WAGGGS also noted that, even with this postponement, it anticipates that the meeting will need to be much different than what was originally envisioned and what has traditionally taken place because of the difficult economic and social conditions worldwide.