



Q. Why the change from Council “Chapters” to Council “Networks”?

A. As part of our 2013 strategic planning process, the Governing Board approved an objective focused on *building the effectiveness of chapters to deliver a consistent, high-quality member value and brand*. The goal is to strengthen the local structure to emphasize:

- a) member professionalism
- b) relevant professional development opportunities on timely business issues and principles
- c) business leadership skills
- d) member networking and relationship building

To support that goal, we looked to our own industry and the franchise model, linked with core standards. This model puts the focus on true member value (business growth, hyper-relevant programs, leadership opportunities) and less on organizational governance, typically associated with the term “Chapter.” Alternatively, a “Network” implies a nimble, business-oriented structure – a place for people to connect, share information and do business. We believe these attributes are what members look for in their local Council structure. Women’s Council is proud to have the largest and most successful network system in the REALTOR[®] family, and our activities, budgets, and work revolve around successful local groups.

Q. What else is changing with this transition to Networks?

A. In addition to the change in branding, several other structural changes are part of this strategic evolution project:

- More targeted programming – reducing the number of annual programs from eight to six
- Shift from “Local Affiliates” to “Strategic Partners”
- Lowering the National Affiliate membership threshold from 30 percent to 20 percent
- Streamlined governance; more relevant officer positions and introduction of project teams

Q. How were these changes determined?

A. In 2014, the Women’s Council of REALTORS[®] California, in consultation and collaboration with National, conducted a two-year project to test the “Chapter-to-Network” model. California – with its 33 Networks – was a logical choice for the pilot test as it is a microcosm of how local Council groups function across the United States. California’s local groups vary across all demographics (size, type, strength, etc.) and represent a wide breadth of geographical regions – similar to what exists nationally. With the California pilot test complete and deemed successful, we are ready to roll out the program nationally, with a two-year implementation timeline, and allowing for some local customization, e.g., pricing of strategic partnerships to reflect the local market.

Q. Are there available outcomes and metrics from the test period?

A. Yes. We were very pleased to find that after the two-year California pilot test, a survey of individual members and Networks found that there was an increased awareness of enhanced programming, growth in REALTOR® membership, increase in operating budgets (due to more partnerships and registration fees in spite of fewer events), and overall, higher levels of member satisfaction in all categories. These improvements were most evident among the Networks that fully embraced the new model.

Q. Are today's Chapters prohibited from using the term "Chapter" going forward?

A. The new official terminology of today's Chapters will be "local business resource networks" – shortened to "Networks" for easy reference. We ask that, going forward, you refer to Chapters as Networks. More formally, Networks are called "Women's Council of REALTORS®" followed by geographic location. For example, instead of Women's Council of REALTORS® Charlotte Network, the name is "Women's Council of REALTORS® Charlotte."

Q. Are there branding guidelines for the Network?

A. Yes. In 2015, Women's Council introduced new branding standards, asking local groups to drop the word "chapter" or "network" from their name, and to avoid using local themes, mission statements or graphic variations of the corporate logo. We provided every local group with custom logo artwork and a branding guide, available on our website.

Q. Doesn't the reduction in programming guidelines mean less value?

A. This is a quality versus quantity issue. In reducing the *quantity* of events per year, the California pilot test determined that the *quality* of the events improved. Also, the number of programs as part of the new model is a minimum guideline. Networks are free to hold more programs if that is what works best for their group.

Q. Why the shift from Local Affiliates to Strategic Partners?

A. The Women's Council is first and foremost a REALTOR® organization. It's one of our strengths. While non-REALTOR® affiliates enrich the organization, the focus on the REALTOR® is paramount. Equally important, however, is that as a "Strategic Partner," 100 percent of any partnership revenue is retained by the local Network. Women's Council National has resources to assist local Networks transition their Local Affiliate members to Strategic Partners, ensuring a continuing or growing source of non-dues revenue. From the California experience, we found that many Local Affiliates were very happy to support the transition, knowing their financial contribution benefits the Network and the local community.

Q. What is the impact of lowering the threshold of National Affiliate membership on the Networks?

A. For the great majority of Networks, there will be no impact as only 16 percent of our current Chapters exceed the 20 percent threshold. For those that do, there is a two-year window to bring the percentage in line with the model. The best way to do so is simply to grow the base of REALTOR® members.

Q. How are you streamlining governance?

A. The Network model reduces the number of required Governing Board meetings from six to four. It also introduces Project Teams to replace Standing Committees. In conjunction with this shift, two new Director positions have been created to oversee the Network's Education and Membership activities. These governance changes begin to go into effect in the Fall of 2017, in preparation for 2018.

Q. Will the elimination of Standing Committees reduce volunteer opportunities?

A. We believe it will have just the opposite effect. By introducing Project Teams to accomplish the work of Standing Committees, it allows members to get involved who may not have been able to commit to a full one-year term. REALTORS® are busy professionals – pulled in many directions. Project Teams allow volunteers to take on a project with a clear time frame and recruit others to help. Also, it gives the Network officers the flexibility to respond to unanticipated opportunities and needs – calling on the right leader for the right project at the right time. In short, a much nimbler operation that can engage more volunteers and support broader leadership development within the Network.

Q. When will the Chapter-to Network change be implemented?

A. A two-year timeline has been developed for the Chapter-to-Network model to ensure a smooth transition with minimal disruption to current Chapters. The timeline accommodates the following:

- Governing Board review and approval. *November 2016*
- Comprehensive training and educational activities (state meetings, leadership academy, member communications, etc.). *Ongoing in 2017*
- Election of 2018 officers under new model. *Fall 2017*
- Current Chapters adhering to the Network model. *January 2018* (National is prepared to provide support to any group struggling with the transition.)
- The Network model standards are fully functioning in 100 percent of Council Networks. *January 2019*