**California Local Business Resource Network**

**Operating Model – Revised 7/27/15**

**Background**

Chapter Effectiveness: a National Priority

Women’s Council chapters are the primary delivery system within the organization for membership value and the Council brand. The strength and consistency of chapters in large measure determines the success of Women’s Council in fulfilling its mission. It has always been a priority and strategic goal of Women’s Council to ensure the success and effectiveness of its chapters.

In the recently approved Women’s Council Strategic Framework, the Governing Board approved the following objective: “Build the effectiveness of chapters as a consistent, high-quality delivery system for membership value and the Council brand.” To achieve this Objective, the Executive Committee established an initiative to build and test a more effective local chapter model during the 2014-2016 planning cycle.

There is strong precedent and support for this type of re-evaluation. As the industry shifts fundamentally and competition sharpens, REALTORS® themselves have been forced to re-examine their business model to ensure they remain essential to consumers and central to the real estate transaction. The associations that serve the REALTOR® must do the same or risk irrelevance. NAR’s recent move to significantly raise the core operating standards of local REALTOR® associations was an important pre-emptive strike to build value and consistency in every local association to ensure a REALTOR® anywhere in the country can access the resources needed to succeed in a rapidly changing industry environment.

Opportunity – the California Test

At the same time as the National Women’s Council Executive Committee was exploring ways to tackle the chapter development objective in its strategic plan, the California State Chapter was working on ways to address local chapter challenges and support their local chapters to achieve the same ends. The California State Chapter leadership team brought forward a proposal to more widely adopt the Business Resource Group model throughout the State. It was a timely opportunity to work with a large, diverse state on a fresh, new approach to local chapter structure and operations.

As a result, a work group was formed, consisting of representatives of the Women’s Council Executive Committee, including all four National Line Officers, the California State Chapter Line Officers, and the Women’s Council Executive Vice President and Vice President of Membership. The work group’s task was to design a new chapter model, building upon the strengths of current chapters, and structure a test of the model with the engagement of local chapters in California.

Test Goals

* Develop and test a new model for Women’s Council local chapters that will ensure high value for REALTORS® and greater consistency in delivery of that value, and in the Women’s Council member experience.
* Based on test results, consider application of the new model to local Women’s Council chapters nationwide.

**Model Design**

Under the new Model, the name of a local Women’s Council chapter will be changed to ‘Women’s Council of REALTORS®, [insert current local name]’. As an example, the ‘Long Beach Chapter of the Women’s Council of REALTORS®’ will become ‘Women’s Council of REALTORS®, Long Beach’. The word ‘chapter’ will no longer be used. When local chapters are referred to generally or as a group, they will be referred to as ‘business resource networks’. As an example, ‘all of the local business resource networks in California are participating in a test of a new operating model’. The California State Chapter will be referred to as Women’s Council of REALTORS®, California. The new name is intended to be more descriptive of the distinctive, *dynamic* value of Women’s Council that includes changing program content relevant to current business issues and needs, and the deep and evolving value of the personal and professional relationships that are formed between members of the Council. Placing ‘Women’s Council of REALTORS® first in the name reinforces the brand identity.

The Local Business Resource Network Operating Model is structured as a set of *minimum* standards that all Local Networks must follow in key operating areas to ensure a baseline of member value and experience, and the integrity of the Women’s Council brand. Network leaders are free to operate above these standards based on the needs and desires of local members, but must at a minimum meet each standard as a baseline of operation.

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| **Design Criteria**  The Women’s Council Local Business Resource Network model has been designed to satisfy the following criteria for how every Local Network should operate:   * Streamlined, efficient governance * A range of volunteer leadership opportunities for members * Delivery of relevant, timely professional development opportunities for REALTORS® that will drive:   + Personal growth   + Business success   + Profitability   + Development business leadership skills * Consistent reflection of the Women’s Council brand to both internal and external audiences * Consistent high-value member experience |

**The California Local Business Resource Network Operating Model**

\*Tools and resources available (or in development) to support Local Business Resource Network in satisfying Operating Standards are noted and listed below.

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| **Function/Operating Component** | **Minimum Operating Standards** |
| **Local Business Resource Network Purpose, Focus and Scope** | 1. A Business Resource Network will be focused solely on delivering value to members in the following areas:  * Raising member professionalism * Providing relevant professional development opportunities focused on timely business issues and needs and that incorporate practical application of business principles and related tools and resources * Developing business leadership skills that are transferable to the exercise of leadership in all personal, professional and public arenas * Facilitating member networking and relationship-building |
| **Member Programs and Services** | 1. Conduct a minimum of 4 mission-focused professional development programs1 annually:    * All programs must provide content that is timely, issue focused and member income-generating    * One of the four programs must be focused on development of business leadership skills    * One of the four programs must be conducted collaboratively with other local business resource networks, with the local REALTOR® association, or with a related real estate organization 2. Conduct a minimum of two additional events focused on member networking/relationship building2 that could also include professional development content; examples include:    * Smaller programs, such as mastermind groups, lunch and learns, topical roundtables, etc.    * Networking events    * Social events that facilitate relationship building 3. Facilitate an exchange of value between members3 for the purpose of meeting members individual business goals, with a special focus on new members (see ‘welcome and orientation’ strategy under Membership Recruitment and Retention standards). |

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| **Function/Operating Component** | **Minimum Operating Standards** |
| **Membership Structure** | 1. Maintain a minimum of 20 REALTOR® members, or if below that number currently, attain 20 REALTOR® members by September 30, 2015.\* 2. New Local Business Resource Networks must be chartered with a minimum of 30 REALTOR® members. 3. Local Business Resource Networks do not have ‘local affiliate members’, but are encouraged to have Strategic Partners who are provided a range of sponsor benefit packages4. Part of the benefit of being a Strategic Partner should be access to all Local Resource Network meetings and events at the ‘member’ rate. (A Local Network can decide how many Strategic Partner representatives are provided access at the ‘member rate’ depending on the level of benefit package.) 4. 20 percent of a Local Business Resource Network’s membership can be comprised of National Affiliate Members\*; rights and privileges of National Affiliate Members include:    * Service as Secretary/Treasurer or Membership Director    * Service as a Program or Membership Chair    * Service on a Project Team    * Vote    * Use of the Women’s Council logo    * Access to the Women’s Council web site |

\*Local Network membership numbers are reviewed after the March 31 membership drop date. If the Local Network does not have a minimum of 20 REALTOR® members by September 30 of the same year, they will be disbanded. The percentage of a Local Network’s National Affiliate Members will also be reviewed after the March 31 membership drop date. Local Networks who have more than 20% National Affiliate Members at that time will need to focus on recruiting REALTORS® to ensure a 20% or less National Affiliate Member ratio by September 30.

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| **Function/Operating Component** | **Minimum Operating Standards** |
| **Governance Structure** | 1. The Local Business Resource Network governance structure5 includes:   Officers:   * President   + Must be a REALTOR® member   + Elected as President-elect and automatically moves up to the position of President   + One-year term * President-elect   + Must be a REALTOR® member   + Elected by the membership   + One-year term * Secretary/Treasurer   + Can be a REALTOR® member or National Affiliate member   + Elected by the membership   + Can be a one- or two-year term   Governing Board:   * Composed of the three Officers, plus:   + Program Director (must be a REALTOR® member; appointed by the incoming President and ratified at the last Governing Board meeting prior to the year taking office)   + Membership Director (can be a REALTOR® member or National Affiliate member; appointed by the incoming President-elect and ratified at the last Governing Board meeting prior to the year taking office) * Governing Board would meet a minimum of four times a year * Governing Board quorum would be 3, and must include either the President or the President-elect   Project Teams:  The Program Director and Membership Director would each oversee, as needed, Project Teams that focus on particular functions, tasks, projects, meetings/events, etc. Project Teams:   * Are composed of members and outside expertise/support as needed * Disband at the end of the project * Must be ratified by the Governing Board * Receive appropriate recognition for their contribution   *Optional:* Program Chair and Membership Chair  The Governing Board may approve a Program Chair or a Membership Chair to assist the Program Director or Membership Director with oversight of the function and the Project Teams. These Chair positions can be REALTOR® members or National Affiliate members, and are appointed by the incoming President and ratified by the Governing Board. |

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| **Function/Operating Component** | **Minimum Operating Standards** |
| **Governance Systems** | 1. Submit annually a Business Plan6 to the State Network. 2. Develop and submit to the State Network by the 4th Quarter an Annual Budget7 for the following year. 3. File annually State and Federal Tax Returns8. 4. Maintain a 501c6 IRS tax-exempt designation. 5. Maintain D&O9 and Event/Liability Insurance policies. 6. Conduct a Periodic Financial Review (DVPs/GOVs will conduct a financial ‘check-up’ with assigned Local Resource Networks three times a year).   16. Conduct an Election Process10 as follows:   * A minimum of 90 days before the election, establish a Credentials Project Team that can review candidate information to ensure complete, ensure candidate understanding of roles and responsibilities, and confirm agreement to serve. * A minimum of 60 days before the election, send a notice to the membership soliciting candidates for open positions * A minimum of 30 calendar days before the election, require candidates to submit an application and Consent to Serve form11 to the Chair of the Credentials Project Team that includes self-reporting by the candidate of any ethics violations with the past five years. |
| **Women’s Council Branding** | 1. The Local Business Resource Network mission statement must be the mission statement of the National Women’s Council: *We are a network of successful REALTORS®, advancing women as professionals and leaders in business, the industry and the communities we serve.* 2. The official Women’s Council logo12 must be used on all media/communications according to logo guidelines provided; no deviations or alternations allowed. 3. The Local Resource Network must use and maintain the web site13 provided by National. If the Local Resource Network has a secondary website, it must link to the National site. 4. If the Local Resource Network has a social media presence (such as a Facebook page), it must include a link to the official website. 5. All Local Resource Network events and communications (including any graphics, annual themes, fundraisers, etc.) must reflect that of a professional, business organization. |
| **Member Communications** | 1. Promote Local Resource Network meetings and events with a minimum of a 60-day lead time.14 2. Use a consistent, online reservation platform. 3. Use a ‘drip system’15 for communication to members throughout the year, including information and key messages provided by National Women’s Council and branded locally. |
| **External Communications** | 1. Conduct target marketing of Local Resource Network programs/events to appropriate outside audiences. 2. Develop and implement a strategy16 to establish (or reinforce) and maintain a positive, productive relationship with the Local Association of REALTORS®. |

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| **Function/Operating Component** | **Minimum Operating Standards** |
| **Membership Recruitment and Retention** | 1. Implement a timely new member ‘welcome and orientation’ process17 that includes a personal interview with each new member on her business needs and goals 2. Develop and implement a first year member communications strategy18 focused on ensuring membership renewal. 3. Develop and implement a strategy19 focused on recruitment of REALTORS®. |
| **Participation/ Reporting to State and National** | 1. Network President-elect is expected to attend the National Leadership Academy. 2. Submit the Network Annual Report to National by the deadline. 3. Submit the Network Business Plan and Annual Budget to State by the deadline. 4. Submit the Network Program Meeting Schedule to State by the deadline. 5. Make every effort to participate in all State and National meetings. |

**Model Testing**

Timeline and Transition

The test period will run from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2016. Preparation for the test, including State leader training, local leader orientation and planning for implementation of the Operating Model, and development of support tools and resources will take place starting in October 2014.

It is understood and anticipated that planning for and transitioning to *full* operation of the Operating Model will take place with regard to some Operating Standards over the first year of the test, including full transition to the new Network governance structure. DVPs and Governors will work closely with the Local Resource Networks to offer options for transition that are best for your group.

Support/Tools and Resources

Women’s Council of REALTORS®, California and the National Women’s Council are committed to the success of the California Local Business Resource Networks as a potential model for local Women’s Council organizations across the country.

State District Vice Presidents, Governors, Line Officers and others are preparing a Local Business Resource Network contact system, including meetings, work sessions and regular communication to help Local Network leadership with transition steps, fulfilling Operating Standards, tracking progress and evaluating success.

Nationally, the following Tools and Resources are available or are being developed to help Local Business Resource Networks meet the Operating Standards (as noted above).

1A regularly updated menu of program ideas and options that meet program criteria, including delivery methods.

2A regularly updated menu of options for mini-programs and networking/relationship- building activities.

3Suggested structure and tools to facilitate exchange of value between members.

4Key messages to solicit Strategic Partners and ideas/suggestions for Strategic Partner benefit packages.

5Job descriptions for all positions.

6Business Plan template, adjusted to include new Operating Standards.

7Annual Budget template.

8Guidance on filing State and Federal tax returns.

9D&O insurance policy.

10Election Procedures

11Sample Application and Consent to Serve form.

12Women’s Council logo guidelines. National Women’s Council will provide a jpeg of the local resource network logo/name for use on electronic and printed collateral material.

13Nationally provided local web site.

14Ideas and resources for effective marketing and promotion of Network programs, including use of video.

15Content for ‘drip system’ communication to members.

16Reference with tips and techniques for building productive relationship with Local Association.

17New member ‘welcome and orientation’ procedures and related tools.

18First year member communications strategy with process and related tools.

19REALTOR® recruitment strategy ideas and related collateral materials.

Reporting and Evaluation

California State leadership will be in regular contact with District Vice Presidents and Governors to monitor the test and to help address any implementation issues. State leadership will make regular reports to the National Women’s Council Executive Committee on test progress. At the Women’s Council Annual Meeting in November 2015, the Executive Committee will assess the results of the first year of the test and make any adjustments to the Operating Standards necessary. At the end of the test period, the Women’s Council Executive Committee will assess final test results and make decisions regarding roll-out of the Network Operating Model nationwide.

The ultimate measure of the success of the Local Business Resource Network lies with the members, and the degree to which they find value in the Network and are satisfied with their membership experience. A strategy is being developed to establish a baseline for member satisfaction that can be re-assessed at the end of the test period as part of the evaluation process.