

TESOL INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

PROPOSED GOVERNANCE MODEL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL

What prompted these changes to TESOL International Association's governance?

The proposed new governance model is based on the findings and recommendations of the Governance Review Task Force (GRTF). Their findings, released in a [report](#) in March 2014, were based on a thorough review and analysis of the association's current model, which included feedback from TESOL leaders and rank-and-file members. (The changes are summarized in the [proposal document](#)). The GRTF found that some aspects of the current governance model work well, but the current model also tends to inhibit the change and growth necessary to meet the needs of members and the field. The new model is intended to foster a culture of knowledge, trust, nimbleness, and transparency, and enable the association to respond to the evolving needs of members and the profession with efficient, effective, and strategic decision making.

Is this proposal the final decision on TESOL's governance structure?

No. The overall governance structure, which this proposal addresses, is still subject to change based on member feedback ([collected through 28 February](#)). The board of directors will determine the specific changes that affect different entities within the association (e.g., interest sections, standing committees) after it has considered member feedback and finalized the overall governance structure. Changes will not be made immediately; they will be implemented in phases over a period of 12 to 18 months. A more specific implementation plan and timeline will be developed and communicated following the board meeting and convention in March.

Does the proposed governance model intend to make the association more management driven and less member driven?

No. In fact, the proposed model is intended to make the association more responsive to the needs of members and the field, and make the membership experience more meaningful. The association's success will continue to depend on a collaborative relationship between member volunteers and staff. Both groups contribute enormously to its advancement. In proposing the changes, the board seeks to adapt to a new environment while preserving and enhancing a sense of community among TESOL professionals. Together, the TESOL leadership, member volunteers, and TESOL staff seek to elevate the profession and support members as they strive to succeed in a rapidly changing profession. Neither staff nor volunteers can accomplish this mission on their own.

Where is the leadership pipeline in the new governance model?

The board is committed to designing a dynamic leadership pipeline that will ensure that the association continues to meet the needs of members and the profession well into the future. In the current governance structure, leaders emerge through their service on committees, interest sections, and in their local affiliates, but the process is often ad hoc, and its limited scope tends to overlook potential leaders. The proposed governance model does not include a specific leadership pipeline. However, the new strategic plan calls for the design of a new volunteer management process that will open up additional leadership opportunities to more members.

Why aren't forums included in the proposed model?

The governance review and the proposed model focus on the internal governance system of TESOL International Association. Although many in the field participate in forums, they are not part of TESOL's internal governance system and thus were not included in the scope of the governance review. No changes are being proposed to the forums at this time.

COMMITTEES

Why does the proposed model eliminate some standing committees? Does the exclusion of certain committees represent a change in the association's commitment to the issues that these committees represent?

Standing committees have provided invaluable work on issues important to the association, and they will continue to do so. The board appreciates and values their work. However, the GRTF's findings suggest that the committee model works best for executing specific tasks on a regular basis, and the association management literature supports this finding. For other kinds of work, other models (e.g., task forces, advisory councils) work better and allow the association to respond more readily to changing needs.

What will happen to committees that are not included in the proposed governance model?

For the time being, all committees should continue the work outlined in their charges. After the board has received member feedback and finalized the new model, it will communicate any changes to the current governance structure and outline a plan for transitioning to the new model. Committees that the board decides to sunset will most likely complete their current activities, identify any work that needs to be carried over, and possibly recommend the best type of group in the new model to execute that work.

Why has the GRTF proposed changing certain committees to advisory councils?

Advisory councils are groups of volunteers appointed to provide their expertise to support regular association functions in important areas such as publications, professional development, standards, and the convention. The advisory councils support this work by advising and serving as a resource for TESOL staff. Depending on their function, advisory councils would operate on a short-term or long-term basis. Changing certain committees to advisory councils would enable the association to respond more effectively and efficiently to members' evolving needs and a rapidly changing field.

Will committees meet at the 2015 convention?

Yes. All governance and business meetings will happen as planned at the 2015 convention.

INTEREST SECTIONS AND AFFILIATES

Why is the Interest Section Leadership Council (ISLC) excluded from the proposed model?

Interest Sections are an important part of the association, and the board is committed to creating a governance model that allows them to thrive. The board values the ISLC's work and the TESOL Interest Sections. The [proposed model](#) suggests eliminating the ISLC as part of the larger effort to streamline the governance structure to allow for efficient, effective, and transparent communication and decision-making processes (p. 6).

The board will appoint a task force to research possible forms and functions for contemporary knowledge-based member communities (i.e., interest sections) and recommend strategies to foster strong communication between these groups and the board. The task forces' findings will be released as soon as the work has been completed.

Without the ISLC, how will interest sections communicate with the board?

The proposed model intends to provide interest section leaders more direct access to the association's leadership. Bringing interest sections closer to the board allows for more effective communication and thus helps the association to be more nimble and transparent.

A task force will be appointed to conduct research on contemporary forms and functions for knowledge-based member communities (i.e., interest sections) in contemporary associations. As part of its work, the task force will also recommend correlating strategies to foster strong communication between these groups and the board. The task forces' findings will be released as soon as the work has been completed.

Will the interest section and affiliates meet at the 2015 convention?

Yes. All governance and business meetings will happen as planned at the 2015 convention.

Are any interest sections being eliminated?

The GRTF’s findings suggest that the association’s current one-size-fits-all structure for knowledge-based member communities (i.e., interest sections) might not be the best model for the diverse range of issues and interests in the field. The task force will not audit the current interest sections but will research the forms, roles, and functions of knowledge-based member communities in contemporary associations, and recommend possible adjustments to the composition and functions of these groups that would better serve members’ needs and interests.

Why is the board forming task forces to examine interest sections and the association’s relationship with its affiliates?

The board is committed to data-driven decision making, as well learning from the current best practices in association management. Several of the issues and recommendations from the GRTF merit further exploration, so these task forces will conduct further research in these specific areas to present different options for the board to consider.

Who is serving on these task forces?

The board has not yet created the task forces. The board will invite members who are familiar with the respective entities (ISs or affiliates) as well as the overall structure of the association, and who understand association governance and have demonstrated leadership and strategic-thinking skills.