

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on IABC's Stronger Together Proposed Model *Organizing Ourselves to Thrive*

### Why are we proposing to reorganize IABC?

To better position our international community of professional communicators to thrive in the more complex operating environment every membership organization faces today. IABC's existing hierarchical, siloed structure – formed decades ago – simply isn't flexible enough to meet the needs of its members, particularly in terms of the time and resources volunteer leaders need to devote to ensure the organization's continued growth and vitality.

High expectations of IABC volunteer output around administration rather than programmatic activities have led to burnout, reduced local resources, and forced some chapters to struggle or close. The result is that member value is fragmented and inconsistent worldwide, impacting IABC's brand, reputation, and finances.

### How does the proposed model fit with IABC's goals for the future?

The impetus for this initiative was the release of IABC's multi-year strategic plan, [Stronger Together Strategy 2022-25](#), which emphasizes the collective power of our community in responding to the changes affecting our world and our profession. Executing on that plan, the IABC Governance and Structure Task Force, comprised of experienced leaders from across the globe, was formed to design a proposed model that would best position the organization for the opportunities these sweeping changes have brought.

The Task Force is recommending a model that aligns our leadership and operations around the world to help us achieve common strategic objectives and initiatives.

We propose a model with:

- Unlimited **Communities** (Chapters and Shared Interest Groups (SIGs), with the flexibility to operate for size and scale, and responsible for caring for members through professional development, networking and providing opportunities for volunteer recruitment.
- Seven redefined **Regions**, boosted to support a member and volunteer experience tailored to the market across their designated areas. Geographies will partner with the International Executive Board to design and implement IABC's strategy across the world.
- A **Global** Center to build the brand, design and deliver critical administrative and revenue programs.

### Is the new governance model for IABC about finances or functionality?

Both. There is no escaping the fact that consistent revenue declines, exacerbated by the pandemic, created considerable financial pressure on IABC, not only at International HQ but in many regions and chapters. In response, the International Executive Board (IEB), working closely with IABC staff, has implemented several measures to stabilize the organization's finances. The proposed re-design builds on those efforts by creating a structure and governance model that not only stabilizes but helps secure IABC's future.

### How does the new model help us seize opportunities for growth?

Strategically, the new model removes structural barriers that hinder our volunteer leaders from doing what they do best: creating powerful, kinetic experiences that advance careers and leadership skills, attract, and retain members, deliver a superior value proposition for sponsors, and grow the association's brand.

### **What does the new structure look like?**

The proposed model is member-centered and designed to delegate more strategic decision-making and financial control to the regions, closer to their communities.

Members would belong to at least one, but potentially multiple communities, with much more flexibility around the definition of a community, to allow groups of like-minded members in a common geographic or subject-matter area to form as appropriate, without the constraints of budget and administrative management. That could be done through a formal chapter as currently, but also as a networking group, a special interest group or through volunteering opportunities at the regional level. The goal is to get members plugged in with others as soon as possible. Each community falls under one of seven regions, empowered to manage budgets and tailor delivery of programs to their market. The IABC Global Center remains responsible for brand, budget, and global programming.



### **What will happen to Chapters?**

IABC has a range of chapters operating internationally. Some of these are long-standing with a strong identity and board. These will continue, with some changes to governance through a more centralized financial model. Others have had to close because they have struggled to meet the current governance arrangements for an IABC Chapter. These would benefit from the flexibility of the new model to create communities where there is interest.

### **Will the SIGs be affected with the new model?**

The SIG will continue where there is energy and support for making connections and sharing knowledge. SIGs have been a feature of some larger IABC Chapters for many years. In 2022, the IEB piloted six SIGs to operate internationally. The new model will encourage further development of these communities around special or shared interests. They may come together around a short-term interest or be longer standing. SIGs do not need to be international. They can be part of a community or a region.

### **What makes this model different?**

First, the IEB board composition will change in the new model to include representation from past Chairs in each Region. Second, the Council of Regions will sunset. This will streamline communications and ensure more frequent and closer collaboration between International HQ and the seven individual Regions across the globe.

Two other notable changes for the new model are the expansion of staff and financial resources at the geographies level, including a robust Treasurer role to provide centralized financial management for the IABC Communities it serves. This enables staff and our volunteer leaders serving on the Region board to focus on delivering more “plug and play” content and on-brand communications to our most active and vibrant Communities. It is designed to free local leaders from the heavy lift of board governance (should they so choose), banking and financial management, as well as managing the full tech stack.

### **What does moving to a more centralized financial model mean?**

We are **not** changing IABC’s financial model at this time, and delegates are not being asked to vote on a financial model at the AGM.

The Stronger Together Taskforce has made recommendations to IEB to streamline financial operations through efficiencies and proposed a consolidated approach for transparency into financial management, monitoring and reporting. These are preliminary recommendations; further work will be required to understand the challenges, specify requirements and design a fit-for-purpose approach.

The proposal recommends further consideration of a more centralized financial model where the global center and the seven regions will be responsible for and accountable to each other for budgeting, forecasting and financial management, and payment systems that work across borders and are simpler to maintain. The Communities will no longer have this responsibility. Instead, they would work with their Region board and Region Treasurer to budget for program revenue and expenses and access Regional funds to pay for professional development and networking events.

The Region Treasurer will sit on the International Finance Committee to ensure full transparency and accountability for those funds.

A more centralized financial model affords IABC the opportunity to advance its management operations into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, considering the fast-moving world of technology-enabled innovation in financial services – think Venmo, Paypal, bill.com, borderless, Zelle. Some chapters – even some defunct ones – are sitting on large reserves while nearby chapters have very limited resources. IABC chapters maintain hundreds of bank accounts around the world and collectively pay too much for banking fees, transfers, and account management.

## **When would the new governance model take effect?**

The Stronger Together Organizational Design Taskforce has proposed a series of recommendations to help IABC become more agile as an organization and create alignment between international regions and chapters so we can **co-create** our future. The Taskforce has presented a proposed organization model and three categories of recommendations:

1. Governance and structure (the focus of 2022 – 2024 board years)
2. Financial operating model (the focus of 2023 – 2024 board year)
3. Programming optimization (the focus of 2024 – 2025 board years)

Three votes pertaining to governance and structure will be put to the vote at the June 2023 Annual General Meeting: composition of the International Executive Board; changes to Region Board nominations for Region Vice Chairs; and composition of the International Finance Committee.

See ***IABC Annual General Meeting & Delegate Voting: A Primer*** for a detailed explanation of IABC's bylaws and the proposed changes that will be put to the vote at the 2023 AGM.

## **How will we fill roles for the Region Boards?**

We will recruit board members to the Region Boards using the [Open Call in a Box Toolkit](#) and the recently published [DE&I Toolkit](#) that includes guidance for keeping DEI at the forefront of all our recruiting efforts, including recruiting for leaders and volunteers.

It is proposed that Region Vice Charis will be selected through an open call process by the International Nominating Committee.

## **What other volunteering opportunities will this new model create?**

Our future success depends on IABC continuing to build a diverse and inclusive strategic leadership around the globe. We want to encourage and attract existing and new volunteer leaders from amongst our members to drive growth at the International, Region and Community level.

In addition to Board roles, the new model will enable IABC to design and recruit for a range of micro-volunteering opportunities. These will be informed by our strategy, but could include:

- Working groups to explore issues impacting our members and where we want to take a thought leadership position in the communications industry e.g., generative AI, disinformation, DEI.
- Shared Interest Groups based on discipline, industry, or special interests e.g., Employee Experience & Brand, Government, Sustainability & Climate Change Communications.
- Taskforces to co-create how we can amplify the value delivered to our members through Conferences, Awards & Recognition and Certification.

## **What if my region or chapter isn't convinced this is the best model?**

Help us make it better. The establishment of a second taskforce (Taskforce 2.0) will provide additional opportunity for volunteer leaders and members to be involved in our transformation. The new model will **not be created by International** and rolled out to regions and chapters. It will be co-created by International, regions and chapters together to ensure agreement and alignment prior to implementation.

Assuming an affirmative vote at the 2023 AGM the IEB will establish a second taskforce that will be responsible for:

- Fine-tuning the operational details of the proposed governance and structure based on feedback from regions and chapters and presenting any further bylaw changes for approval at the 2024 AGM.

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- Exploring different types of financial operating models and collaborating with regions and chapters to develop appropriate approaches to address legal, regulatory and fiscal obligations for each jurisdiction where IABC operates.
- Creating an implementation and change plan for the organization redesign based on the approved model; and leading engagement and associated change communications.

### **Where can I go to share my views?**

The [International Executive Board](#) welcomes and values your input. Please contact any member of the IEB to share your thoughts with us.

Stronger Together Taskforce members are also happy to hear from you:

- Danielle Bond, IEB Past Chair, Taskforce Chair
- Jennifer Andrewes
- Paula Bernardino
- Ginger D. Homan, ABC, SCMP
- Michael Nord, SCMP
- Jacob R. Robinson
- Michael Shepherd
- Anisu K. Verghese, Ph.D.
- Brad Whitworth, ABC, SCMP, IABC Fellow
- Peter Finn