

THE LINKS, INCORPORATED BYLAWS



Linked in Friendship, Connected in Service

MANUAL OF PROCEDURES 2017

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National President

Building A Healthy Legacy: Our Prescription for the Future

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FOREWORD

This is the official Manual of Procedures of The Links, Incorporated. Chapter manuals of procedures intended to replace this document are prohibited. This *Manual of Procedures (MOP)* is a complement to and is to be used in conjunction with the Bylaws of the *Constitution and Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated*. (The **Articles in this document denote the corresponding Articles** of the Bylaws of the *Constitution and Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated*). Its purpose is to delineate the steps used to implement the policies stated in the Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated. When specific implementation steps are not given for a particular policy, refer to the “Document” section on the national website for manuals specific to that function or contact the Committee Chair charged with that responsibility.

The procedures contained in this document have been approved by the Executive Council to implement policies adopted by the National Assembly. The Financial Handbook contains financial practices and procedures relative to items that must be adhered to in order to be in compliance with the 501(C) (4) tax-exempt status of The Links, Incorporated, the 501 (C) (3) tax-exempt status of The Links Foundation, Incorporated, policies of The Links, Incorporated and the Washington, D.C. not-for-profit corporation laws. While the Financial Handbook was adopted as part of the Manual of Procedures at the 2004 National Assembly, due to the volume of its content, it is housed in a separate document.

Further clarification or interpretation of the Constitution and Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated or this Manual of Procedures may be sought from the National President, National Parliamentarian or other members of the Executive Council.

Forms, manuals, handbooks, trainings and instructions can be found under “Documents” in the “Members Only Section” of the National Website. Please complete the forms as directed. Questions about these forms can be directed to National Headquarters Staff. Forms received from National Headquarters should be returned to National Headquarters. All National dues, fees and assessments are remitted to National Headquarters through local Chapters, except in the remittal of the National Building Fund Assessment, and for active members on Affiliate Status in which case dues, fees and assessments are submitted directly to National Headquarters.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Sincere gratitude to all who worked diligently to revise the *Manual of Procedures (MOP)*, a complement to the Bylaws of the *Constitution and Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated*. There were many who provided support, read, wrote, and assisted in the editing of this *Manual of Procedures*. Specifically, the Area Parliamentarians, Link Angela Foster, Eastern Area; Link Tracey Morant Adams, Southern Area; Link Sarah Brown-Clark, Central Area; and Link Lucy Hicks Anderson, Western Area assisted in updating the Manual with actions passed at the 2016 National Assembly.

Additionally, thanks to Link Kimberly Jeffries Leonard, National Vice President and Chair of Membership, for her invaluable input and Link Crystal Kendrick, National Recording Secretary for her many contributions and excellent editing and formatting skills.

I offer special *thanks* to **Link Tyna D. Davis, National Parliamentarian**, a stalwart who took the leadership helm of this task with relentless zeal, commitment, dedication and vision. This *Manual* will be updated periodically. I acknowledge with gratefulness, the willingness of Link Tyna to perform these updates.

Yours in Linkdom,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Glenda Newell-Harris". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Glenda Newell-Harris, MD

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MANUAL OF PROCEDURES of The Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated

Membership (ARTICLE I)

Membership Intake Process

Membership in The Links, Incorporated is by invitation and application. Women invited to membership should have the following qualifications: (1) residence within the membership boundaries in the Chapter's charter; (2) active involvement in educational, civic and/or intercultural community activities; (3) ability to serve actively in support of the programs of the organization; (4) willingness to assume the financial responsibilities, and service and attendance requirements of the organization; (5) skills and talents that will contribute to the vitality of the Chapter; and (6) demonstrated ability to work with others.

Candidates for membership must be recommended by a member(s) in good standing¹ in the respective Chapter. In the case of a daughter or granddaughter of a Link (DOL), the mother or grandmother may submit the DOL's name into the system indicating the Chapter to which the daughter or granddaughter is applying. In the absence of the mother or granddaughter, a member in good standing can reach out to the Chapter for submission. The mother, grandmother or member in good standing may write an optional letter of introduction to the Chapter expressing the DOL's desire to apply for membership. It is not required that the mother or grandmother be a member of the Chapter to which her DOL is applying or that the DOL has a sponsor.

Newly chartered Chapters must wait two (2) years before inducting new members with the following exceptions: (1) if the Chapter falls below the mandatory membership of twenty (20) members, (2) an appeal to the National Membership Chairman (the National Vice President) regarding a transferee if no other Chapter is accessible, and (3) a special appeal is made to the Executive Council for an exception.

Before a candidate (non-DOL or non-reinstatement) can be considered for membership, the sponsoring member(s) must complete the electronic ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form*** on the prospective new member(s). In the case of the DOL candidacy, the electronic ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form*** may be completed and submitted by the DOL's mother, grandmother, sponsor or Chapter President of the Chapter for which she is being considered. The DOL's ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form*** can be signed electronically by the DOL's mother, sponsor, or President of the Chapter for which she is being considered.

The ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Forms*** for all prospective new members, including DOLs, is an electronic form and is to be submitted electronically via The Links, Incorporated website. The ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form*** may be found

¹ A member is considered to be "in good standing" who has met all financial obligations of her Chapter, Area and the National Assembly, is not under disciplinary action or a member of a Chapter under disciplinary action, has met her Chapter's attendance requirements, has met the minimum forty-eight (48) hour service requirement [or an appropriate prorating thereof], and who has met the one-in-five attendance and registration requirement of The Links, Incorporated

in the “Member’s Only” section of The Links, Incorporated website. Voting for candidates other than DOLs or former members of The Links, Incorporated, may occur in the November, December or January Chapter meeting [*see Reinstatement Process for Reinstatement Guidelines*].

Voting on daughters or granddaughters of a Link (DOLs), may take place at any regular Chapter meeting between September and May. New members shall be elected by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative ballot vote of active members of the Chapter who are present and voting, except for (DOLs) who shall be elected by a majority vote of active members present and voting [*see Reinstatement Process* for the vote required for reinstating former members]. Absentee voting is prohibited.

Chapters shall have a procedure(s) **PRIOR** to voting on candidates, for occasions when more candidates receive the required number of votes than there are vacancies/slots. Procedures may include but are not limited to: (1) a second vote on the entire ballot, (2) voting again only on those candidates who received the required minimum number of votes on the first ballot, or (3) inviting those candidates receiving the highest number of votes over the minimum requirement.

A New Member Profile and an ***Induction Request Form*** for all candidates [including reinstatements but not DOLs] receiving the required number of votes shall be completed in its entirety and submitted electronically via The Links, Incorporated website not later than February 20th. The ***New Member Profile*** and the ***Induction Request Form*** for DOL candidates receiving the required number of votes shall be completed in its entirety and submitted electronically via The Links, Incorporated website not later than two weeks following an affirmative vote. After review and approval by the Area Director, the ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form*** will be electronically routed to National Headquarters for approval.

No candidate shall be extended an invitation to membership prior to the Chapter receiving approval of the candidate(s) from National Headquarters. When the proper approval is received by the Chapter from Headquarters, invitations may be extended to the prospective new members. Upon written acceptance of the invitation, the candidate(s) shall be informed of all attendance and service requirements, and financial responsibilities, including joining fees and dues for the fiscal year.

When candidates have paid all fees and assessments, they are electronically submitted to National Headquarters by the Chapter. Fees must be electronically submitted at least thirty-five (35) days before the date of induction. Upon National Headquarters’ acknowledgment of receipt of forms and fees, the Chapter may proceed with preparations for the induction of new members. The Chapter, using the official Orientation Manual, shall conduct orientation sessions for the candidate(s). At the conclusion of the orientation sessions, the candidate(s) will be inducted using the prescribed rituals.²

Chapters requesting a waiver of the thirty (30) day waiting period for inducting new members shall be charged a \$50.00 processing fee if the request for waiver is granted. Chapters shall be charged a \$100.00 fee (\$50.00 processing and \$50.00 penalty) for any subsequent waiver granted.

² All documents, manuals, handbooks, trainings and forms are available under “Documents” in the Members Only section of the national website.

Requests for a waiver of the thirty (30) day waiting period for the induction of new members shall be automatically denied if they are postmarked less than fourteen (14) days before the proposed induction date. Requests for a waiver of the thirty (30) days waiting period for induction of new members shall be automatically denied if the fee accompanying the request is not in the form of certified check, cashier's check or money order, for the proper amount.

The maximum number of Active non-DOL members in a Chapter is sixty (60). Daughters/granddaughters of Links should have the same qualifications for membership as any other prospective member.

Intake Procedures for a Daughter or Granddaughter of a Link (DOLs)

Within two months of the receipt of a completed *New Member Profile and Induction Request Form* for the daughter or granddaughter of a Link (DOL) by either the Chapter President or Chapter Membership Chairman, voting on the DOL shall take place. An invitation to membership shall be extended to the DOL within 30 days following a majority ballot vote and approval from the Area Director and National Headquarters. *New Member Profile and Induction Request Forms* must be submitted electronically to the Area Director immediately but not later than two weeks following an affirmative vote.

After review and approval by the Area Director, the *New Member Profile and Induction Request Form* will be electronically submitted to National Headquarters for approval. When an affirmative response to the invitation to membership and all necessary fees and assessments are received from the DOL, she shall be inducted into the Chapter between May 1st and June 30th of either the same year or the following year, whichever comes first, using the prescribed rituals. All monies shall be paid to National Headquarters electronically by the Chapter at least thirty-five (35) days prior to the planned induction date.

DOLs who are *active* members of a Chapter which has reached its maximum number of members shall not be included when calculating the total number of active members in the Chapter for membership intake purposes, which includes new, transferring, reinstating and returning Alumna Members.

Membership Classification

Membership in The Links, Incorporated falls into three categories: Active; Alumna; and Honorary. Within these categories are Classifications of Membership. These Classifications are presented below.

I. Active Member

An *Active Member* is a member who has met all obligations and requirements as determined by her Chapter, Area and the National Body, except in the case of an Affiliate Member (See section on Affiliate membership) who has met all National obligations. Members meeting these requirements are active members in good standing¹.

These requirements shall include finance, attendance and service. She Members shall pay all dues and assessments of her Chapter, Area and the National Assembly. She is expected to participate in Chapter activities and programs that implement the priorities of The Links, Incorporated.

A member shall have active membership in only one Chapter (primary Chapter). However, in recognition of the growing number of members who have dual residences, and in the spirit of

friendship, a member may establish visiting status in a second Chapter. She shall be responsible for providing advance notification to her primary Chapter President and the President of the secondary Chapter of her intention to participate in meetings and programs of the Chapter in the location of her secondary residence.

All Chapter, Area, and National responsibilities and requirements (financial, attendance, and service hours) shall be recorded and reported through her primary Chapter. Service hours may be performed in the secondary Chapter; however, these hours must be certified by the secondary Chapter and reported through the Link member's primary Chapter.

Active Member: Attendance Sabbatical

An Active Member may apply for and be granted ***Attendance Sabbatical*** if she demonstrates that she cannot fulfill her Chapter's minimum attendance requirement and may be placed on a sabbatical from attending Chapter meetings for one (1) year at the discretion of her Chapter for these reasons:

- 1) Her employment or civic responsibilities prevent her from attending Chapter meetings, or
- 2) She is enrolled in a college or university course that meets on the day and time of Chapter meetings.

At the discretion of her Chapter, this attendance sabbatical may be extended. An active member on an attendance sabbatical shall be required to meet all other obligations of her Chapter, Area, and the National Assembly, i.e., dues and assessments, National attendance requirement for Assemblies or Area Conferences, and the minimum 48-hour service requirement. No Chapter shall grant attendance sabbaticals that would prevent the Chapter from obtaining a quorum at Chapter meetings.

Active members may apply at any time for this status but preferably in January or February preceding the fiscal year the status is being requested. The request for Attendance Sabbatical must be made in writing to the Chapter Vice President of Membership and the Chapter President with supporting documentation. The supporting documentation can be from the member's employer, civic official representative, college or university documentation or member herself sharing itineraries or schedules. The Vice President of Membership then presents the request to the Chapter and the Chapter grants approval with a majority vote. The member may apply for this status for two consecutive years.

Attendance Sabbatical is not transferable to another Chapter and a member on this status may not hold office within The Links, Incorporated or serve as Chairperson of a Chapter, Area or National Committee.

Active Member: Leave of Absence (LOA)

A member on ***Leave of Absence*** is an active member in good standing to whom the Chapter has granted a leave of absence for one year. An additional year may be granted at the discretion of the Chapter. Leave begins and ends in accordance with the fiscal year, May 1st – April 30th. If the member wishes to request an additional year of leave of absence, the request must be made in writing using a Leave of Absence Form² prior to the expiration of the current leave. In extreme circumstances, proof of need for additional leave beyond two years must be submitted to the Chapter for approval and to the Area Director for concurrence.

The Chapter must give the member on leave written notice of the expiration date of the leave at least thirty (30) days in advance. At the expiration of the leave, she shall become an active

member of her Chapter or her membership in The Links, Incorporated shall be automatically terminated. This does not preclude her from reinstating.

A member on LOA must pay National dues and assessments through her Chapter and must meet the Area Conference and National Assembly attendance requirement (One-in-Five). While on leave, a member is not responsible for the minimum forty-eight (48) hour service requirement or Chapter dues, and has no Chapter responsibilities or privileges.

A Chapter shall not grant leaves of absence in excess of 10% of its membership during any fiscal year. For example, a Chapter with 46 members can grant a leave of absence to no more than four (4) members. Ten percent (10%) of 46 is 4.6. Because a Chapter cannot grant leave to six-tenths (.6) of a person and five is in excess of 10%, the Chapter can only grant leaves to four members. DOLs who are Active members of a Chapter are included in the total membership when determining the ten percent (10%).

Active Member: Provisory Status

A member on ***Provisory Status*** is an active member who is medically unable to participate in any activity outside the home. This status may be granted by the Chapter upon written request from the member and a notarized certificate from her doctor. When the member can resume activities outside her home, her provisory will end. The member will re-engage with her Chapter and be required to meet all of the requirements of active membership. False claims of provisory membership status by a member or Chapter shall cause that member or Chapter to be subject to disciplinary action.

Active Member: Military Leave and Military One-in-Five Waiver

A member in good standing on active military duty who is deployed to a combat or high-risk zone or military installation shall be granted a special military leave upon submitting a copy of her orders to her Chapter. While on military leave, and for the remainder of the year in which she returns, she is not responsible for the minimum forty-eight (48) hour service requirement nor any dues or assessments. Said member will also be granted an extension to complete the One-in-Five certification requirements if she cannot meet the requirement during her deployment and will be required to complete the requirement upon her return during the following five-year period. This extension does not exempt her from meeting the requirement of the next five-year period. This member is included when calculating a Chapter's ten percent (10%).

A member in good standing who is called to military training or duty during the time of a National Assembly that falls within the fifth year of a one-in-five period will be granted an extension to complete the National or Area Conference attendance requirement to complete the one-in-five requirement during the following five-year period. This extension does not exempt her from meeting the requirement of the next five-year period.

Active Member: Affiliate Status

A member on ***Affiliate Status*** (Affiliate Member) is an active member in good standing who moves to a locality where there is no Chapter of The Links, Incorporated or a non-DOL where all existing Chapters have reached the maximum number of members. **She must request a transfer** from her Chapter to Affiliate Status no more than six (6) months after moving to a new location. (See the Transfer Process section of this document.)

This request is made to National Headquarters. She must become an Affiliate Member to retain her membership. She shall be responsible for all National dues and assessments, the National attendance requirement (One-in-Five), and the minimum forty- eight (48) hour service requirement. Dues and assessments shall be paid directly to National Headquarters via cashier's check or money order. Dues and assessments shall be paid directly to National Headquarters via cashier's check or money order accompanied by documentation of her minimum 48 service hours. The Affiliate Member is responsible for informing National Headquarters of her new residence and requesting Affiliate Status.

Service Hours and Dues Submission for Affiliate Members

Affiliate Members must submit certified service hours to the National Headquarters **PRIOR** to the submission of dues. Service hours **MUST** be documented via correspondence from the organization(s) through which you completed your service hours. All service hours must be received by April 15th of each fiscal year. Documentation should be sent to membership@linksinc.org or: The Links, Incorporated. Attention: Affiliate Membership, 1200 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005

After receipt of acknowledgment for service hours from the Membership Department, the Affiliate Member can log into the national website using her username and password to pay national dues to The Links, Incorporated and The Links Foundation, Incorporated. Instructions are sent electronically to Affiliate Members in Fall and Winter Affiliate Mailings. The deadline for payment is April 1st. A \$25.00 late fee for both The Links, Incorporated and The Links Foundation, Incorporated will be incurred for dues processed after April 1st for a total of \$50.00. **Late dues will be accepted through May 1st. Dues will not be accepted after May 1st.**

Platinum Status for Affiliate Members

Affiliate Members meeting the required criteria are eligible to apply for ***Platinum Status***. The application should be made through the National Headquarters by completing and forwarding the Platinum Membership Recommendation Form² for approval by the National Vice President and the Executive Council.

II. Alumna Member

An ***Alumna Member*** is a member in good standing who has been an active member for at least thirty (30) years regardless of her current age or has at least ten (10) years of service and is age seventy (70) or more. It is not mandatory that she retire from active membership at age seventy (70). Members who meet the above requirements by June 30th of the next fiscal year and who notify the Chapter no later than the preceding March meeting shall be eligible for Alumna Status. She must request Alumna Status in writing and complete the Alumna Request Form². She must present her request and the form to her Chapter not later than the Chapter's March meeting for Alumna Status to become effective the next fiscal year. The Chapter then forwards the request to National Headquarters with an attached letter, signed by the Chapter President, verifying that the member meets the qualifications for Alumna Status.

A member who is granted Alumna Status is an Alumna of The Links, Incorporated (not her Chapter) and has *no financial* responsibilities to The Links, Incorporated; however, she may participate in Chapter, Area and National activities with the payment of any required fees. She shall be afforded all the rights and privileges of The Links, Incorporated except for participating in parliamentary procedures including voting, chairing committees and holding office.

An Alumna Member may request to return to Active Member Status within five (5) years of taking Alumna Status. An Alumna Member may request to return to Active membership providing the Chapter has available member slots. Alumna Members who seek to return to active membership status must submit the Alumna-to-Active Form² to the Chapter President of their former Chapter and National Headquarters between September and February. She will be allowed to return to active membership status without any required votes or fees, assuming the Chapter has not reached its maximum number. This decision to return to active membership status, without any required fees, from Alumna Status can only occur once. Alumna Members who seek to return to Active Status must be sure to confirm that their contact information in the Links Headquarters database is current.

If an Alumna Member seeks to return to Active Status and she has moved from the boundaries of her former Chapter, she may request to return to Active Status in a Chapter that is within her boundaries by sending a letter to the Chapter President of the new Chapter and National Headquarters.

Platinum Classification for Active and Alumna Members

A Platinum member is an Active member in good standing or an Alumna Member who (1) has reached eighty (80) years of age or older and who has given thirty (30) years of service; or (2) has given 50 years of service. This status is the highest honor afforded a member on the recommendation of a Chapter and the National Vice President, and approval by the Executive Council.

The member must become eligible for Platinum Status between the previous National Assembly and June 30th of the year in which she will be honored. A non-Affiliate Member seeking Platinum Status must have her Chapter submit electronically the Platinum Membership Recommendation Form, signed by the President and containing information verifying that the member meets the qualifications for Platinum Status to National Headquarters, the National Vice President, and the respective Area Director not later than February 1st in order for the member to be honored as a Platinum member at the next National Assembly. An Affiliate Member meeting the requirements may complete the form herself and forward to National Headquarters for approval by the National Vice President and approval by the Executive Council.

A Platinum member is not responsible for meeting the minimum forty-eight (48) hour service requirement or the One-in-Five Area Conference or National Assembly attendance requirement.

III. Honorary Member

An ***Honorary Member*** is a well-known public individual of high ethical standing of any race, nationality or creed who has been cited nationally and/or internationally for her outstanding service to humanity.

Criteria for Selection

An Honorary Member shall have evidenced identifiable abilities, interests and contributions in the areas of educational, civic and intercultural activities with special emphasis on at least one of five-dimensional program facets of The Links, Incorporated.

No former member of The Links, Incorporated shall be considered for Honorary Membership.

Area Selection Process for Nominees

Only one individual may be selected to Honorary Membership at a time. At least four (4) years must elapse between the selection of Honorary Members.

Chapters may submit nominees for Honorary Membership to their Area Director. Area Executive Committees may also submit nominees. Each Area Director, in consultation with her Area Executive Committee, may present a nomination to the Executive Council to be considered for Honorary Membership. A biographical sketch of the Area's nominee including personal background, leadership roles, experience, honors, special recognition, societal contributions, and addresses where the nominee or her representative may be contacted must be included. Additionally, a statement of how the nominee's societal contributions relate to the programmatic thrust of The Links, Incorporated must be included in the nominating statement. Special emphasis on at least one of the five-dimensional program facets of the organization is recommended. This information must be provided by Chapters or the Area Executive Committee when submitting nominees. Additional data may include visual supportive material that can be duplicated.

Areas may follow a selection process based on that of the Executive Council.

Executive Council Selection Process and Schedule

Area Directors submit required data to National Headquarters not later than October 1st.

National Headquarters distributes all documentation on each nominee to the seven (7) members of the Executive Council Screening Committee not later than November 1st.

A Screening Committee of the Executive Council shall consist of seven (7) members including the National President, who shall serve as Chair, the Immediate Past National President who shall serve as Vice Chair, National Vice President, and the four (4) Area Directors. This Committee shall recommend a nominee to the Executive Council after carefully investigating the credentials and contributions of each nominee.

A ballot with the names of the nominees shall be in the packet sent to the committee. An electronic ballot may be used in place of a paper ballot.

Committee members shall return ballots to National Headquarters postmarked no later than December 1st if a paper ballot or sent no later than December 1st if an electronic ballot. A two-thirds (2/3) affirmative ballot vote of the Executive Council Screening Committee shall be necessary for selection as a candidate for Honorary Membership.

National Headquarters shall tabulate the vote not later than December 10th. The results of the balloting shall be made known immediately via memorandum to the Executive Council Screening Committee members. A ballot (paper or electronic) shall then be sent to the voting members of the Executive Council. Ballots shall be returned to National Headquarters not later than January 7th. A two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the voting members of the Executive Council shall elect the candidate and cause the National President to extend an invitation to Honorary Membership in The Links, Incorporated.

Should a favorable vote occur, the National President shall write the prospective Honorary Member not later than January 20th, informing her of her invitation to Honorary Membership in The Links, Incorporated and its attendant rights, privileges and responsibilities. The National

President shall request a written response from the prospective Honorary Member by March 1st indicating whether she will accept or decline the invitation.

Upon acceptance of the invitation to Honorary Membership in The Links, Incorporated, her induction shall occur at a time and place mutually agreed upon in advance by The Links, Incorporated and the honoree.

Rights and Privileges

An Honorary Member shall be afforded all rights and privileges of The Links, Incorporated except for voting, holding office and chairing committees.

An Honorary Member has no financial responsibility to The Links, Incorporated; however, she may participate in Chapter, Area and National activities with the payment of any required fees.

An Honorary Member shall not share in the financial obligations of the National Assembly at which she is inducted. Reimbursement shall be at the same rate as established for members of the Executive Council except that she shall have full room allowance.

Reimbursement for attendance at subsequent National Assemblies shall be limited to the registration fee.

An Honorary Member shall be presented with an appropriate plaque or scroll, which shall remain the same for all individuals so honored. Additional information regarding rituals and protocol for Honorary Members can be found in The Links, Incorporated Rituals Manual and The Links, Incorporated Protocol Manual.

An Honorary Member who becomes an active member shall relinquish all rights and privileges of Honorary Membership.

Transfer Process

An active member seeking a transfer to another Chapter or Affiliate Status must be a member in good standing. She shall request and be granted a transfer through National Headquarters between May 1st and December 1st.

Transfers can be processed only if a member moves to another locality or if a new Chapter is established closer to the member's home.

Newly chartered Chapters must wait two (2) years before accepting transferees. Exceptions would be (1) the Chapter falls below the mandatory membership of twenty (20) or (2) a member appeals to the National Vice President regarding the transfer if no other Chapter is accessible and a special appeal is made to the Executive Council for an exception.

Members shall retrieve a Transfer Form² within six months after moving to another locality. Upon completion of the Transfer Form, the member requesting a transfer shall follow the submission instructions delineated on the Transfer Form. These forms are available after April 1st or by request to the National Vice President or Headquarters Membership Staff.

If the member is in good standing, the President of the transferring Chapter acknowledges receipt of the form by signing it and returning it to National Headquarters within thirty (30) days of receipt. The request for transfer of a Chapter President must be signed by the Chapter Membership Chair.

If the member is not in good standing, the president of the transferring Chapter must send a letter to National Headquarters explaining the circumstances of the member who wishes to transfer within thirty (30) days of receipt of the form.

If the receiving Chapter has not reached its maximum of sixty (60) non-DOL members or if the transferring member is a DOL, the president of the receiving Chapter acknowledges receipt of the form by signing it and returning it to National Headquarters within thirty (30) days.

If the receiving Chapter has reached its maximum of sixty (60) non-DOL members and the transferring member is not a DOL, the President of the receiving Chapter will return the form to National Headquarters indicating such. Headquarters shall inform the transferring member of her classification as an Affiliate Member and the requirements of that membership classification.

The Executive Director of The Links, Incorporated validates the transfer and sends copies of the approval with the effective date of the transfer to the following:

- the Chapter from which the Link is transferring
- the new Chapter, in accordance with the member's request where two or more Chapters exist in a city, to which the transfer is made
- the respective Area Director(s)
- the member and
- the National Membership Chairman (National Vice President)

No Chapter shall refuse to accept a member for whom a transfer has been received unless there is no available space. DOLs do not count for membership intake purposes when calculating the number of Active members in a Chapter that has reached its maximum membership.

A member's financial obligation to her Chapter becomes effective as of the date of the transfer on a pro rata basis. Chapter dues paid to the former Chapter shall be refunded in the same manner. Area and National dues and assessments are not refundable. Problems regarding transfers shall be referred to the Area Director(s) and National Vice President for disposition.

Minimum Forty-Eight (48) Hours Service Requirement

Active members of The Links, Incorporated are required to accumulate a minimum forty- eight (48) hours of service per fiscal year to the organization through service sanctioned by and a part of her Chapter's programmatic thrust. Service hours may also be earned by attending Chapter meetings, participation in Chapter activities, participation in certain Area meetings as may be designated by the Area Director, and participation in certain National meetings as may be designated by the National President. The one-year period mirrors the fiscal year of The Links, Incorporated i.e., May 1st through April 30th. Members may project an estimate of service hours that will be accumulated after the Chapter's submission of its Master Data Form and by April 30th if necessary. Chapter leadership is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the service hours reported.

Area and National Officers, Committee Chairs and Committee members will be granted service hour credit for service given in the facilitation of their committees' responsibilities and/or officer duties. Examples of hours for which credit may be taken include, **but are not limited to** conference calls; time spent writing reports and/or minutes; power point preparation; site visits; preparation time for meetings; and time presenting workshops at Area Conferences

and/or National Assemblies. [See Service Hour Toolkit² for service hour categories and allotment.]

National Attendance and Participation Requirement

Except for active members with Platinum or Provisory Status, Active members are required to attend and participate in a minimum of one (1) National Assembly or one (1) Area Conference in her Area every five-year period (One-in-Five) to maintain membership in The Links, Incorporated. The initial period began in 2002 for all who were members at that time. The initial five (5) year period for members inducted after 2002 shall begin the year of their induction. Alumna Members are not required to meet the One in Five attendance requirement. In order to meet this requirement and receive credit for having attended, a member must register for the Assembly or Area Conference and attend a minimum of two (2) business meetings, one (1) program workshop, and one (1) operational workshop of the Assembly or Area Conference.

In order to meet the registration and attendance requirement, documentation verifying attendance at a program workshop, an operational workshop and two business meetings at an Area Conference or National Assembly is required. A member who fails to attend either her Area Conference or a National Assembly within her currently applicable five (5) year period shall forfeit her membership in The Links, Incorporated.

However, if a documented life-altering or life-threatening event occurs unavoidably preventing an active member from attending either the Area Conference or National Assembly in the fifth and final year of the requirement, and a member has not yet fulfilled the requirement during the first four years, she shall be allowed to provide written explanation of the unavoidable circumstances.

The written explanation must show that the circumstances were unavoidable, not an inconvenience, however, great the inconvenience may be. The written explanation, if accepted and approved by National Executive Council, will prevent her from forfeiting her membership for failure to fulfill the one (1) Area Conference or one (1) National Assembly within every (5) years requirement.

The approval process shall begin with submitting the documentation to her Chapter for approval. The Chapter shall send approved documentation to the Area Executive Team for approval, and the Area Executive Team shall send approved documentation to the National Executive Council which shall have final approval or rejection of the documentation.

Once approval has been received from the Chapter, Area, and the National Executive Council, the member will be notified that she does not have to fulfill the requirement. She will be advised to attend the next scheduled Area Conference or National Assembly without the possibility of exception.

The Chapter, Area and National Secretaries will ensure that the Member's Membership Profiles are updated to reflect attendance at Area Conferences and/or National Assemblies by implementing the following procedures:

Years 1 through 5 of the five-year period: The Chapter Recording Secretary, no later than October 30th of the program year, will run a One-in-Five Certification Report from the Membership Management System. This report should be distributed to all members in the Chapter to verify that their Area Conference or National Assembly attendance is accurately reflected in their profiles. Chapter members alert the Chapter Secretary of any updates or revisions to their Area Conference/Assembly attendance if necessary no later than November 30th of that program year. The Chapter Recording Secretary will send necessary changes to

the Area and National Recording Secretaries, who will ensure that updates are made to the member's profile in the Membership Management System by December 15th. The Chapter Recording Secretary will provide an accurate One-in-Five Certification Report to the Chapter Vice President of Membership by December 30th of this and every program year.

Years 3 through 5: The Chapter Recording Secretary will submit the December report of those members not yet meeting their One-in-Five requirement to the National Recording Secretary and Area Secretaries. Reminders will be sent out to Chapter Secretaries requesting this report. The One-in-Five Report will be verified by the National Recording Secretary and Area Secretaries, who in turn will submit the report to the National Vice President and Area Vice Directors. Chapter members who have not met their One-in-Five requirements will receive reminder letters under the signature of the National Recording Secretary with carbon copies to the members' respective Area Recording Secretary, Area Vice Director and National Vice President by January 30th of the program year.

Reinstatement Process

A former member shall at no time become a member of The Links, Incorporated except through the process contained in this section. The former member shall pay a reinstatement fee. Reinstating members do not pay new member fees. A Chapter may consider a former member for reinstatement if it has not reached its maximum number of members. A DOL may be considered for reinstatement regardless of the number of Active members in a Chapter. A former member shall apply for reinstatement between September and November via a certified letter, return receipt requested, to the president of her former Chapter, or, if the former member has moved, to a Chapter in her new locale.

As soon as the letter is received and before the former member is voted upon, the Chapter shall send the former member a ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form***. The former member must complete and return the form to the Chapter within 15 days. When the completed form is returned, the Chapter shall vote on the request for reinstatement of the former member within two regular Chapter meeting dates. If the former member is to be reinstated, the Chapter shall electronically submit the ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form*** to the Area Director via the national website for review and approval.

After review and approval by the Area Director, the ***New Member Profile and Induction Request Form*** will be electronically routed to National Headquarters for approval. Upon receiving approval from National Headquarters, the Chapter shall notify the former member via certified mail of its decision and information regarding the amount of applicable assessments, National and Chapter dues, the reinstatement fee and any outstanding dues and fees. All appropriate fees and assessments monies shall be paid to National Headquarters electronically by the Chapter at least thirty-five (35) days prior to reinstatement.

A former member seeking reinstatement must apply for reinstatement to her former Chapter unless she has moved since the termination of her membership. If she has moved, she may apply for reinstatement in a Chapter in her new location. Her application must be accompanied by a letter from her former Chapter president certifying her status at the time of her resignation or forfeiture of membership. However, the Chapter in which she is requesting to become a member must vote on her reinstatement.

The president of her former Chapter, or the Chapter in which she is requesting to become a member, shall acknowledge, in writing, receipt of her request within thirty (30) days via certified mail.

The reinstatement voting requirement and subsequent processes will vary based on the length of time the former relinquished her membership. Specifically:

- 1) **A former member who resigned in good standing and applies for reinstatement within two (2) years of her resignation** shall be reinstated upon application and a majority ballot vote of the Chapter members present and voting. She shall pay current National and Chapter dues and assessments and a reinstatement fee in an amount determined by the National Finance Committee and approved by the National Assembly. She shall be reinstated within 35 days after her fees are processed.
- 2) **A former member who forfeited her membership for non-payment of dues and applies for reinstatement within two (2) years of her forfeiture**, shall be reinstated upon application, payment of all current Chapter and National dues and assessments, payment of all National and Chapter dues and assessments owed at the time of her forfeiture, and a majority ballot vote of the Chapter members present and voting. She shall pay a reinstatement fee in an amount determined by the National Finance Committee and approved by the National Assembly. She shall be reinstated within 35 days after her fees are processed.
- 3) **A former member who resigned in good standing and applies for reinstatement more than two (2) years after her resignation** shall be reinstated upon application, a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative ballot vote of the Chapter members present and voting, and payment of current National and Chapter dues and assessments. She shall be required to participate in orientation sessions and shall be inducted as in the process for a new member between May 1st and June 30th. She shall pay a reinstatement fee in an amount determined by the National Finance Committee and approved by the National Assembly.
- 4) **A former member who forfeited her membership for non-payment of dues and applies for reinstatement more than two (2) years after her forfeiture**, shall be reinstated upon application, payment of all current Chapter and National dues and assessments, payment of all National and Chapter dues and assessments owed at the time of her forfeiture, and a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative ballot vote of the Chapter members present and voting. She shall be required to participate in orientation sessions and shall be inducted as in the process for a new member between May 1st and June 30th. She shall pay a reinstatement fee in an amount determined by the National Finance Committee and approved by the National Assembly.

The time period for determining whether a former member is requesting reinstatement within two (2) years of her resignation or forfeiture of membership, or more than two (2) years after her resignation or forfeiture of membership, shall begin on the date the Chapter accepts her resignation or May 1 of the year of non-payment of Chapter and/or National dues. Upon reinstatement, the member is given credit for her previous years of service as an active member.

Resignation Process

A member who wishes to resign from The Links, Incorporated must submit her resignation *in writing to her Chapter*. After the Chapter accepts the resignation, a copy is sent to the respective Area Director and National Headquarters. The resignation becomes final when it has been accepted by the Chapter and is formally acknowledged at the National Assembly. The acceptance of the member's resignation must be reflected in the minutes of the meeting at which the resignation was acted upon.

Forfeiture of Membership

A member shall forfeit her membership in The Links, Incorporated if all Chapter, Area and/or National dues and assessments are not paid on or before May 1st of each year or the year it is due, if she does not meet the minimum forty-eight (48) hour service requirement, or if she does not meet the One-in-Five Attendance requirement.

Disciplinary Process

Members shall function under the auspices of The Links, Incorporated. No member shall take any action, legal or otherwise, that contravenes the Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, Bylaws, Manual of Procedures, Code of Ethics or other governing documents of The Links, Incorporated. A member who is subject to disciplinary action shall not participate in the investigation or deliberation of the action.

Members, including officers, may be censured³, suspended, or expelled for conduct injurious to the name of The Links, Incorporated, including, but not limited to disturbance of the organization's well-being, violation of, or failure to abide by, the governing rules, regulations and/or policies of the organization, harmful behavior to members, and/or conviction of a felony. The recommended disciplinary action shall be dependent upon the seriousness of the violation.

Only members of The Links, Incorporated may participate the hearing process. Legal representation is not allowed. A Link who is an attorney and a respondent's representative, may not act in the capacity of an attorney during a hearing.

See **HEARING PROCESS** (Appendix A) for detailed information regarding the conducting of a hearing.

Suspension

A Chapter, Area Executive Committee, or the Executive Council wishing to suspend a member must have a fair and impartial hearing during which the accused member is given the opportunity to participate. The hearing shall be held in Executive Session on a regular meeting date in the case of a Chapter, or on a date determined by the Area Director or the National President in the case of the Area Executive Committee or the Executive Council respectively. All members, the respective Area Director, and the National Vice President shall be notified by certified mail at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting at which the hearing shall take place. Notices shall be mailed to the last known address.

A thorough investigation of the accusation(s) shall take place prior to the hearing. The investigation shall be conducted by the Chapter, Area or National Membership Committee, designated members of the Area Executive Committee, or designated members of the Executive Council, whichever is applicable. Should a member of any of these committees be the accused, she shall recuse herself from the investigation. The accused member shall be notified of the results of the hearing via certified mail, within ten (10) days. In the case of a suspension, the letter shall include information regarding the period of the suspension and the member's appeal rights.

³ Censure is an official reprimand of a member. It serves as a formal condemnation of a member's behavior or action and has no direct effect on her membership privileges. The censure should be noted in the minutes of the proceeding at which it is given.

A suspended member is withdrawn from all activity with The Links, Incorporated for a specified period not to exceed one (1) year. During this time, the suspended member has no rights or privileges of membership; however, she shall be responsible for National, Area, and Chapter dues and assessments.

At any time during the period of suspension, a member may be restored to good standing in her Chapter by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the Active members present and voting, or at the expiration date of the suspension. The member is automatically reinstated when the matter causing the suspension has been resolved. If the matter causing the suspension has not been resolved at the end of one (1) year, the member shall be subject to further disciplinary action including expulsion. A member shall not be under disciplinary action for more than two years.

Expulsion

A Chapter or an Area Executive Committee considering recommending the expulsion of a member, or the National Executive Committee considering recommending the expulsion of a member of the Executive Council, must have a fair and impartial hearing during which the member is given the opportunity to participate personally or by representation. The hearing shall be held in Executive Session on a regular meeting date in the case of a Chapter, or on a date determined by the Area Director or National President in the case of the Area Executive Committee or the Executive Council respectively. All members, the respective Area Director, and the National Vice President (and the National President in the case of a member of the Executive Council) shall be notified by certified mail at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting at which the hearing shall take place. Notices shall be mailed to the last known address.

A thorough investigation of the accusation (s) shall take place prior to the initial hearing. The investigation shall be conducted by the Chapter, Area or National Membership Committee, designated members of the Area Executive Committee, or designated members of the Executive Council, whichever is applicable. Should a member of any of these committees be the accused, she shall recuse herself from the investigation. The accused member shall be notified of the results of the hearing via certified mail, within ten (10) days. In the case of a recommendation of expulsion, the letter shall include information regarding the total severance of the member's suspension and the member's appeal rights.

Code of Ethics

Recognizing the important role that each member has within our organization in accomplishing our mission and understanding the value of excellence and professionalism, The Links, Incorporated adopted *The Links Organization Code of Ethics*² as a model to guide our ethical conduct as we build the bonds of friendship among our membership and provide service through programmatic activities in the program facets. Refer to the *Code of Ethics and Standards Quality Control Document* for detailed information regarding specifics of the *Code* and the associated processes for filing complaints.

Process of Ethics and Standards Chapter Compliance

- 1) Chapter President appoints a Chapter Ethics and Standards Committee
Evidence: Names and contact information of committee members are on file with the Area Chair, including the identification of the committee chair.
Due Date: Immediately

- 2) Chapter is oriented on the contents of *The Links Organization Code of Ethics and Standards* Evidence: Copy of agenda where orientation was conducted accompanied by Roster of Chapter members attending.
Due Date: February 27th

- 3) Completion of the Code of Ethics Member Acknowledgment Form - Form COE 61-1
Evidence: Statement from the Chapter President that all members have been given the opportunity to sign the form.
Due Date: February 27th

- 4) Storage of Ethics and Standards Member Acknowledgment Forms
Evidence: Documentation from Chapter President
 - (a) Original signed forms are filed with Chapter Recording Secretary with copies filed with the Membership Chair and the Chapter Ethics and Standards Committee Chair
 - (b) Roster noting member action on form (signed or elected not to sign) is on file with the Area Chair-Ethics and Standards.
 Due Date: February 27th

- 5) Include Ethics and Standards orientation in the Chapter New Membership Orientation
Evidence: Documentation from Chapter president that Items 1, 2, and 3 have been completed for all new members inducted.
Due Date: between February 27th and May 31st.

As a part of the Chapter Compliance Process, the Chapter Recording Secretary will store ethics and standards member acknowledgment forms. Original signed forms are filed with the Chapter Recording Secretary with copies filed with the Membership Chair and the Chapter Ethics and Standards Committee Chair.

The Chapter Recording Secretary should follow each of these steps:

- 1) Receive the signed Code of Ethics Member Acknowledgement Forms (Form COE 61-1) from Chapter Ethics and Standards Committee Chair
- 2) Make two sets of copies of all signed Forms and provides a set to the Membership Chair and a set to the Standards Committee Chair
- 3) Scan all signed copies alphabetically and stores the file(s) on flash drive, Chapter laptop, etc. by program year
- 4) File original signed hard copies in a notebook entitled Ethics and Standards Compliance Forms alphabetically and separated by program year.
- 5) Transition both notebook and electronic filing device to the incoming Chapter Recording Secretary at the end of her elected term.

Appeal Process

Members have the right to appeal or question any matter resulting in disciplinary action. As a condition of membership, a member agrees to first pursue the appeal procedures of The Links, Incorporated as set forth in the *Constitution* and *Manual of Procedures*. Members are not allowed to bring legal counsel to any administrative hearing. Violation of these procedures shall be a basis for expulsion from the organization by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the Executive Council. A member failing to appeal within the designated time limit shall end the appeal process. Should an officer or the Executive Council fail to render a decision within the designated time limit, the appeal shall be heard by the next officer in succession or by the Executive Council as applicable.

Appeals of disciplinary action imposed by a Chapter proceed from the action of the Chapter to the Area Director to the Executive Council to the National Assembly.

Appeals of disciplinary action imposed by an Area Executive Committee proceed from the action of the Area Executive Committee to the Executive Council to the National Assembly.

Appeals of disciplinary action imposed on a member of the Executive Council by the National Executive Committee proceed from the action of the National Executive Committee to the National President, to the Executive Council, to the National Assembly.

All notices requesting an appeal or advising of a decision shall be in writing and sent via certified mail. Receipt of a decision or request for appeal is deemed to have occurred when the mail shall have been delivered to the last known address of the party, whether or not the mail is actually received by the addressee. It is the responsibility of each member to keep National Headquarters aware of her current and correct contact information.

A member wishing to appeal any decision must do so not later than thirty (30) days from the postmarked date of the letter advising her of the decision she is appealing. The officer to whom the appeal is directed, or the Executive Council, shall render a decision within sixty (60) days of the postmark date of the certified letter appealing the previous decision. A member wishing to appeal to the National Assembly shall notify the National President at least ninety (90) days in advance of the National Assembly to which she wishes to appeal. If the request to appeal to the National Assembly is made with fewer than ninety (90) days left until the convening of the National Assembly, the appeal shall be heard at the following National Assembly.

All documentation presented in hearings during the appeals process is to be sealed and forwarded to National Headquarters at the conclusion of the appeal process.

Chapters (ARTICLE II)

Chapter Establishment Process Overview

For the detailed process of establishing a Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, refer to the Chapter Establishment Manual². This section contains an outline of the process. A group or individual in a city or community with or without an existing Chapter (s) of The Links, Incorporated may begin the process of establishing a Chapter. A group of at least thirty but not more than sixty (60) women is required to begin the process. This group may include Active and Affiliate Members of The Links, Incorporated, but may not include Alumna Members.

All proposed members of the Applying Group shall meet the qualifications for membership as outlined in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Manual of Procedures of The Links, Incorporated.

Prospective members shall reside within the proposed geographic boundaries of the Applying Group. When multiple Chapters are considered, a population of 50,000 African Americans for each Chapter must be in existence. This requirement may be waived by the Executive Council under unusual circumstances. Those circumstances shall be determined by the Executive Council after a recommendation by the Chapter Establishment Committee (CEC). In cases of multiple Chapters, boundaries may be the same and/or overlap.

The process of establishing a Chapter of The Links, Incorporated by an individual or group other than the organization itself, shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- 1) A letter of inquiry is sent to the National Headquarters of The Links, Incorporated, 1200 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005.
- 2) Headquarters will acknowledge receipt of the letter and forward the letter of inquiry to the Chairman of the Chapter Establishment Committee (CCEC).
- 3) The CCEC will forward information including initial guidelines for required documentation and fees to the inquiring party.
- 4) The CCEC requests that the Area Director of the Applying Group's locality send three names of members from different Chapters of the Area who shall act as an Ad Hoc Committee to determine the feasibility of the Applying Group becoming a Chapter of The Links, Incorporated.

After review of the completed documents by the CEC and the Ad Hoc Committee, a vote is taken to determine that qualifications are met and whether or not the group is granted the status of an Interest Group.

When the criteria of the Applying Group are met, ballots and documentation are mailed to the Executive Council. A two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the Executive Council is required for the group to attain the designation of Interest Group of The Links, Incorporated.

An Interest Group organized expressly to become a Links Chapter, or a group that has worked together prior to applying to become a Links Chapter, shall work together for at least one (1) year after application and shall submit quarterly reports of the group's activities.

At the end of at least a one (1) year period and a visit to the Interest Group by the CCEC, materials not previously circulated along with a ballot and the recommendation of the CCEC and the CEC for Chapter-Elect status are mailed to members of the Executive Council.

Following the tallying of the vote of the Executive Council, National Headquarters shall advise the National President of the results. The CEC shall notify the Interest Group and the Area Director. If the vote is favorable, the group shall choose a date in conjunction with the CCEC, the National President and the Area Director, for the Chapter chartering

Newly chartered Chapters shall be on probationary status its first year and wait two (2) years before inducting new members or accepting transfers. The exceptions being (1) if the Chapter falls below the mandatory membership of twenty (20); (2) an appeal to the National Vice President regarding transfers if no other Chapter is accessible; or (3) a special appeal is made to the Executive Council for an exception.

A group outside the United States follows the same procedures except that the National President shall act in place of the Area Director and the steps involving the Ad hoc Committee members shall be eliminated. International Chapters will be chartered with a minimum of 25 members, and a percentage to be determined will be made up of permanent/legal residents in the area in which the Chapter is chartered.

Chapter Bylaws

Chapter bylaws shall be in compliance with the Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated. The bylaws of a newly established Chapter shall be reviewed by the National Parliamentarian (who shall maintain a copy) and copies filed with National Headquarters, the respective Area Director and

Area Parliamentarian. Each revision of a Chapter's bylaws shall be reviewed by the Area Parliamentarian and a copy filed with National Headquarters, the National Parliamentarian, the respective Area Director and the Area Parliamentarian.

The bylaws of Chapters shall be kept current with those of The Links, Incorporated. In all cases, the Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated shall prevail.

Chapter Boundary Change Request Guidelines

Chapters who desire a boundary change must submit the following information to their Area Executive Committees for approval: the rationale for the boundary change; assessment of impact to neighboring Chapter(s); demographic data to support the requested boundary change; and, maps of the areas, counties, cities involved. If approved, the proposed new boundaries shall be approved by the Executive Council before a Chapter's boundaries can be changed. Specific information to be included in each section is as follows:

Rationale for Boundary Change

Chapters should fully explain the rationale for a boundary change. Legitimate conditions may include:

- Declining African-American population within the current boundaries
- Declining Chapter membership due to members seeking Alumna Status
- Challenges with increasing Chapter membership
- How this will improve Chapter membership growth
- Other

Assessment of Impact on Neighboring Chapter(s)

Requesting Chapter should provide compelling evidence that the requested boundary change will not negatively impact neighboring Chapters. Supporting data may include:

- Other Chapters are able to continue to induct new members
- Increase in African American population
- Increase in industries/businesses located within the community or boundaries

Demographic Data to Support Boundary Change

Requesting Chapter should provide demographic data to support the requested boundary change. Supporting data should include:

- Current census data by county, municipality, locality, etc.
- Current economic development and/or regional planning organization's data (if the census data is more than five (5) years old)
- Increased African American social/service/fraternal organizations (from which the Links Chapter may draw)

Maps (with color-coded components below)

Requesting Chapter should provide maps to support the requested boundary change: The map(s) should include:

- Current Chapter boundaries
- Proposed Chapter boundaries
- Neighboring Chapter's boundaries
- Overlapping boundaries

Chapter Responsibilities

The Links, Incorporated, a public service, nonpartisan, volunteer organization, is listed as a tax- exempt organization because of its purposes and pursuit of charitable endeavors. Organizations which are tax-exempt because of their structure cannot become political instruments. Chapters of The Links, Incorporated shall conduct programs which implement the National Programs of the organization.

Chapters shall function under the auspices of The Links, Incorporated. No Chapter shall take any action, legal or otherwise, that contravenes the Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, Bylaws, Manual of Procedures, and/or duly published rules and regulations of The Links, Incorporated. Chapters may adopt special rules of order and standing rules as long as they do not conflict with The Links Incorporated governing documents.

Chapters must maintain a minimum of twenty (20) Active members and are limited to a maximum of sixty (60) non-DOL members.

Chapters located in areas with a population of more than fifty thousand (50,000) African-Americans, whose active members fall below the minimum number of active members, will be given two (2) years to increase their active membership to the minimum requirement.

Chapters located in areas with a population of fewer than fifty thousand (50,000) African-Americans whose membership falls below the minimum number of active members will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The National Vice President, the respective Area Director, and the National Membership Committee shall monitor the Chapters' growth and size. The National Vice President, in consultation with the respective Area Director, may grant continued Active Status to those Chapters whose membership is below the minimum number of active members for one (1) year. At their discretion, the National Vice President and the Area Director may grant a one (1)-year extension to those Chapters with less than the minimum number of active members showing they are working to increase their active membership to the minimum number.

Each Chapter shall submit required reports to the Area Director, National Headquarters and other personnel as may be directed in a timely manner. Official forms shall be used for these reports. Failure to submit required reports may result in disciplinary action.

Chapters are responsible for documenting the following information for each member:

- Attendance at Area Conferences and National Assemblies
- Financial obligations
- Minimum 48-hour service requirement
- Adherence to Chapter attendance requirements
- Death (The death of a member should be reported immediately to the Area Director and National Headquarters and the Chapter should immediately update the member's profile in the system to reflect said death)

Chapter committees may meet by means of a conference telephone or similar communications technologies provided the committee members, and interested Chapter members can hear and communicate with each other. Participation in a meeting as provided by this provision shall constitute presence in person. The regular Chapter meeting shall be a face-to-face meeting.

Chapter Disciplinary Action

Any Chapter violating the rules and policies of The Links, Incorporated shall be notified of the infraction by the Area Director via certified mail. Within ninety (90) days of receipt of the notice, the Chapter shall have the opportunity to show cause why it should not be subject to disciplinary action. The Area Director may assist, or appoint a representative or committee to assist, a Chapter in removing its deficiencies prior to or after the imposition of disciplinary action. Should disciplinary action be imposed, the recommended disciplinary action shall be dependent upon the seriousness of the violation.

Probation

The activities of a Chapter on probation are determined, controlled and supervised by the Area Executive Committee. The initial period of probation shall not exceed one (1) year.

If the deficiencies are not remedied within one (1) year of the date of notification of probation, the Area Executive Committee may extend the probation period for one (1) additional year **only**. However, if the deficiencies are not remedied after either one or two years (depending upon whether or not probation was extended for an additional year), the Chapter is automatically suspended and may be subject to revocation of its charter.

Suspension

An Area Executive Committee, with the concurrence of the National President, may place a Chapter on suspension. When this occurs, all Chapter activities must stop. The Chapter is not allowed to represent itself in any way as a part of The Links, Incorporated. The period of suspension shall not exceed one (1) year.

Charter Revocation

If after two (2) years a Chapter has not remedied its deficiencies, and upon the recommendation of the Area Director and the National Vice President, the recommendation to revoke the Chapter's charter is made to the Executive Council.

Three (3) months prior to the meeting of the Executive Council, at which the recommendation to revoke a Chapter's charter is to be considered, the Chapter shall be notified of this intent. This gives the Chapter the opportunity to rebut the pending revocation or to appear at this meeting of the Executive Council.

A two-thirds (2/3) affirmative ballot vote of the Executive Council is required to adopt this recommendation. If charter revocation is recommended, the Chapter is notified of the pending revocation via certified mail, return receipt requested, and given six (6) months from the date of receipt of the notice to remedy the deficiency.

The revocation of a Chapter's Charter becomes final by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the National Assembly.

Chapter (Member) Participation

Members of a Chapter that is on probation, suspension or whose charter has been recommended for revocation cannot serve in their National or Area offices, elected or appointed, nor as National or Area Committee members until the matter causing the disciplinary action has been resolved.

A Chapter under disciplinary action is required to have representation attending National Assemblies and/or Area Conferences, although it shall not be seated nor have a voice in the proceedings. However, members shall be required to attend workshops as directed by Area Executive Committee.

Appeal Process

A Chapter at any level of disciplinary action has the right to appeal at any time prior to the revocation of its Charter, following the appropriate levels—first to the respective Area Director; then to the Executive Council; and finally, to the National Assembly. A Chapter wishing to appeal any decision must notify the next level of appeal of its intent to do so not later than thirty (30) days from the postmarked date of the certified letter, return receipt requested, advising it of the decision being appealed.

A Chapter wishing to appeal to the National Assembly shall notify the National President at least ninety (90) days in advance of the National Assembly to which it wishes to appeal. If the request to appeal to the National Assembly is made with fewer than ninety days left until the convening of the National Assembly, the appeal shall be heard at the following National Assembly.

The Hearing Process shall be followed when applicable.

Insurance

Each Chapter shall be covered by liability insurance for all activities and events, members and guests. The Links, Incorporated shall not be held accountable for any liability of Chapters.

Division of a Chapter

A majority vote of the Executive Council is required to divide a Chapter. The recommendation of an Ad Hoc Committee on “The Division of a Chapter” shall be chaired by the National Vice President, with the Chairman of the Chapter Establishment Committee and the respective Area Director as members, is required. The following *Rules for the Division of a Chapter* shall be adhered to:

Rule 1. Conditions

Chapters requesting the Division of a Chapter shall:

- Be in good standing with the Area and National organization.
- Have justifiable cause for a division.

Rule 2. Copies of a letter of request for the division of a Chapter with any accompanying documents shall be sent by the Chapter President to the Area Director and National Headquarters. The request shall:

- Be in writing and signed by two-thirds (2/3) of the Chapter’s active members.
- Contain the following: (1) number of years established, (2) Names and number of active members, (3) names and number of members on leave, (4) names and number of Alumna Members.
- Contain the names of members and applications of individuals to be invited to join each division. Each division must have at least thirty (30) women, including members of The Links, Incorporated, desiring to become members of the Chapter.

- State fully the facts surrounding the request and indicate which group will retain the charter.
- Include a statement of the proposed geographical area (locality) both groups are to have as membership and service area boundaries and documentation showing the town, city or area's ability to support a Chapter (s).
- Include a plan of action for the disposition of programs and projects, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the original Chapter, and how these are to be allocated.

Rule 3. Processing of Request

The letter of request and documentation shall be studied by the Area Director for the following action:

- She may request any necessary additional information.
- She may meet with the Chapter members regarding the division.
- She may assist with the distribution of assets.
- She shall present her findings and recommendations to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Division of a Chapter.
- She shall send copies of the request with any supporting documents to all members of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Rule 4. Report of the Committee

The Committee shall:

- Determine by voting (mail or electronic voting permitted) whether to approve or deny the request.
- Produce a written report of its findings, conclusions and recommendation.
- Distribute the report, with accompanying documentation, to the Executive Council.

Rule 5. Disposition by the Executive Council:

The Executive Council shall, by a majority vote (mail or electronic voting permitted), approve or deny the request. The Executive Director shall notify the National President, Chairman of the National Membership Committee, Chairman of the Chapter Establishment Committee and the Area Director of the results of the voting. The National Vice President notifies the Chapter of the results of the voting and if the division is approved, may include the committee's recommendations to assist in a smooth division.

Rule 6. Induction of Members:

Group A. If the vote is favorable, the group(s) retaining a minimum of 10 members shall be afforded the full rights to operate as a Chapter and to invite candidates for membership. Procedures are as follows:

- The Chapter shall follow the membership process as established in the *Bylaws*, Article I and the *Manual of Procedures*.
- The Chapter shall induct new members between May 1st and June 30th.
- The Area Director shall assist with the induction services for new members, install the officers of the Chapter, and conduct an orientation workshop for the Chapter and its new members.

Group B. If the vote is favorable, the group(s) retaining less than 10 members shall be designated an Interest Group(s). Even though there are current members of The Links, Incorporated in the group, the group shall follow the procedures found in the Chapter Establishment Manual² for a group initiated by the organization.

Rule 7. Finances

A Chapter coming into existence as a result of the division of a Chapter shall refer to the Chapter Establishment Manual² and the Financial Handbook² for information regarding applicable fees and the amount of those fees.

Rule 8. Appeal

In the case of a negative decision, the Chapter may appeal the decision of the Executive Council to the National Assembly by written notice to the National President within thirty (30) days of the mailing of the notice of the decision of the Executive Council. The National Assembly makes the final decision in all cases involving the appeal of the division of a Chapter.

Rule 9. Notification to the Chapter

All notices required by these rules to be given a Chapter, shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, with delivery restricted to the Chapter President.

Areas (ARTICLE III)

The **Areas** of The Links, Incorporated shall be:

Eastern—*Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia.*

Southern—*Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Nassau, Bahamas.*

Central—*Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, Wisconsin.*

Western—*Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.*

Chapters chartered outside the boundaries of the United States shall be assigned to function through an Area designated by the Executive Council. Each Area may have up to eighty (80) Chapters.

Area Responsibilities

Each Area shall convene an Area Conference in odd-numbered years.

The primary function of the Area is to unite Chapters within a geographical area to accomplish the goals of the National organization through the exchange of ideas, methods, and techniques to implement the National program.

Areas shall have an Area Executive Committees and may have an Area Executive Board. (See Bylaws Article III.)

Area Officers

The elected Area officers shall be the Area Director, Area Vice Director, Area Secretary and Area Treasurer. The appointed Area officers shall be the Area Parliamentarian and such other officers as shall be deemed necessary to carry out the work of the Area.

Insurance

Each Area shall be covered by liability insurance for all activities and events, members and guests. The Links, Incorporated shall not be held accountable for any liability of Areas.

National Assembly (ARTICLE IV)

Delegates and Alternates

A Link serving as a duly elected delegate or alternate to an Area Conference or a National Assembly is obligated to attend the business meetings regardless of the expense allowance provided by the Chapter.

A delegate or alternate is free to vote as she sees fit unless her Chapter has instructed her regarding a particular matter.

She shall present a report (preferably written) to her Chapter following the Area Conference or National Assembly. Her report should include all business conducted and other information as required by her Chapter.

Assembly Operations

The *Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated, Manual of Procedures*, Standing Rules adopted for the National Assembly and the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the proceedings at the National Assembly.

Planning for the National Assembly should begin at least one (1) year prior to the National Assembly, but no later than the meeting of the Executive Council in the year preceding the meeting of the National Assembly. Hostess Chapter (s) shall be designated for each National Assembly. Within ninety (90) days following the conclusion of the preceding National Assembly, the National President and the Executive Director of The Links, Incorporated shall meet with the hostess Chapter or Cluster of Chapters.

The business to come before the National Assembly should be agreed upon by the National President and the Executive Council. The National President shall preside at all business meetings of the National Assembly at which she is present. In her absence, the National Vice President shall preside. If both the National President and National Vice President are absent, the President shall appoint a Chairman pro tem with the approval of the Assembly to preside at the Meeting.

Business at the National Assembly should proceed according to the agenda and schedule mailed to all Chapters at least ninety (90) days prior to the opening of the National Assembly and the changes adopted at the beginning of the National Assembly.

Matters and actions ensuing between meetings of the National Assembly should be reported to the National Assembly. All National Officers, National Nominating Committee Chair, the National Program Director, Facet Directors, and Standing Committee Chairs should report to the National Assembly. Additional reports may be given as directed by the National President.

The National President shall appoint a Standing Rules Committee to meet prior to the National Assembly to prepare rules by which the National Assembly shall function. These rules shall be presented for action at the first business meeting of the National Assembly. The National President shall appoint committees and personnel as may be necessary or desirable for the efficient functioning of the National Assembly.

National Assemblies usually rotate between Areas in the following sequence whenever possible: Eastern, Western, Central, Southern. Chapters interested in hosting a National Assembly should send the request to the Executive Council at least eight (8) years [four National Assemblies] prior to the National Assembly it (they) is proposing to host. If no request is received by that time, six (6) years [three (3) Assemblies] before the proposed National Assembly, the Executive Council shall request a Chapter or cluster of Chapters to host, keeping in mind the rotation among Areas.

If more than one (1) Chapter in an Area applies for the same Assembly, the Executive Council shall consider the most feasible site and submit a recommendation to the National Assembly for action. If only one (1) site is proposed and accepted as suitable by the Executive Council, such action shall be reported to the National Assembly. This shall also be true if the site is unsuitable.

Hostess Chapter (s) shall be responsible for planning and sponsoring cultural and social events as may be agreed upon with the respective Area Director and the National President. No activity shall be planned without the knowledge and consent of the National President. Final National Assembly plans shall be reviewed by the National President, the Executive Director of The Links, Incorporated, and the hostess Chapter (s). Courtesies are also provided per the Protocol Manual.

Registration for the National Assembly shall be handled by the Executive Director with whatever help may be required by Headquarters' staff whether at National Headquarters or the site of the National Assembly. Additional help for on-site registration shall be secured as needed.

National Headquarters/Executive Director/ Deputy Executive Director (ARTICLE V)

National Headquarters

National Headquarters shall be under the supervision of the National President who is accountable to the Executive Council. The National Headquarters is maintained to handle the business of The Links, Incorporated and not personal or Chapter matters. Administrative and clerical assistance to National Officers and National Committees may be provided by staff, but at no time shall requests for personal favors be made or honored.

All forms (including but not limited to new and reinstating member profiles, transfers, requests for Alumna Status, requests for Platinum Status, Master Data Forms, etc.) and finances are processed through the National Headquarters, except those as may be initiated by an Area Director that are related to a particular Area.

The Links, Incorporated is the legal employer of The Links, Incorporated staff. The Human Resources Committee, through the Human Resources Committee Chairman, shall maintain close contact with the Deputy Executive Director and jointly shall handle all matters related to personnel and their functioning.

A Personnel Manual adopted by the Executive Council shall be kept updated by the Human Resources Committee. There shall be periodic evaluations of the National Headquarters operations and the performance of all personnel.

Executive Director

The Executive Council is responsible for the employment of the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall be accountable to the National President and the Executive Council.

The Executive Director is responsible for accomplishing the overall objectives and specific goals of The Links, Incorporated within the framework of the organizational structure including planning, accountability, external relations, public affairs, and public relations.

Deputy Executive Director

The Deputy Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of The Links, Incorporated including supervision of staff and the implementation of organizational policies and procedures and decisions of the Executive Council. The Deputy Executive Director is accountable to the National President and the Executive Council through the Executive Director.

Executive Council and National Executive Committee (ARTICLE VI)

Executive Council

The Executive Council is the governing body of The Links, Incorporated between National Assemblies. Actions of the Executive Council are reported to the next National Assembly except those previously authorized by the National Assembly. The Executive Council shall:

- Approve procedures necessary to implement policies adopted by the National Assembly;
- Implement the program(s) and policies adopted by the National Assembly through the National President and its members carrying out specific responsibilities; and,
- Review proposals to be made to the National Assembly.

Officers and members of the Executive Council shall give reports as requested by the National President or the Council.

Executive Committee of the Executive Council

The National Executive Committee shall function only in emergencies and on matters related to those to be acted on in a time frame that prohibits sufficient communication with all members of the Executive Council. Actions taken by the Executive Committee are reported to the Executive Council and ratified by the next meeting of the National Assembly.

Officers and Nominating Committee (ARTICLE VII)

A majority vote shall elect all National and Area elected officers and the National Nominating Committee Chair. The five (5) nominees for the Area Nominating Committee receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. The nominee receiving the highest number of votes shall be the Chair of the Area Nominating Committee.

National Officers and Chair of the Nominating Committee

The elected National Officers shall be the National President, National Vice President, National Recording Secretary and the National Treasurer. They shall serve the term for which they are elected or until their successors are elected. The National Parliamentarian shall be the appointed officer and shall possess documented expertise on a National level and hold the earned Registered Parliamentarian credential. To serve as Chair of the National Nominating Committee, a member shall have served as a member of the National, Area, or a Chapter Nominating Committee.

All elected National officers and the chair of the National Nominating Committee shall have been members for at least five (5) years prior to election; shall have attended at least three (3) National Assemblies including the Assembly at which the election takes place; shall be elected at each Assembly for a two-year (2) term or until their successors are elected; may succeed herself in the position. They shall not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same office; and shall assume their respective positions at the close of the National Assembly at which they are elected.

The Executive Council shall elect a successor to complete the term of an elected officer or chair of the National Nominating Committee who does not serve the full term to which she was elected.

No more than two (2) elected National Officers may come from the same Area at the same time. [Except when the newly elected officers are incumbents.] Immediately following the close of the National Assembly, the immediate past officers and the newly elected officers shall meet to ensure a smooth transition and completion of administrative business and the orderly transfer of procedures and records to the newly elected officers.

Within sixty (60) days after the close of the National Assembly, all immediate past National officers shall transfer to their successors all records, correspondence, complete files, equipment and other official materials of The Links, Incorporated in their possession, related to their office.

National Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in the office of National President, the National Vice President shall fill the unexpired term. If she serves more than one-half (1/2) of the term, she is considered to have served a full term.

In the event an elected National officer other than the President, or the National Nominating Committee Chair does not complete the term of office for which she was elected, the Executive Council shall elect a successor to complete the term. An officer elected to fill an unexpired term and serves more than one-half (1/2) of the term is considered to have served a full term. In the event the National Parliamentarian does not complete her term of office, the National President shall appoint her replacement.

Area Officers

The elected Area officers shall be the Area Director, Area Vice Director, Area Secretary and Area Treasurer. The Area Parliamentarian and such others shall be deemed necessary to carry out the work of the Area.

No more than one (1) member of a Chapter shall hold an Area office, elected or appointed, or serve on the Area Nominating Committee at the same time.

Area Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in the office of Area Director, the Area Vice Director shall fill the unexpired term.

In the event an elected Area Officer other than the Area Director, or a member of the Area Nominating Committee does not complete the term of office for which she was elected, the Area Director shall appoint a successor with the approval of the Area Executive Committee. The successor shall be considered to have served an unexpired term and shall be eligible for election to this office for the maximum terms of the office.

In the event the Area Parliamentarian or other appointed Area officers do not complete their term of office, the Area Director in consultation with the Area Executive Committee shall appoint their successors.

Nominations (ARTICLE VIII)

For detailed information regarding Area and National nominations procedures and deadlines, refer to the *Nomination Procedures Manual*².

The National Nominating Committee shall submit a slate of certified candidates for office to the National Assembly with one or more nominees for each office and the Chair of the National Nominating Committee. It is the duty of this committee to certify (validate) the eligibility of each nominee for the office they are seeking.

Following the report of the National or Area Nominating Committee, the floor shall be opened for additional nominations. A nominee from the floor shall have given prior permission for her name to be placed in nomination. Failure to do so nullifies the nomination. A member nominated from the floor must meet the eligibility requirements of the office for which she is nominated. The Nominating Committee shall certify (validate) the eligibility of each nominee from the floor for the office she is seeking prior to the election.

Candidates must be present at the National Assembly or Area Conference at which they are elected.

Elections

Election Committee

Voting procedures shall be recommended by the Election Committee and acted on by the National Assembly or Area Conference. The National Election Committee is appointed by the National President with representation from each of the four (4) Areas. Members of the Area Election Committee are appointed by the Area Director. Both the National and Area Election Committees are charged with developing voting procedures and making all preparations for balloting for officers and balloting for the Chair of the Nominating Committee and shall oversee the election process.

The names of all candidates shall appear on the ballot whether electronic or printed. A majority vote of delegates present and voting shall elect officers and [at the National Assembly] the Chair of the National Nominating Committee. The five (5) nominees for the Area Nominating Committee receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. The member receiving the highest number of votes shall be the Chair. If there is a tie, the Committee shall elect its Chair by ballot.

Tellers Committee

The National President or the Area Director shall appoint a Tellers' Committee for the National Assembly or Area Conference respectively. The Election Committee may also serve as the Tellers' Committee.

Each candidate may select one member as an observer to be present during the casting and counting of votes.

The Tellers' Committee shall supervise the casting the votes and determine the number of votes cast for each candidate. The Tellers' Committee shall also prepare a Tellers' Report that includes the following:

- total number of votes cast for each office
- number of votes necessary for election for each office
- number of votes received for each candidate
- number of illegal votes for each office

The Elections Committee Chair reports the results (Tellers' Report) of the balloting to the National President immediately and to the National Assembly at the earliest possible time as determined by the President. She does not state who has been elected.

The National President then repeats the Tellers' Report and declares the person elected to each office. At a National Assembly, the National President also declares the member elected Chair of the National Nominating Committee. At an Area Conference, the Area Director also declares the five (5) members elected to the Area Nominating Committee and the Chair if determined.

Standing Committees (ARTICLE IX)

Only those committees listed in the Bylaws as Standing Committees have a continuing existence. Any Special or Ad Hoc Committees appointed by the National President or adopted by the Executive Council cease to exist upon completion of its charge or a change of administration.

Committee recommendations affecting programmatic thrusts or administration shall be reviewed by the Executive Council prior to being presented to the National Assembly. Implementation shall occur only after adoption by the National Assembly.

To facilitate the orderly transfer of information to new National Committee Chairs, immediate past Chairs shall deliver all records, correspondence, complete files, equipment, and other official materials of The Links, Incorporated to the new Chairs within sixty (60) days of appointment or election.

Finance (ARTICLE X)

Detailed information regarding financial obligations, policy, procedures and deadlines are contained in the *Financial Handbook*². The *Financial Handbook* is part of the *Manual of Procedures*; however, due to its size, it is contained in a separate document

The fiscal year of The Links, Incorporated is May 1st to April 30th. All dues and assessments are due in National Headquarters by April 1st after which a twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) late fee is imposed.

All Chapter, Area, and National dues and assessments must be **paid in full** to the Chapter before National dues and assessments are submitted to National Headquarters. A member for whom dues, assessments, and any late fees have not been received at National Headquarters by May 1st shall be dropped from the rolls of The Links, Incorporated.

The Links Foundation, Incorporated (ARTICLE XII)

The Links Foundation, Incorporated shall operate under its own *Articles of Incorporation*² and *Bylaws*² with a Board of Directors.

Rituals and Emblems (ARTICLE XIII)

The official rituals of The Links, Incorporated must be used as printed in their entirety. All instructions must be followed in the manner in which they are given.

The official symbols of The Links, Incorporated are as follows:

- Name – The Links, Incorporated
- Colors – Emerald Green and White
- Flower – White Rose
- Emblem – Insignia – A World Globe Encircled
- Members – Links
- Spouses of Members – Connecting Links
- Children of Members – Heir-O-Links

No appendages or other distractions may be attached to the emblem. While it is preferable to use a natural white rose(s), when roses are not in season, a silk rose(s) may be substituted.

Awards and Recognition (ARTICLE XIV)

Awards

Awards shall be given at the National Assembly and Area Conferences in recognition of accomplishments in the areas of programming, community service and service to the organization. The National Awards Committee, in consultation with the National President, shall select awards, plaques, medallions and certificates presented at the National Assembly.

The Area Director, in consultation with the Area Program Coordinator and/or another designee(s), shall select awards, plaques, medallions and certificates presented at Area Conferences. Expenses shall be budgeted **only** for non-Links who are asked to attend a National Assembly because they are being honored.

Awards presented at the National Assembly, in addition to program awards, include the Margaret Hawkins-Sarah Scott Co-Founders Award(s); Presidential Legacy Award; Life- Time Achievement Award(s); Outstanding Service Award; The Links Medal, and, the Globe-in-Hand corporate sponsor's award.

The Links Medal is an honor presented in the form of a medal by the National President to an organization or institution that has impacted the lives and culture of African Americans, which represents the broad concerns and impact that characterizes and relates to the totality of Links values and objectives. The Medal will be presented every two years and an honorary committee of Links to include past National Presidents will be designated to identify nominees.

Eligibility and criteria for receiving awards at the National level should be recommended by the National President, Executive Council, National Program Coordinator or National Program Directors. Recommendations shall be approved by the Executive Council.

Upon the selection of an honoree (s) to receive the Co-Founders Award(s), the National President shall write to the proposed award recipient (s) advising of the nature of the award, matter of expenses, date and time the award will be given at the National Assembly, and a

request to be advised by January 15 if that individual will be able to attend the National Assembly. If the proposed honoree is not able to attend, an alternate honoree, previously determined, should be contacted.

The outgoing National President shall receive a signet ring.

Recognition

At each National Assembly, special recognition shall be given to those who have been members of The Links, Incorporated for fifty (50) or more years and to those members who have been elected to Platinum Status by their Chapter. A member shall have reached her fiftieth year by the time of the National Assembly at which the recognition is to be given or have been elected to Platinum Status by April 30th in the year of the National Assembly at which the recognition is to be given. She shall be recognized for each of these achievements only once.

At each Area Conference, special recognition shall be given to those who have been members of The Links, Incorporated for twenty-five (25) years and to those who have been members of The Links, Incorporated for forty (40) years. A member shall have reached her twenty-fifth or fortieth year by the time of the Area Conference at which the recognition is to be given. She shall be recognized for each of these milestones only once.

Policies and Procedures (ARTICLE XV)

Policies

New policies and changes in existing policies may be recommended by members, committees, Areas, the Executive Council or the National Assembly. They shall only become binding when adopted by the National Assembly.

Procedures

Procedures are the steps used in implementing the policies of the organization and must be consistent with those policies. The Executive Council shall have the authority to adopt procedures to implement the policies of The Links, Incorporated by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative ballot vote.

Amendments and Revisions of the Bylaws (ARTICLE XVIII)

Members, Committees, Areas or the Executive Council may propose amendments to the *Constitution and Bylaws* of The Links, Incorporated. All proposed amendments to the Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated, must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee at least four (4) months prior to the convening of the National Assembly at which it will be considered.

Proposed amendments to the Constitution of The Links, Incorporated must be submitted to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee at least six (6) months prior to the convening of the National Assembly at which it will be considered.

The Chair of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee will acknowledge receipt of the proposed amendment(s) in writing including whether or not the proposal included all specifically requested information and if it was received in a timely manner. To facilitate this acknowledgment, the member submitting the proposed amendment must include her name, current address, email address or fax number if she does not have an email address, and phone number.

Each proposed amendment must specifically include the following:

- The Article, Section, and sub-section (whichever is applicable) they wish to amend
- The existing language in the Bylaws
- How they wish to amend i.e. by striking, inserting, striking and inserting, adding, etc.
- If the amendment is adopted, state the amended language i.e. if adopted will read...
- The rationale for the proposed amendment(s)

Proposed amendments not received in a timely manner, but including all specifically requested information, will be retained for consideration at the next National Assembly. Proposed amendments that do not contain all required information will be returned by the Chair to the member submitting it with specific information identifying the missing information and the timeframe for re-submission.

The Chair shall present all proposed amendments to the members of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee and the Executive Council within two (2) weeks after the deadline for submission of proposed amendments. The Committee and Executive Council shall submit comments to the Chair no later than two (2) weeks after receipt.

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall review all proposed amendments and make recommendations regarding the adoption of the proposed amendments.

All proposed amendments to the Bylaws of The Links, Incorporated received in a timely manner and containing the specifically requested information, shall be circulated to each Chapter by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee at least forty-five (45) days prior to the convening of the National Assembly at which they will be considered.

All proposed amendments to the Constitution of The Links, Incorporated received in a timely manner and containing the specifically requested information, shall be circulated to each Chapter by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee at least three (3) months prior to the convening of the National Assembly at which they will be considered.

Adopted: 1980
Amended: 1984
Amended: 1986
Amended: 1988
Amended: 1990
Amended: 1992
Amended: 1994
Amended: 2000
Revised: 2009
Amended: July 3, 2013
Amended: November 19, 2013
Amended: July 2016

Appendix A

Hearing Process

The Disciplinary hearings shall be conducted with substantial fairness and following due process procedures. The issues presented at the hearing shall only relate to the specific cause of action that is presented as the basis of the hearing. The member or entity (Chapter, Area Executive Committee, or Executive Council) bringing the cause of action shall hereafter be referred to as the “Complainant” The member or Chapter against whom the charges are being levied shall hereafter be referred to as the “Respondent”. **All members present must have a signed Confidentiality Form (COE-4) on file.** This form is located in the *Code of Ethics and Standards Quality Control Document*.

1) Introductions (Presiding Chair of the Hearing, Complainant, and Respondent) and review of the process.

The Presiding Officer/Chair begins by introducing herself and requests that the representatives for the Complainant and Respondent identify themselves. The Complainant and Respondent shall have one (1) representative who shall present their case. In addition to the representative presenting the case for the Complainant and the Respondent, the Complainant and Respondent are entitled two (2) additional representatives to assist with the presentation of the case. The Presiding Officer/Chair then reviews the hearing process (items 2 through 7). At the conclusion of the review, the Presiding Officer/Chair then states: **“this meeting is now in executive session, and thereby the requisite obligation of secrecy. Are there any questions?”**

2) Complainant’s Statement

Complainant bringing the cause of action shall have no more than ten (10) minutes (including questions and answers) to present information regarding the case. Members and the Respondent shall be provided an opportunity to ask questions of the Complainant.

3) Respondent’s Statement

The Respondent shall have ten (10) minutes (including questions and answers) to present information regarding the matter and may respond to the information introduced by the Complainant. Members and the Complainant shall be given an opportunity to ask questions of the Respondent.

4) Final Questions by Members [of the Entity Conducting the Hearing]

Members shall be afforded the opportunity to ask for clarification from either party or additional questions. There shall be no more than five (5) minutes allowed for final questioning.

Complainant Summary

The Complainant shall be provided up to five (5) minutes to summarize her/its position.

Respondent Summary

The Respondent shall be provided up to five (5) minutes to summarize her/its position.

Adjournment and Deliberation

The hearing shall be adjourned, and the Respondent, Complainant (if an individual Link), and all representatives are excused. Members then review and vote on the matter. A two-thirds (2/3) affirmative ballot vote is required to uphold the cause of action. The Respondent and Complainant are informed of the outcome, including sanctions and appeal rights if applicable, by certified mail, within ten (10) days of the hearing.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I bring a witness to speak on my behalf?

Yes. You may bring a witness with you if she was present during the incident or has relevant information regarding the matter. Character witnesses are not permitted. A witness is only present in the room when called. Witnesses may be questioned by members, the complainant, or respondent. **Only members of The Links, Incorporated may participate as a witness. Legal representation is not allowed whether or not a member of The Links, Incorporated.**

Is the Respondent allowed to bring documentation and distribute it at a hearing?

Yes. Both the Respondent and Complainant may distribute materials that are relevant to the matter under consideration. Be certain to have enough for all in attendance.

What happens if I am found responsible for violating rules, regulations or policy?

After the hearing, the members will review all of the relevant information. If a member is found culpable of the charge (s), the members then consider which sanction is appropriate. Considerations when determining sanctions include the nature of the violation, any mitigating circumstances, and any prior violations of a similar nature. Possible sanctions include a mandatory apology, censure, suspension or expulsion. In the case of a Code of Ethics violation, possible sanctions also include a fine or removal from office.

Do I have appeal rights?

Yes. If a member is found culpable of a violation, the letter advising her of the results of the hearing will contain information regarding the nature of the sanction and her appeal rights.