



அட்லாண்டா மாநகரத் தமிழ்ச் சங்கம்
Greater Atlanta Tamil Sangam
a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization
(Federal Tax ID: 56-2305795)

Greater Atlanta Tamil Sangam (GATS)

Bylaws

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By-law I: Nature of the organization

Section 1. Greater Atlanta Tamil Sangam, hereinafter referred to as Sangam or GATS, is a member-based, non-profit, cultural, and charitable organization, incorporated under the laws of the State of Georgia, USA, and focused on promotion and preservation of Tamil culture and heritage.

Section 2. Sangam does not contemplate any financial gain or profit for its members.

Section 3. Members of Sangam shall acquire no interest in the property or assets of Sangam by virtue of their membership therein.

Section 4. Sangam does not authorize engaging in any other activity or activities, except in furtherance of the purposes as mentioned or written under Article 3 of the Constitution/Articles of Incorporation of Sangam, and henceforth will be referred to as the Constitution in this bylaws document.

Section 5. Sangam shall be non-political. It shall never engage in propaganda, or participate in any political campaign for and on behalf of any candidate for public office in USA or elsewhere. Sangam shall not support anyone, including any member of Sangam, for any political campaign whatsoever in USA or elsewhere, as defined by Article 4 of the Constitution.

Section 6. No part of the property or assets of Sangam shall be devoted to any purpose other than the purposes mentioned under Article 3 of the Articles of Incorporation of Sangam.

Section 7. Members and officers of Sangam shall not be held personally responsible or liable in any lawsuit against Sangam and for any debt incurred by Sangam. The extent of liability of members and officers shall be limited to the unpaid membership dues and for no more.

Section 8. For all official functions, Sangam shall use “Tamil Thai Vazthu” - “nErARumkadaludutha” composed by Thiru Manonmanium P. Sundaram Pillai as the invocation song.

Section 9.

9.1 Types of membership, fees and basic rights

9.1.1 Individual membership: Individual members shall pay an annual membership fee decided by the Board of Directors (BOD). The individual member

can cast a single vote in Sangam's meetings and is eligible to run for office, as outlined in the election procedure.

9.1.2 Family membership: Family members shall pay an annual membership fee decided by the BOD. A maximum of two adult members of a family living in the same household are eligible to cast one vote each in Sangam's meetings and to run for office, as outlined in the election procedure.

9.1.3 Life membership: Life members shall pay a life membership fee decided by the BOD which should be 10 times the annual family membership fee. A maximum of two adult members of a family living in the same household are eligible to cast one vote each in Sangam's meetings and to run for office, as outlined in the election procedure. Life membership dues should be deposited in the Endowment Account.

9.1.4 Student membership: Student members shall pay an annual membership fee decided by the EC and approved by the BOD. This category of membership is restricted to full-time students between the ages of 18 and 25 who are currently enrolled in a University or College. The student member can cast a single vote in Sangam's meetings and is eligible to run for office, as outlined in the election procedure.

9.1.5 Program Fees: Only members are permitted to attend and participate in Sangam programs. Non-members who want to perform or attend Sangam programs shall pay a fee of at least \$10.00 per person per event. The EC shall have the authority to alter this amount, per event. Non-members who pay such fees for participation in Sangam programs are not eligible to attend Sangam General Body meetings, vote, or run for any elected office (EC or BOD).

9.2 Member in good standing: A member in good standing is defined as an eligible voting member whose membership dues has been paid and is not under suspension or removed from the Sangam.

9.3 Membership fees are non-refundable.

9.4 Dormant members: The members are responsible to inform GATS administration of their change in physical address and email ID. If GATS administration is unable to contact a member by both returned mail and bounced or unanswered emails, then that member will be listed as "Dormant" and will not be counted for quorum in a GB meeting.

Further, any member who is informing GATS of their inability to actively participate in Sangam activities would also be classified as dormant members. Dormant members will not be considered towards quorum in all GB meetings. However, they

can change their state to “active” by informing the GATS administration that they can participate in Sangam activities.

9.5 Increase of membership fees: The Executive Committee (EC) can propose an increase in the membership fees for each category of membership by a simple majority vote and submit it to the BOD. After a majority vote by Board of Directors, the proposal shall be presented for approval by the members at a meeting of the General Body called for this purpose. Any increase in membership dues shall take effect the next calendar year after a majority of members in General Body vote in favor of such a proposal.

Section 10. No Director, Officer, or member serving in the Executive Committee or any subcommittee of Sangam shall receive, directly or indirectly, any salary, compensation or emoluments thereof, due solely to his or her position as Director, Officer, or member of Executive Committee, as defined by Article 4 of the Constitution. Notwithstanding this provision, a Director, Officer or member of Executive Committee may be compensated for providing business or other professional services for which compensation is customarily paid.

Section 11. Rules and Laws: The latest edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall be authority on all questions of procedures that are not specifically stated in Sangam’s bylaws. Sangam is subject to all applicable local, state and federal laws of USA, which shall govern in the case of any conflict between them and Sangam’s bylaws.

Section 12. Governance: Sangam is governed by two elected bodies – Board of Directors and Executive Committee. Six Subcommittees with defined tasks – Charity, Education, Technology, Newsletter/Magazine, Youth and Sports – assist and extend the capabilities of the Executive Committee. In addition, both Board of Directors and Executive Committee may appoint ad hoc committees to execute specific tasks.

By-law II: Administration/Management by Executive Committee (EC) of Sangam

Section 1. Composition of Executive Committee

- 1.1** The total number of members on the EC shall not exceed 15. Of these, five shall be Officer Bearers with the titles of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Communications Director while ten shall be general members of the Executive Committee without titles.
- 1.2** Elected Body: All members of the EC shall be elected by the general body, except where vacancies are filled, as outlined in the Sangam's bylaws.
- 1.3** **Term:** All EC members are elected for a term of one calendar year, and are eligible to be re- elected.

The President shall not serve more than two consecutive terms in that position. In case the President is changed in the middle of the year, then a term of 6 months or more will be considered as full term for the interim President.

The Treasurer cannot be re-elected in the same capacity as Treasurer consecutive years.

- 1.4** The strength of this committee could be enlarged only by a majority vote of members in the General Body.

Section 2. Meeting of the Executive Committee

- 2.1** The Secretary shall be responsible to decide the date, time, place and agenda for the meetings in consultation with all members of the EC and get approval of at least eight EC members of which at least three are officers.
- 2.2** **Notice of meeting:** Secretary shall give at least 1 weeks' notice of meeting to all EC members and other invitees.
- 2.3** All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with these bylaws & the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order.
- 2.4** **Regular Meetings:** Meetings of the EC shall be held at least once in 3 months.
- 2.5** **Special Meetings:** Special meetings of the EC may be called for any purpose at any time at the request of a member of the EC. Written or email notice of such request must be provided to the Secretary at least 2 weeks prior to the requested date of the

meeting, and the Secretary shall arrange for such meeting if the majority of EC members agree to the request.

- 2.5a Emergency Meetings:** An emergency meeting of the EC may be called for emergency purpose with a pre-determined agenda at the request of any member of the EC. Resolution can be passed in this meeting with quorum provided all the EC members agreed for the meeting in writing on the pre- determined agenda. The resolution passed in these emergency meetings and summary of the discussions on the motion should also be communicated via email to all EC members and approved by the two-thirds of the EC to become effective. However, the EC can have an emergency meeting without a quorum or predetermined agenda, but no resolution can be passed in this meeting.
- 2.6 Quorum:** The presence of a majority of members of the Executive Committee, including a minimum of 3 Officers, shall be necessary to constitute Quorum for EC meetings. This quorum is necessary to transact Sangam's business, except to adjourn as hereinafter provided. A majority vote of those present may transact all businesses, except as otherwise provided.
- 2.7 Adjournment:** A quorum of EC members may adjourn any EC meeting to meet again on a stated day, provided however, that in the absence of quorum, a majority of the members present at any meeting of the EC may adjourn the meeting, to meet again at a stated time and place. Notice of such adjourned meetings shall be given to all members of EC, as provided in the Special Meetings, section 2.5 above.
- 2.8 Participation by electronic means in meetings:** Members may participate and vote in meetings of executive committee by electronic means such as telephone, audio/video conference, and other means where their identity can be verified by others present at the meeting.

Section 3. Responsibility of EC member to attend meetings and participate

All EC members are expected to attend EC meetings and participate effectively in running the Sangam. If a member is habitually absent, i.e. absent for three consecutive EC meetings, without a reasonable cause for such absence, Executive Committee may, by 2/3rds majority, vote to remove that member from the Executive Committee, and immediately inform the Board of Directors of such action. Once the removal is approved by a 2/3rds majority vote of the EC, and approved by Board of Directors, that member will be ineligible to serve as a member of the EC for the remaining term. Within 7 days, such removal should be communicated to the general body by updating the Sangam website.

Section 4.

If any EC member is required to relinquish his/her membership from the EC, the individual must transfer all documents and assets and share details regarding his/her duties to the President or the newly-appointed officer or EC member within 2 weeks or a time specified by the BOD, whichever is later. It must also be noted that any delays beyond this stipulated time, without reasonable cause, will give rise to the EC/BOD member being charged with all the attendant cost of maintaining the organization, including any legal expenses that could be incurred.

Section 5. Vacant positions in the Executive Committee

There could be vacant positions in the Executive Committee because of various reasons – insufficient number of nominations for all the positions during the election process, resignations, disqualifications, removals, and other.

If vacancies exist during the course of the year after the elections or Sangam failed to fill the positions during floor nominations, the EC and/or BOD shall identify members in good standing, and nominate them for approval by EC. If the vacant position being filled is either the President or Treasurer position, BOD approval is required in addition to EC approval. Once the position is filled, Sangam's website should be updated, and the general body should be informed via e-Letter.

At a minimum, the 5 Office Bearer positions shall not remain vacant for more than 2 weeks. If a vacancy arises in any of the 5 Office Bearer positions, such vacancy shall be filled within 2 weeks.

Required minimum number of members in Executive Committee: A minimum of 8 EC members (at least 5 of whom shall be Officers) is the required quorum to carry out the business of Sangam in the calendar year they are elected. If the total number of members in EC falls below 8 (at least 5 of whom shall be Officers), the Board of Directors (BOD) shall assume the responsibility of running the day-to-day affairs of Sangam, until such time a quorum is restored in the EC within that calendar year. Failing so, the BOD will be in additional operational charge of Sangam and will discharge the duties of EC until the new EC team is duly elected by the general body during the annual elections as specified in this document.

Section 6. General Body Meeting (GBM)

General Body: General body (GB) is the collective group representing all paid members of Sangam for the current year, who are eligible to vote as defined in section 9 of By-law I.

The Executive Committee (EC) calls for and organizes general body meetings upon the request of

- a) a majority of EC members,
- b) a majority of BOD members, or
- c) by at least 20% of the eligible voting members of the general body requesting such a meeting in writing.

EC has to act upon the request within 15 days of such request. In normal situations, the President will be the presiding officer of such meetings, and in his/her absence, Chairman of BOD, Vice-President, or the longest-serving member of BOD will preside over such meetings.

As stated in (c) above, any general member of Sangam may request the EC to convene a General Body Meeting provided the member gets the signatures of at least 20% of the eligible voting members of the general body. In order to get the support of 20% of the eligible voting members, such member may submit a written request for the mailing addresses of all current members along with the purpose of requesting the GBM. EC shall provide the mailing addresses of current members in print form within 30 days of such request. Email ids and phone numbers shall not be provided. Such member shall be charged a processing fee equivalent to the annual family membership fee for each request. The member/s shall use the address list so procured only for soliciting support for calling the GBM, and for no other purpose.

Notice of General Body meeting: All paid members shall be given at least two weeks' notice of the meeting. The notice shall contain information about the date, time, location and purpose of the meeting. Emails and eLetters can be used to issue such notice in addition to updates on the Sangam's website.

Quorum: At any general body meeting of the Sangam, at least 20% the total strength of all members of Sangam in good standing shall constitute a valid quorum, which includes absentee votes. The members should be an active member 30 days prior to the meeting date except for a GB meeting called for annual EC/BOD elections which has a specific cutoff date as defined in Bylaw IV.

Proxy votes in meetings of Sangam: Proxy voting is not allowed in General Body meetings of the Sangam.

Absentee votes in meetings of Sangam: Absentee voting by postal mail is allowed in General Body meetings of the Sangam if it is received at the Sangam mailing address one day before the General Body meeting. Mailed absentee voters should use the ballot papers provided by GATS and mail them in a small, sealed envelope accompanied by a separate sheet, which is duly signed by the member and notarized. Also, any member can hand over

his/her votes to his/her spouse in a sealed envelope if they cannot make it to the general body meetings of the Sangam. The secrecy of all absentee voting shall be maintained.

Proxy votes are allowed for meetings of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, provided purposes are predetermined and informed to the members at least 15 days before such meeting. Proxy votes shall be duly signed, notarized, and delivered in a sealed envelope. Proxy voting can be exercised by email provided the originating email id is the same as the member's email id in Sangam's membership email database.

Section 7. The EC shall convene at least two general body meetings during the year.

One is to elect new members of Sangam (EC Officers, EC members and BOD members) every year. This GBM could be held in conjunction with a regular GATS program/function (e.g. Deepavali), but the EC should announce that the meeting is a General Body Meeting, the specific time slot to conduct the business of the meeting, the specific purpose (example: Election) through email/e-Letter and website update.

The other GBM is to present the financial status of Sangam. This GBM is usually held in conjunction with Tamil New Year Day function in April or May.

Section 8. The outgoing treasurer shall present the previous year financial statement of Sangam at the first general body meeting of the following year (generally, at the Tamil New Year Day function in April or May).

Section 9. **Member's Email address protection:** Past and current members' email addresses in GATS membership databases shall not be provided to any businesses or individuals and should be maintained confidentially by officers of Sangam. After leaving office, the officers are prohibited from providing any confidential member records to public or businesses or use it for their own personal, business, or other interests.

Section 10. **Advertisement policy:** To generate income for Sangam, GATS publications including electronic communications, e-Newsletter/e-Magazine, emails, social media, website etc.), program souvenirs and membership directory can carry paid advertisements, charges for which are collected from businesses and individuals. The charges for such advertisement shall be decided by the Executive Committee at the beginning of the year before first event and shall be applied accordingly and consistently for all advertisement requests. Each publication should carry a disclaimer stating that all paid advertisements and the wordings in the advertisements shall not indicate that the products/services are promoted or endorsed by Sangam in any manner.

Section 11. **Partnership and collaboration policy:** The Executive Committee is free to explore avenues to promote the cultural and charitable goals of Sangam by collaborating with other non-profit, tax- exempt charitable organizations or for-profit associations or

individuals. However, each such proposal shall be discussed and approved by the majority of the EC, shall be documented and signed, and the decision communicated to BOD with all relevant documentation. These collaborative ventures should conform to the rules and regulations set forth by the IRS for a non-profit, tax-exempt (501 3c) organizations such as Sangam.

Section 12. Email and Website communication:

Sangam's website shall, at a minimum, contain the following information:

- Constitution & Articles of Incorporation
- Mission & Vision Statements
- Bylaws
- Board of Directors
- Executive Committee
- Subcommittees
- Contact details (phone number and email id of Chairman and President)
- An email id and a phone number to communicate with Executive Committee
- Membership information –how to become a member, membership fees, membership strength (in every category of membership).
- Financial information – copy of at least the past 7 years of financial statements filed with IRS.
- Archives of previous web content.
- General body resolutions.

By-law III: Duties of the EC and Officers

Section 1. To purchase, rent or lease, own, pay mortgage, maintain, sell and dispose of real estate property and/or other properties of Sangam.

To solicit funds and donations for activities that will further the goals of the Sangam.

Section 2. To create an endowment, receive and hold in trust as otherwise voluntary contributions, gifts, bequests or levies to be devoted to such purposes to the full extent to which they may be authorized hereby.

Section 3. To make disbursements and perform any other business as deemed necessary and desirable in the interest of Sangam.

Section 4. The President shall be the spokesperson for Sangam. The President shall preside over the meetings of Sangam and the EC and shall perform all the duties of a presiding officer.

In addition, the President, by virtue of the office he/she holds in Sangam, serves as a Director in the Board of Directors. The President shall address the BOD about the State of the Sangam in every BOD meeting.

President ensures that EC carryout their responsibilities in accordance with the bylaws of the Sangam.

Section 5. The Vice-President shall perform all the duties of the President whenever the President is absent. If the President is present, the Vice-President shall assist the President in his duties.

If, for any reason, the office of President falls vacant mid-term during a calendar year, the Vice- President shall take-over the role and title of President for the remainder of the year.

Section 6. The Secretary of Sangam shall convene, call, and send notices for all meetings. The Secretary shall

- Record the proceedings & maintain minutes of all the meetings of the EC and General Body Meeting as per Robert's Rules of Order.
 - all minutes of the meeting has to be approved by 2/3rd of the EC members who attended the meeting and approved minutes of the meeting shall be communicated to all the EC members within 15 days
 - any resolution passed in EC meetings has to be sent to the BOD as well as published in the Sangam website with member access within 30 days from the date of approval of meeting minutes

- keep a record of the Sangam's official correspondence for the year
- regularly check GATS mailbox, and keep EC/BOD informed of relevant mail
- maintain current membership database, including email addresses and other contact information of Sangam's members
- honor appropriate requests for information from members,
- renew business license for Sangam and any other statutory renewals with local, state and federal authorities every year
- secure insurance for activities and property (hall/theater) rentals
- hold and preserve all office records, registers, books and papers of the current year
- handover all documentation at the end of the year to the BOD for archival purposes, and
- perform all other duties pertaining to the Secretary as required by the EC

Section 7. The Treasurer shall

- collect all dues, contributions, donations and receive all monies belonging to Sangam giving a receipt thereof
- deposit the amount in the name of Sangam in a bank designated by the EC
- pay all bills after due review and upon the instructions of the EC
- notify members or business or any individual who are three months in arrears in dues
- keep and maintain accurate record of all financial transactions and properties as well as all assets and liabilities, receipts and disbursement vouchers and all other financial records and accounts that are required by the EC
- present the audited GATS finances/accounts to the general body within 90 days of the following year
- be responsible for filing Tax returns with Internal Revenue Service on behalf of GATS as stipulated by the Internal Revenue Service guidelines. For example, for the financial year 2018 ending December 31st, the person who served as the Treasurer in the year 2018 shall file the tax returns per IRS guidelines in 2019 on or before May 15th, the date for tax filing for non-profits
- furnish financial reports at EC meetings after every GATS program/function
- perform all other duties and responsibilities as a Treasurer as required by EC and BOD
- submit quarterly financial statements to the BOD within one month of the end of the quarter. The report must be submitted and must get BOD approval by Apr 30, Jul 31, Oct 31 and Jan 31.

- submit the financial statement of the event via email within 4 weeks after the completion of any special event.
- provide all existing and updated membership information, including email addresses and other contact information to the Secretary for record keeping within one month prior to the end of each quarter as describe above.

To assist Treasurer, EC shall appoint one or two persons who are knowledgeable in using accounting software for book keeping.

The Treasurer shall present the final report for the calendar year in which he/she served as Treasurer at the General Body meeting of the subsequent year (usually the Tamil New Year's celebration around April or May).

The Treasurer, holding office during a particular year, is responsible to file and sign the tax returns for that year although the actual tax returns are actually filed only in the subsequent year.

Treasurer may create an ad-hoc committee that will assist in financial and accounting activities. Such a committee can have a maximum of 3 members, and all members of such a committee shall be members of the current year EC.

In addition, the Treasurer, by virtue of office he/she holds in Sangam, serves as a Director in the Board of Directors. The Treasurer is expected to attend all meetings of the Board of Directors, submit quarterly financial & membership reports to the BOD via email or at a BOD meeting. Such reports shall include budgets, actual expenses, program expense, tax filing, charity-related income, expenses & disbursements.

Section 8: The Communications Director (CD) is in-charge of GATS communication activities. These include newsletter, annual membership directory, maintaining web sites, email distribution and maintaining Email databases of the members of Sangam. He/she is, upon request of the BOD, EC, and other subcommittees, responsible for communicating GATS activities to the general body and GATS subcommittees, and vice versa.

Media Committee (MC): Since effective communication is an integral part of our Sangam, projecting our image to the communities (Tamil, Indian & the mainstream American communities), the CD should work closely with members of the Media Committee (MC) to disseminate information to the community via e-Letter, and website and other portals of communication in compliance with the Sangam's communication policy as described below. The MC should consist of the CD, the President, Chairman of Board of Directors, Secretary, Treasurer, and a member of the EC with the CD playing a primary lead role in the MC. The CD should communicate within 7 days of assuming the office to the MC members, the EC, and the BOD about the activation of the MC.

Apart from the CD, Chairman of Board of Directors and President should have full access to all the communication facilities and must be able to communicate with the General Body at any time.

The mailing system should be designed in such a way that the email messages or request reaches all the office bearers, EC, BOD, or respective sub groups automatically, if the message is meant for them. The content on the website shall reflect only factual information pertaining to the values and objectives of GATS. All GATS public member communications have to be moderated and validated by the MC. On approval of the same, contents will be communicated via mail & web postings. Similarly, all feedback, issues, clarifications from the public will be routed to the CD, who will internally route it to the appropriate EC or BOD or a subcommittee with a copy to President and the Vice President.

The Communications Director is responsible to archive the contents of the website and submit it as part of the 'transition process' at the end of the year.

No member of the EC, the BOD or a member who gets access to GATS communication medium shall use GATS Email list, address list or web site for: (a) personal glory, (b) airing grievances and internal conflicts, (c) accusations, badmouthing, profanity, insults, derogatory/demeaning remarks, etc., (d) unproven allegations or (e) any other purposes that are detrimental to GATS image and principles.

- If the CD receives conflicting instruction from the EC and the BOD, then the request from the BOD prevails.

Section 9. The other elected members of the EC shall assist the officers, as mentioned in by-law III, sections 4 through 8, in the performance of their duties and also serving in the GATS subcommittees (bylaw VII).

Section 10. Every office bearer and Executive Committee Member is elected individually by the General Body. In transacting business, a decision made by a majority vote is binding; however, EC members are expected to operate under the constraints of Sangam's Articles of Association, Bylaws, prevailing law, and generally accepted principles of conduct.

Section 11. Ad-hoc committees: The Executive Committee has the power to establish task-based committees to accomplish specific tasks or to handle specific events.

The term of all such task-based committees established by the Executive Committee shall cease when the task is completed, or the term expires or at the end of the calendar year in which it was formed, whichever is earlier.

Section 12. EC can appoint two members for a three-year term to staggering subcommittees like Charity, Tamil Education, and other subcommittees as described in by-law VII.

By-law IV: Election and Voting Procedures

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall be responsible to conduct elections for all Board and Executive Committee positions.

All officers and members of the EC and BOD shall be elected by the General Body of members as per the voting procedures provided below. A minimum of 17 positions for which elections are held are:

- 5 Office-Bearer Positions in the Executive Committee:
 - President
 - Vice-President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Communications Director
- Up to 10 Member positions in the Executive Committee
- 2 Directors for 3-year term in the Board of Directors
- Any other vacant position in the Board of Directors caused by resignation or any other reason.
- The term of Executive Committee is a calendar year; it begins on 1 January of the calendar year, ends on 31st December of the calendar year.

Section 2. Election Committee

- On or before September 01 of every calendar year, BOD shall appoint a 3-member Election Committee to conduct Sangam's elections.
- These 3 Election Officers (EO) members must have been members of Sangam for at least 2 consecutive years, or must have been a life member for at least 12 months. They must not have served in the current year's EC or BOD. They must not run for any office in the election being conducted, and they cannot be considered for nomination to any vacant position during the year for which elections are being conducted until the Election Committee is dissolved.
- 3 members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors. These 3 members shall elect one among them to serve as the Chief Election Officer.
- Within 1 week of appointment, Chief Election Officer should announce the formation of the Committee to the General Body by email, web announcement and announcement at General Body Meeting if any held.

Election Committee shall have the authority to make any election-related announcement to the general body of members by email, website notification and announcements during GBMs, if any held. The Communications Director is obligated to carry out any requests from

the Election Committee in a timely manner (within 5 days of receiving such requests from the Election Committee, or sooner).

Section 3. Call for nominations: The Election committee shall call for nominations for all vacant positions in EC and BOD at least 30 days prior to the date of elections from all active members of good standing. The acceptance status of such nomination shall be communicated to the nominated candidate and the nominating member within 5 days of receipt of the nomination. Active GATS members in good standing, as per By-law I Section 9.2, are eligible to contest in the elections

Additional qualifications to contest in elections: Any member who has been a paid member of the Sangam for 2 consecutive years as of September 1 of the election year or has been a life member for at least 1 year (12 months by September 01) prior to the date of election and who, in the past 5 years, has not been removed from the Sangam or from any position in the EC or BOD are eligible to contest in elections.

Members who have been removed from office or suspended from membership shall not be eligible for a period of 5 years from the date of such removal or suspension to contest for positions in EC or BOD.

Qualification to serve in EC: Only members in good standing are eligible to serve as office bearers and members in the EC. For the purposes of valid membership, the official record of membership as of 30 days before the election date shall be considered. Members who are elected to serve in the EC shall renew their membership within 30 days of being so elected.

The post of the Treasurer shall not be filled from a member of the same family (family for this purpose would include husband, wife, children, and parents) for 2 consecutive years.

The positions of President and Treasurer shall not be filled by members of the same family (family for this purpose would include husband, wife, children, and parents).

The positions of BOD members shall not be filled by members of the same family (which for this purpose would include husband, wife, children, and parents).

The positions of EC members shall not be filled by members of the same family (family for this purpose would include husband, wife, children, and parents).

Members of the same family shall not hold the signature authority on finances of the Sangam in the same year. In cases the members of the same family serving on EC and/or BOD for multiple years consecutively, they shall not hold the signature authority on Sangam finances in those years. Furthermore, if the Treasurer becomes the GATS President

in the following year, the Vice-President of the Sangam will assume the signing authority. If the Vice-President cannot sign, the Secretary will assume signing authority.

Out of the 10 EC member positions, 2 positions may be filled by Student Members. Even though the eligibility criteria of two-year active GATS membership are not applicable for such student members, they shall however be active members for the year when they are nominated, and during the time they serve in EC.

Qualification to serve in BOD:

Only members in good standing, who have been members of Sangam for at least 5 consecutive years as of September 1 of the election year, are eligible to serve as Directors in the Board of Directors. For the purposes of valid membership, the official record of membership as of September 1st of election year shall be considered.

All BOD members must be a life member or pay membership for serving term years in advance.

There shall be a break of at least 1 year between any two consecutive terms of a member elected to the Board of Directors.

The Election Committee will review the nominations to make sure they satisfy the eligibility requirements. If a nomination received from a member does not meet the requirements, the committee should notify such member about her/his status confidentially. If sufficient nominations for all positions are not received from members of Sangam within the set date of receiving such nominations, the nomination date for such positions will be automatically extended until the two days before the Election Day. Election Committee shall solicit floor nominations on the day of elections, only in the event that no prior nominations are received for any of the open positions.

Nominations process: A GATS member in good standing can only make one single nomination, including self-nomination. The nominating member shall submit nomination only with the consent of the candidate, with an email copy to the Election Committee. A candidate shall be nominated for only one post for EC or BOD at a time. A candidate can withdraw his or her nomination and be nominated for another post during the nomination period according to his or her choice.

The Election Committee shall organize the ballot papers with all the valid nominations duly received and entered for all the positions. In the general body meeting, the Chief Election Officer shall first announce the members elected unopposed to the position(s) on the EC and BOD, and conduct the balloting only for the remaining positions (EC and BOD), where there are more than one candidate and the contest is warranted; the Election Committee will issue ballots to all active members who are eligible to vote and conduct the elections.

The operating budget of the Sangam shall be used to pay for all expenses related to conduct of elections. The Chief Election Officer and the Election Committee shall be responsible to conduct the elections.

GATS members and all new members of EC, BOD and sub-committees must be informed of the availability of GATS Articles of Incorporation and bylaws on the Sangam website.

Section 4. Equal Accessibility:

Every candidate running for a specific position on the EC (officers and members) and BOD shall have equal access to the information needed for campaigning. This includes all candidates contesting for a single position and they shall be eligible to receive a printed list of eligible voters (names and mailing addresses on record) for the purposes of campaigning. This privilege is made available only after the nomination deadline had passed. Candidates shall not misuse this privilege of acquiring GATS membership information for other external purposes (business, personal, religious etc.) other than for the specific GATS election campaigning.

The Election Committee shall develop campaign guidelines that are approved by the BOD and give it to candidates along with eligible voters list.

The campaigning by the candidate and any member of the candidate's campaigning team shall ensure fairness, keep order, and preserve the integrity of the election.

The Election Committee will have the authority to cancel the nomination of candidates and disqualify them for violating these principles of campaigning in consultation with BOD

Section 5. The current EC shall extend all the help and assistance to the Chief Election Officer and Election Committee that includes a list of volunteers, so they will be able to conduct the election in an open and fair manner. The election committee can also choose to recruit GATS Members as volunteers of their choice to conduct the election.

Section 6. Members eligible to vote: All paid members of Sangam as of September 01 of the current year are eligible to vote.

Every eligible member of the Sangam will have the right to cast one vote in the election. In the case of family membership in the Sangam, both adult members of family will have one vote each, and so the family membership will have two votes. No other member of the family will be eligible to vote, unless that member is 18 years of age and has an independent active membership in the Sangam.

Voting procedure:

- Members will not be allowed to vote without a government issued photo ID.
- The members and spouses names should be listed in the membership database.
- Any name changes can be accepted as an exception as decided by the election committee.

Section 7. Elections shall be held once every year between October 01 and November 15.

The election schedule is:

- September 01 – Election Committee formed by appointment of officers.
- September 01 – Cut-off date for members to be considered active members eligible to vote.
- September 07 – Announcement of Election Committee and Chief Election Officer to members by email, and website announcement.
- September 30 – Executive Committee should deliver, in print form, the Voters List (list of all members eligible to vote) to Election Committee.
- 30-45 days before election day – Election Committee sends “Call for nominations” to members by email and website announcement.
- 15 days before Election Day – Last day for receipt of nominations.
- 7 days before Election Day – Last day to withdraw nominations.
- Election Day – Conduct Elections (in a General Body Meeting called specifically for this purpose, usually on the day GATS celebrates Deepavali function).
- 7 days after Election Day – Election Committee announces results of election to general members by email and website notification.
- 10 days after Election Day – Election Committee submits “Closure Package” to BOD.

The Election Committee shall maintain a schedule of announcements as follows from the time of its original call for nominations to the active members of the Sangam: a) Valid list of nominations for all vacant positions on a weekly basis, b) Withdrawal of nominations, c) The list of nominees 1-2 days before closing date of the nominations.

Only the nominated candidate can withdraw his/her nomination, with a GATS registered email message to the Election Committee indicating this fact and copied to the member who nominated him/her in the first place.

Section 8. **Bylaws:** Once elected, all the officers, directors and EC members of Sangam shall be informed about the bylaws of Sangam by the Chairman of BOD. They shall also undergo a mandatory bylaw orientation program before assuming the office. The format and time of bylaw orientation will be decided by the BOD.

Elected members should also be reminded to renew their membership within 30 days following the election as stated in bylaws.

Section 9. Closure package from Election Committee to BOD upon conclusion of elections: Within 10 days of the date of election, the Election Committee shall deliver to BOD all documentation relating to the election including nominations, ballots, list of members who were eligible to vote, and a list of all members who attended the GBM and voted, quorum, declaration of election results, and a list of positions that remained vacant after the elections. Any documentation given to candidates shall be collected back from them and handed over to BOD as part of the Closure Package.

The closure package should also include the name, position, email ID, and phone numbers of the all the nominees and elected candidates.

In the case of any dispute involving the election processes as described above, the Election Committee should use election procedures described in Robert's Rule of Order book as the final reference authority.

Section 10. **Term of Election Committee:** The term of Election committee shall start from the date it is formed (September 01 or earlier) and shall end upon submission of the Closure package as specified in Section 10 above.

By-law V: Board of Directors (BOD)

Duties and responsibilities of the BOD

Section 1. The Board of Directors (BOD) is legally responsible for the activities of GATS, as defined in Article 6 of the Constitution, and hence the BOD is entrusted with the responsibility to oversee proper execution of Sangam's Constitution, bylaws, and discharge of duties by the Executive Committee as outlined in the bylaws.

Section 2. **Transition Issues:** BOD shall oversee that the proper and prompt transfer of documents and other matters related to assets and liabilities of this Sangam to newly elected EC and newly elected BOD chairman. The existing BOD will oversee the yearly transitions between ECs and BOD chairman as outlined in by-law VIII Section 1. The existing BOD will also oversee other than yearend-transitions as outlined in by-law II section 4 if any office-bearers or BOD chairman or more than 7 EC members are replaced during a particular year.

Section 3. BOD shall serve as an advisory body to EC in the conduct of any business over \$5000 as deemed necessary and desirable in the interest of this Sangam. All transactions over \$5000 require the approval of BOD before execution. All transactions or disbursements related to Charitable activities, irrespective of amount, require the approval of BOD before execution. BOD shall convey its approval or decision within 1 week of EC's request.

Section 4. **Election:** The eligibility criteria, nominations and other procedures for the election of GATS members to serve on the BOD are described in bylaws IV. At no time shall more than 1 family member from the same family serve in the BOD. The BOD should have at least 6 elected members and these 6 members shall not be members of the Executive Committee (non-EC members). In addition, the President and Treasurer of Executive Committee, shall, by virtue of the office they hold, be members of BOD for one year until the EC's term ends on December 31st of the calendar year. The Board of Directors will, therefore, have a total of 8 members -6 elected non-EC members and 2 elected EC members. All 8 BOD members (4 BOD members, and 4 newly elected members (2 non-EC BOD and 2 EC BOD) will elect their Chairman every year through a simple majority vote before December 31.

The Chairman may be anyone of the 6 non-EC members in the BOD and must not have served as Chairman in the preceding 3 years. Each of the 8 BOD members will have the right to cast one vote in all BOD decisions including the election of the Chairman. In case of a tie vote in the election of the Chair, the Chair shall be decided by a toss of the coin. A person elected as Chair shall hold that position for a maximum period of one calendar year.

Section 5. Term of Directors: All elected members of the BOD will hold office for a period of 3 years. Every year two new members will be elected to serve on the BOD as described in bylaws IV.

If any Director resigns or is removed mid-term during the year, the BOD shall follow the same process to fill that vacant position as specified in Section 5 of By-Law II -Vacant positions in the Executive Committee.

Section 6. Responsibility of BOD member to attend meetings and participate: All BOD members are expected to attend BOD meetings and participate effectively in running the Sangam. If a member is habitually absent, i.e. absent for three consecutive BOD meetings, without a reasonable cause for such absence, BOD may, by 2/3rds majority, vote to remove that member from the BOD. Once the removal is approved by a 2/3rds majority vote of the BOD, that member will be ineligible to serve as a member of the BOD for the remainder of his/her term.

Within 7 days, such removal should be communicated to the general body by updating the Sangam website.

If the BOD member being so removed is the President or Treasurer of EC, such removal will automatically remove such member from EC also.

Section 7. Meetings: The BOD should hold one meeting every quarter during the year.

BOD members may participate and vote in meetings of the board by electronic means. Additional BOD meetings can also be held at the request of a BOD member.

The Chairman can call for BOD meetings giving at least 1-week notice of the meeting to all board members along with an agenda, and can cast, in case of a tie, a tiebreaking vote (in addition to his/her own vote).

To initiate the transition of duties, a joint session of incoming and outgoing ECs will be convened by the existing BOD Chairman within three weeks of electing new EC and BOD members. In the absence of the BOD Chairman or failure to call the joint meeting, a BOD member can initiate the joint meeting with the majority of the board approval.

All joint meetings of EC and BOD shall be chaired by Chairman of Board of Directors or the President. A minimum of 8 EC members and 4 BOD members shall be required quorum for such meetings.

If necessary, the BOD can request EC to convene General Body meetings to provide a forum for members to express their opinions, feedback and complaints that require further action. If it is so required, additional meetings may be held. The EC should organize such general body meetings, if requested by BOD.

Section 8. **Auditing:** The GATS BOD shall appoint an internal Auditing Committee that shall consist of GATS Treasurer, Associate Treasurers from Tamil schools (agreed by MOU with GATS), 1 EC member, 1 BOD member, 1 GB member with the financial knowledge and accounting Practices. The BOD member shall be appointed as chair of the audit committee. This committee shall have the authority to audit the accounts and submit findings to the BOD. The Auditing Committee shall meet minimum 3 times a year, and the last meeting for the purposes of auditing shall be held to coincide with the US financial year end (i.e. December 31st of the year).

Before filing taxes with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the BOD shall review the Financial Statements and approve the same.

In addition, to ensure the Sangam is in compliance with all the 501 C3 nonprofit tax laws as mandated by IRS, the BOD shall conduct external auditing once in two year, through a Certified Public Accounting (CPA) firm.

Section 9. **Ad-hoc committees:** The Board of Directors has the power to establish task-based committees to accomplish specific tasks. The mandate, term, composition, reporting shall be decided by BOD.

The term of all such task-based committees established by the Board of Directors shall cease when the task is completed or when the term for which it was formed expires, whichever is applicable in terms of the duration and the mandate.

The individuals or the committee that reviews and recommends any a long-term project that may have a long-term financial risk for GATS shall be independent of those in the BOD who are authorized to approve such project proposals.

Section 10. **Resolutions passed by BOD:** Any resolution passed by the BOD to uphold and affirm the Constitution and bylaws of Sangam shall be effective immediately and shall be binding on the Executive Committee and other bodies of Sangam, and its members.

All resolutions that relate to interpretation of Constitution and bylaws of Sangam shall be presented and ratified by the General Body in a GBM and incorporated into the bylaws as amendments at an appropriate time.

By-law VI: Banking procedures

Section 1. Operations Account: The money collected from membership fees, advertisements, food revenue, and miscellaneous income shall be deposited in the Operations Account. The money from this account will be used for organizing GATS programs, functions, meetings, seminars, lectures, and other incidental expenses.

Section 2. Endowment Fund Account: The money from lifetime membership and year-end surplus money from operations or specific donation to GATS endowment shall be deposited into Endowment Fund Account. This Endowment Fund Account shall be invested in a long-term fund. The money in the endowment account shall be used to purchase real-estate assets and related infrastructure that will facilitate the execution of objectives stated under the Article 3 of the GATS Constitution. Use of money, as stated in this clause, is subject to approval of the Board of Directors. The GATS EC shall have the powers, only in case of emergencies, to withdraw any interest that is earned on this account, to meet GATS operational expenses once a year. Such amount shall not exceed \$500 and only one such withdrawal shall be permitted without the approval of the General Body.

If the cumulative withdrawals from the Endowment Fund Account, made within a calendar year, exceed 10% of starting endowment fund balance for that year, then such a withdrawal must be approved by the BOD and General Body.

Any single transaction over \$5000 requires the approval of BOD before execution. All Charity-related disbursements, irrespective of the amount, require the approval of BOD before execution. Once approved by the BOD, the EC, working closely with the Charity subcommittee, has the responsibility to continue the charity work with periodic updates/progress provided to the BOD.

Section 3. Charitable Account:

EC has the responsibility to establish special bank accounts for the purposes of securing donations for specific charitable and humanitarian causes.

The money received for a specific charity cause shall be deposited and spent only as specified under the relevant IRS rules. In an unlikely event that the Sangam, in spite of its best efforts (documented), is not able to honor this request within one year, it shall return the money/gift to the donor or donate the money to another charitable cause or organization with the permission of the donor. If donor at the time of donation does not specify a cause, the money will be deposited into general charity account and will be dispersed at the discretion of the EC with the BOD approval.

BOD will decide on any unused funds to use them for another similar charity cause or organization and inform the GB, accordingly.

All charity-related collections and disbursements to charitable organization(s), irrespective of the amount, require the approval of EC and BOD (see subcommittees section) before any execution to ensure that the money is collected and spent as per 501(c) (3) IRS regulations. The Charity subcommittee and EC shall provide all the documents and finance details within 30 days of the event.

The BOD shall decide on the approval within 30 days after receiving documents from the Charity Subcommittee and the EC. Once approved, the funds need to be disbursed within 14 days to the Charity Subcommittee.

Then the subcommittee shall provide periodic progress reports to the EC and BOD.

Section 4. Funds available to the new Executive committee: New membership renewals for the next year shall be available in full to the upcoming year's committee on January 1st. If the renewal is less than \$3,000, the balance will be supplemented from the operating account to make it to \$3,000. Such amount shall be increased by 4% annually, with the base year being 2012.

In case the operating account does not have money to supplement, whatever the amount left in operating account will be made available on January 1st.

Section 5. Handling of surplus money: The year-end surplus money from the operation account will be distributed as follows: 25% to the charity account with maximum amount of \$2000, 25% to the Education subcommittee with maximum amount of \$2000 and remaining 50% or higher to the endowment fund.

Surplus money should not be used for any regular operational activities of Sangam. The use of education and charity surplus money requires EC and BOD approval.

The surplus money distributed to charitable account shall be exclusively used for emergency charitable causes (example: natural disasters demanding immediate relief) and matching programs supported by members actively. All the surplus money left in this category at the end of the calendar year shall be deposited into GATS Endowment Fund.

The surplus money distributed to the Tamil education account shall be used for educational literary activities, special cultural events as defined below, and scholarships. All surplus money left in this category at the end of the calendar year shall be deposited into GATS Endowment Fund.

Special cultural event may include events featuring professional artists from India, US or other countries, and must be based on either Tamil or Indian programs based on cultural, classical, traditional, or entertainment industry. This fund can also be utilized for staging Tamil movies. Educational and literary events may include educational seminars that may be of interest to the member community or professional artists conducting tamil literary events such as Debates (pattimandrams), poetic events (kaviarangam) or folk events (villupattu, karagattam, etc.).

Section 6. The monthly bank statements from the bank should be sent directly to the official address of Sangam. It shall be provided for review by the President every month.

Section 7. The Treasurer, but in the cases that the Treasurer is not available, and an emergency exists, the President, shall be the only authorized person to sign the checks individually up to \$1800. Any check exceeding \$1800 shall require the signatures of both the Treasurer and the President.

When the Treasurer or President is not available to sign the check, either one can give a written authorization to sign for him/her. Such an authorization needs to be approved by the BOD.

If payments are made electronically, such payments shall be authorized in writing by payment vouchers signed by both Treasurer and President, if the amount exceeds \$1800.

The President and Treasurer shall be joint signatory authorities for all Certificates of Deposit.

Section 8. List of GATS assets, liabilities, and financial statements should be published in the annual Membership directory.

Section 9. GATS shall not borrow or incur debt under any circumstance, unless approved by a three-fourth majority of BOD and approved by a two-third majority of members present in a General Body meeting.

Presence of 40% of eligible voting members will be considered as quorum for the General Body meeting called for debt approval.

This General Body meeting should be called for only after 15th of April.

When a General Body Meeting is called for this purpose, a motion consisting of the proposal to borrow or incur debt should be floored in front of the GB for discussion. Members from GB, EC and BOD should be given floor time to express their views and discuss about the proposed motion before GB members are asked to vote on the motion by ballots.

Section 10. Tamil Education Account: EC can establish special accounts to receive funds and donations for specific Tamil education purposes.

Funds received for a specific cause shall be deposited to this special account and spent only as specified under the relevant IRS rules.

Section 11. Tamil Schools Account: EC can establish the special accounts to receive funds and donations for all GATS affiliated Tamil schools purposes.

Fund received for a specific cause shall be deposited to this special account and spent only as specified and under the relevant IRS rules.

Section 12. Real-Estate Account: In addition to general Endowment fund, EC can establish an account with approval of BOD to manage contribution received towards real estate.

Section 13. Any single transaction over \$5000 requires the approval of BOD before execution, with the exception of the Tamil Schools Education related transactions.

By-law VII: Subcommittees with defined tasks

The following six subcommittees shall be constituted to extend the capabilities of the Executive Committee in the various areas of Sangam's focus.

- Charity subcommittee
- Tamil Education subcommittee
- Technology subcommittee
- Newsletter/Magazine subcommittee
- Youth subcommittee consisting of youth members who are either student members or children in households that hold family membership
- Sports subcommittee

All subcommittees operate under the overall authority of the Executive Committee.

Any paid member of Sangam is eligible for appointment to positions in a subcommittee by the EC. The EC shall have the right to discharge or remove any EC appointed subcommittee who is found uninterested or uninvolved in the activities of the subcommittee, by a 2/3rd vote of EC.

The total membership in any subcommittee is 9, unless stated otherwise for a specific subcommittee. Of these 9 members, 6 shall be non-EC, non-BOD members appointed by the EC. Apart from these 6 members, the following shall serve as members in every subcommittee.

- 1 member of BOD
- EC shall nominate one of the EC members who is not one of the five officers as a liaison between EC and subcommittee
- Further, the current President or Vice President shall serve as a non-voting ex-officio member.

Of the 6 non-EC members appointed to the subcommittees, 2 shall have 3-year term, 2 shall have 2- year term and 2 shall have 1-year term to start with. Every year, EC shall appoint 2 members to 3-year term in the subcommittee.

After the subcommittee is formed, before March 31st of every calendar year, the EC shall call a meeting of each subcommittee. In this first meeting, subcommittee members shall meet to elect a Coordinator among them. The Coordinator shall not be an EC or BOD member. Such Coordinator shall lead the subcommittee for that calendar year, maintain detailed documentation of the activities, report on the activities and progress to EC once every quarter, and shall assist in transition activities at the end of the year.

Vacancies that arise in subcommittees during the calendar year shall be filled by the Executive Committee.

Finance for subcommittees: The financial resources for the sub groups should be decided by the EC. Subcommittees should send a request with a budget for specific activities for the availability of financial resources or other helps to EC at least a week in advance for EC decision. If the subcommittees generate money for general purposes, the year-end surplus will go to the endowment fund. If a payment or donation is made specifically to a subcommittee and the cause is defined by the payee/donor at the time of donation, GATS must spend it accordingly.

If the education subcommittee needs money in advance for GATS Tamil school related expenses, the EC can issue up to 20% in advance based on the budget approval.

Section 1. Charity subcommittee:

Charity subcommittee's mission is to assist in executing and furthering GATS's charity goals. All charity activities require the EC and the BOD approval and shall conform to the rules and regulations set forth by IRS or appropriate authority for a non-profit, tax-exempt (501 C3) organization such as Sangam.

The charity subcommittee shall present their recommendations on fund-raising, funds-disbursements and other charity activities to EC for discussion and approval. Once EC approves the proposal, EC shall forward the proposal to BOD for approval. The approval by EC and BOD shall be communicated to the Coordinator within 30 days of the proposal. Charity activities shall not commence before EC and BOD approval.

At least two charity activities (such as donating, contributing to charity activities, volunteering for charitable cause) shall be conducted every year.

Charity subcommittee shall report details of all its activities including fund-raising, funds disbursement, group volunteering by email newsletters, website announcements and announcements during GBMs.

Charity subcommittee must involve GATS members in raising funds, soliciting ideas for deserving charitable organizations, and shall work towards making GATS a member-driven charitable organization.

Section 2. Tamil Education subcommittee:

As per the Constitution, Tamil education is one of the major goals of the Sangam. Tamil Education Subcommittee is constituted to further GATS' Tamil Education goals.

The subcommittee should meet at least once in the first quarter of the year. The subcommittee shall provide the plan of their activities quarterly reports to the EC and shall handover the stock of any resource material that is in their custody at the end of the year to the transition team.

The education subcommittee shall serve to support Tamil language education-related activities, including ongoing voluntary Tamil educational activities conducted by different volunteers, conduct Tamil education classes and/or provide information about various Tamil educational classes, and help with resource materials, when available.

The subcommittee members or each Tamil School administration team shall meet to elect an Associate Treasurer to handle their school financial related transactions. The Associate Treasurer will assist the Treasurer in managing financial transactions related to Tamil Education/Schools. The Associate Treasurer could request the Treasurer for money collected for an educational purpose to meet the educational expenses that is preapproved by the Education Subcommittee. The Treasurer has to release the requested transactions from the Associate Treasurer within a week of such request. If needed, a standard operational procedure for financial transaction could be developed by Education Subcommittee and approved by EC and/or BOD for this purpose.

The Associate Treasurer of each school shall have signing authority on the check of their school operation account only.

The Associate Treasurer of that school should submit all financial transactions information / records to the Treasurer at least once a quarter.

Section 3. Technology subcommittee:

GATS use technology to manage communication with its members. This technology subcommittee shall advice and assist EC in managing evolving technology changes effectively.

Technology subcommittee shall consist of 5 members. 3 of these would be non-EC members. 1 EC member would be appointed by EC as Technology Liaison. President shall serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of this subcommittee.

Section 4. Newsletter/Magazine subcommittee:

This subcommittee will be appointed by the EC every year. Duties of this subcommittee include publishing weekly electronic newsletters, magazine and helping the EC with publication of GATS annual directory/souvenir.

Section 5. Youth subcommittee:

The GATS shall organize a youth subcommittee to nurture and promote leadership qualities in youths and help them carry out many community, social, cultural, and charity programs organized by GATS. The subcommittee will serve to organize GATS youths and educate them on their heritage and inculcate the value of community charity activities. Any GATS youth member in good standing of age 14 -22 years is eligible to be a member of subcommittee.

A 9-member Youth committee will be appointed by EC for one-year term before end of January of the calendar year. The committee will elect its coordinator. The youth coordinator can become a nonvoting ex-officio EC member as the youth representative. Such person would take initiative and set up meetings, activities, etc. for the committee. A youth should be 18 or older to hold this position and can serve a maximum of two elected terms as the coordinator.

Section 6. Sports subcommittee:

The Sports Subcommittee shall be organized within 90 days of the start of the financial year (by March 31) when the new EC takes charge of running the Sangam on January 1st, and present to the EC the list of sports events they will organize for the year within 30 days of its formation for approval. At least two sports events shall be conducted every year by the committee, with the following structure and responsibility:

- shall consist of 7 members. 4 of these would be non-EC members. 1 EC member would be appointed by EC and 1 BOD would be appointed by the Board as sports Liaisons. President shall serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of this subcommittee.
- shall advice and assist EC in managing sports events effectively.
- shall be financially self-sufficient to meet the sport events expenses.
- shall ensure that a liability waiver form is signed by the participants.

By-law VIII: Transition and other important items

Section 1. All the yearly transitions to new BOD Chairman, EC and subcommittees should be completed within 15 days of expiration of the outgoing EC's term. This time can be extended upon approval of new EC and BOD. It must also be noted that any delays beyond this stipulated time, without reasonable cause, will give rise to the EC/BOD member(s) being charged with all the attendant cost of maintaining the organization, including any legal expenses that could be incurred. BOD shall oversee the transition procedure from the outgoing GATS committee to the new GATS committee. This will include, but not limited to, the following transfers: Media Communications, Tax Filing Documents, Web site (www.gatamilsangam.org) renewal and ownership information Email and email group management authority, Member Address List and confidential email list database, Liability Insurance every year and Georgia incorporation renewal, 501(c) and Georgia state non-profit renewal for every two years.

BOD will also oversee other than yearend-transitions as outlined in Bylaw II Section 4 if any office-bearers or the BOD Chairman or more than 7 EC members are replaced during a particular year.

Any property (asset) purchases need to be documented. BOD has to keep the property checklist. The location of such assets has to be documented. These assets include land as well as other items such as Microphone, entertainment equipment to conduct cultural programs, furniture etc.

Archives of records and publications: All the archives of news GATS letters and other publications, financial information, eLetters and other web contents should be archived and recorded in the transition document.

Section 2. The Email and address lists are proprietary property of GATS. No individual EC member owns any personal rights/ownership to these items. The GATS members listing (mailing address, e-mail address, and phone number) shall be used for distribution of GATS related information and activities only.

Section 3. All annual (calendar year) contracts of GATS with any institution or individuals shall be in writing and signed by two of the following three Officers: President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Contracts, the duration of which are multi-year or those that span multiple calendar years, are subject to approval by Board of Directors and must be signed by Chairman of Board of Directors and President.

Section 4. EC and BOD members shall not be held personally liable for any actions and decisions taken on behalf of Sangam.

Section 5. All the protected information of past and current members including the members listing (mailing address, e-mail address and phone number), and equipment, individual software, web pages developed during the year; photographs taken during the programs (performed by the professional artists), etc. are the Sangam's property. No one should sell, trade, exchange, or utilize in any other manner for personal or third party gains.

Section 6. No part of the net earnings of GATS shall be distributed to its members, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay actual out-of pocket expenses incurred by any member in furtherance of the objectives set forth herein.

Section 7. Office holders of GATS shall avoid conflicts of interest in carrying out their responsibilities.

Section 8. GATS shall celebrate at least four festivals, Pongal, Tamil New Year, Iyal-Isai-NadakaVizha (MuthamizhVizha – Tamil literature, music and drama), and Deepavali in a calendar year. Any additional festivals may be celebrated if the majority of the Executive Committee members are in agreement.

Section 9. In addition, the EC may conduct additional special events to benefit Charity, Education and special projects. These special event requests can also be initiated by any BOD, EC or GATS members. Such requests for special events must be approved by the respective subcommittees and the majority of the EC members. The EC must present a proposal including ballpark ROI (Return on Investment) analysis to the BOD. The BOD can take up to 2 weeks from the time the proposal is received to make its decision. The money generated from these events can be utilized for the purpose the special events are organized for.

Section 10. In order to meet expenses incurred during business meetings, the EC is allowed to spend a maximum of \$400 per year and the BOD is allowed \$100 per year if there are no sponsorships available to cover the cost.

Section 11. BOD, EC and sub-committees may use electronic media (telephone, email, internet/web and other) to hold meetings, voting, and general communication. Such participation by electronic means shall be recorded and minutes maintained and archived.

By-law IX: Conflict-resolution & Grievance-handling Procedures

Section 1. Process to handle member grievances:

A member who has a complaint is called “Complainant or Aggrieved Party”. A member or office- holder (member of EC, Subcommittees, or BOD) against whom another member has a complaint is called the “Complainee”.

The responsible authority that is charged with resolving the complaint – either the Board of Directors or Chairman of BOD, Executive Committee or President, or the General Body of members in a General Body Meeting – is called “Resolving Authority”.

Resolving Authority shall acknowledge the complaint made within 7 days of receiving such a complaint.

Resolving Authority may set up a committee of one or more members to help in investigating, advising, and/or resolving a complaint. Such a committee shall be called “Advisory Committee”.

Any issue that impacts Sangam’s Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Provisions of local, state and federal laws pertaining to Sangam, Sangam’s finances or financial status, and other Sangam issues that span multiple years fall under the purview of the Board of Directors (Resolving Authority). Such issues shall be addressed by Complainant to the Chairman of BOD and may/may not be copied to all Directors. Complaints against the Chairman shall be addressed to all Directors.

Any issue that is operational in nature shall be addressed to the Executive Committee (Resolving Authority) for resolution. Complaints against EC, subcommittees, ad-hoc committees formed by EC, and members of all these committees also fall under this category. All complaints shall be addressed to the President of the EC and may/may not be copied to all EC members. Complaints against the President shall be addressed to the Vice President and all members of EC.

Where the Resolving Authority is a committee consisting of more than one person, a simple majority is required to carry the resolution.

Complaints shall be made in writing, signed and transmitted either by email or US mail. Complaints shall be made before the expiry of 18 months from the date of occurrence of the subject-matter of the complaint. Resolving Authority shall acknowledge the complaint made within 3 days of receiving such complaint. All complaints shall be resolved within 45 days of receiving such complaint. Resolving Authority’s decision is binding on all parties to the complaint. Resolution of complaints shall be communicated to the Complainant in

writing and transmitted either by email or US mail. Resolving Authority shall bind over all documentation pertaining to complaints & resolutions thereof to Secretary, who shall be responsible to keep a log of all complaints with all details of the complaint (complainant, date of complaint, description of complaint, resolution process adopted, resolution, copies of emails or any documents transmitted).

If Complainant or Complainee is not satisfied with the resolution proposed by Resolving Authority, they shall have recourse by referring the complaint to the General Body in a General Body Meeting called for the purpose according to the process outlined in the bylaws within 3 months of such resolution.

Once resolved at a meeting of the General Body, the complaint is closed and shall not be re-presented.

Resolving Authority shall have the right to dismiss any frivolous complaints, or complaints that have no nexus with Sangam. Resolving Authority will address the concerns with the complainant and if deemed lacking merit, factual support or which are too trivial and personal, the complaint will be triaged, and the complainant informed accordingly.

Section 2. Recall or removal: Any member of the elected bodies of Sangam -EC and BOD -may be removed or impeached, on the grounds of inability to perform the duties of the position, corruption, favoritism, or gross misconduct, at a meeting of the members of Sangam (General Body Meeting) called for that purpose. The process set in motion for recall or removal of Officers, Directors or EC members of Sangam by the general body involves the following steps:

a.) Recall of Officers, Directors or EC members any EC or BOD member: Any general member may initiate removal or impeachment proceedings in a meeting of the general body called specifically for this purpose by presenting such a written request to the GATS President, or Chairman, Board of Directors, with the written consent and support (with signatures) of at least 25% of the general body.

b.) Appointment of independent committee: To bring charges against the Officers, Directors or EC members of Sangam, an independent investigative body, appointed either by the EC or BOD or both bodies, will be entrusted with careful analysis of charges. This independent investigative committee shall present its report to the body/bodies that appointed it.

c.) Analysis of the report: The EC and/or BOD will study the investigative report, and reject or recommend further action by the general body.

d.) GBM Meeting: GATS President or Chairman, BOD shall send a notice of such a meeting with date, time, location and agenda for the meeting at least 15 days prior to the date of such meeting. All details relating to the investigative report and EC/BOD resolutions/decisions to remove the member from EC or BOD shall be presented to the general body. The member being sought to be removed shall be given every opportunity to explain his/her position in front of the General Body, before a vote is taken to removed or impeach. A super-majority of 2/3 (two-thirds) of the members so assembled for this purpose is required to remove or impeach a member from the office he/she holds.

e.) Disbarment from Sangam: A member once removed or suspended by the general body will forfeit his/her membership in Sangam for a finite number of years as determined by the GB.

Section 3. Suspension of Membership: Documented activities against the purposes of Sangam as defined in Article 3 of Sangam's Articles of Incorporation shall constitute grounds for suspension of membership.

Authority: EC and/or BOD may investigate, and initiate action related to suspension of membership. EC has to get the approval of BOD before initiating such action. If the member being investigated is the President or any office bearer or any member of EC of Sangam, or any BOD member, BOD shall be the body that investigates and initiates such action.

Allegations shall be notified in writing to the member by the appropriate authority (EC or BOD). Such authority shall appoint an investigative committee to investigate the issue and submit its findings to the authority which will review to see if there exists reasonable cause for suspension. If it is established that there are reasonable grounds for suspension, such authority shall recommend suspension to the general body. The member who is recommended for suspension shall be entitled to a hearing by the General Body in a meeting called for this purpose. In order to be eligible for such hearing, the alleged member should request the appropriate authority in writing, within thirty days from receipt of the above notification, to call the general body meeting. Failure to respond by the alleged member to the original notification by the appropriate authority within thirty days shall result in automatic suspension of the alleged member from Sangam.

Section 4. Conflict-resolution procedure for issues within Executive Committee: Generally, when there is a difference of opinion among the members of the executive committee, the majority opinion shall be the binding. However, if a member perceives himself/herself to have been constantly harassed or deprived of his/her ability to serve the organization, the following procedure is to be adopted:

a. When Executive committee member(s) could not resolve the differences within the committee, any member involved should make a written request to the BOD to form a three-member ad-hoc committee and name one of them as the chairperson for an appeal process within 10 days of receiving notice. All parties to the grievance shall submit in writing that they will abide by the recommendation of such committee. The accuser side and the accused side can each suggest one GATS member in good standing but not a member of the Executive Committee or the BOD for inclusion in the ad-hoc committee. The third person shall be by the BOD. If the accuser side or the accused side does not want to suggest a member to serve in the committee, the BOD can appoint non-EC/non-BOD members to the committee.

b. The committee Chair shall then correspond with all the committee members involved and solicit all supporting documentation from each of them and distributes it to other committee members for review.

c. The committee shall then meet to discuss the materials reviewed and initiate its deliberations. The committee, at this time, may choose to conduct interviews with one or more members involved, individually or combined, to gather additional relevant information.

d. The committee shall prepare a complete report and submit it with its recommendations to the BOD, which shall be no later than 30 days from date of formation of the committee.

e. BOD shall inform the committee's recommendation(s) to all parties involved and implement it/them within 24 hours of receiving the report

f. The committee's recommendation(s) on the issues involved shall be the binding agreement for the Executive Committee.

By-law X: Amendments

Section 1. Any active GATS member, including those serving on the EC or BOD can propose amendments to specific clauses in the Sangam bylaws or Articles of Incorporation ('Constitution'). All such proposed amendment requests shall be submitted in writing to the Chairman of Board of Directors. Such proposals shall be approved by a majority of the BOD or EC or 15% of members of the General Body (GB).

To ensure a fair review of the proposed changes, the Chairman shall appoint an ad-hoc committee consisting of the members from the GB within 45 days. Accordingly, the BOD Chairman shall invite GB members, via GATS Newsletter, and constitute the Bylaws Review Ad-hoc Committee (BRAC) whose members shall be independent of those serving on the current EC and/or BOD.

The BRAC shall conduct an open forum of the GB meeting (quorum not required) for feedback on the proposed changes by announcing the date/venue, via member-specific Newsletter, at least 15 days before such meeting. At the end of this process, the BRAC shall forward the comments and recommendations to the BOD.

The BOD Chairman should seek legal opinion on the proposed amendments and circulate them to the GB within 45 days after receiving the BRAC recommendations. The General Body meeting shall be announced at least 30 days in advance by BOD chairman for the approval of proposed amendments by paper ballot voting. A copy (email) of the proposed amendments shall be distributed to GB along with the GB meeting announcement.

Section 2. The amendments to bylaws and Articles of Incorporation placed before the general body will be passed if approved by 2/3 of the eligible voters constituting the quorum at the meeting and shall be effective immediately. The ballot voting procedure shall be conducted by an independent committee appointed by the BOD. The presence of 20% of eligible members of GATS shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for any amendments to the bylaw. The Secretary of Sangam shall notify the changes in the by-law to the Secretary of State of Georgia, IRS, and copy shall be sent to BOD.

Section 3. Any amendments to the bylaw cannot be brought before the general body in the first month of a calendar year in order to ensure the full participation of General Body.

By-Law XI: Rights of Members

Right to information about EC, Subcommittees and BOD meetings: Every active member of Sangam is eligible to attend, as an observer, in a meeting of the Executive Committee, BOD and any of all officially-constituted Sub-Committees. To attend such meeting, a request has to be made via Email to the contact@gatamilsangam.org of GATS (Email messages are delivered to the GATS Officers: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and Communications Director), specifying a meeting of interest in the subject-heading, at least two weeks before the scheduled meeting.

Accordingly, the Communications Director shall convey this request in a timely manner to the Committee Chair, who will extend an invitation of such member in the scheduled meeting. However, 'Executive Sessions' organized by any the GATS committees are not open to active members of the Sangam.

To make the attendance of these meetings possible, all the afore-mentioned committees shall announce in advance the meeting date/venue via Email communication only to active members of the Sangam and will have the authority to allow only 5 active members per meeting, as observers on a first-come, first-served basis.

Right to ask for and review approved minutes of and resolutions passed at official meetings of EC, BOD. However, sensitive personal information pertaining to members of the Sangam, if in possession of the EC, BOD during deliberations, will not be made public.

All paid members are eligible to receive the Sangam directory.

Members shall give a valid reason or purpose to exercise any of these rights. Any information received shall be used only for the specified purpose. Any information received in hard-copy shall be returned after the purpose is achieved. Any information received in electronic media shall be destroyed after the purpose is achieved.

By-Law XII: Schools MOU

The Admin Staff of all Tamil Schools and all GATS BOD and officers shall follow the GATS bylaws and the MOU executed between the Sangam and the Schools.

Bylaw Review and Amendments

[GATS By law review and amendment 2018 approval details](#)

By-law amendment voting held at the Deepavali Celebrations event (Mountain View High School, 2351 Sunny Hill Road, Lawrenceville, GA) on November 17th, 2018

between 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM EST.

Presiding officer: Jegajeevan Rajendran, 2018 Board Chairman

[GATS By law amendment 2013 approval details](#)

By-law amendment voting held at the Pongal Celebrations event (Lanier High School, 918 Buford Hwy, Sugar Hill, GA 30518) on February 10th 2013 between 3:30 PM - 4:00 PM EST.

Presiding officer: Chand Kuppusamy, 2013 Board Chairman