

Your Guide to Going Gold

How to Become a Gold Award Girl Scout

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the mark of the truly remarkable. Through pursuing the Gold Award, Girl Scouts change the world by tackling issues they are passionate about to drive lasting change in their communities and beyond while they learn essential skills that will prepare them for all aspects of life. As a bonus, the Gold Award opens doors to a variety of scholarships, preferred admission tracks for college, strong networking and amazing career opportunities, and much more.

This guide offers a comprehensive overview of everything from planning to proposals and teamwork to time logs. So, whether you've been dreaming of your Gold Award since you were a Daisy or you're a new member in high school looking to make a difference, this guide is for you. Let's get going and let's Go Gold!

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Part 1: The Gold Award Defined

Curious about the Gold Award? Read on to learn more about what it means and how you'll lead lasting change in your community.

The benefits of becoming a Gold Award Girl Scout

When you become a Gold Award Girl Scout, you delve deep into your passions, flex your problem-solving muscle, stand up for what you believe in, inspire others, and make a difference. It's an opportunity to do something more and to set your sights on true leadership.

Here are a few other reasons to Go Gold:

- **Grow professional skills.** Gold Award Girl Scouts become pros in team building, problem solving, project planning, and time management. These are invaluable skills that all professionals need—and all people value. You can highlight these experiences as you apply to schools, jobs, internships, and other opportunities.
- **Earn scholarships.** Many universities and colleges award [scholarships](#) to Gold Award Girl Scouts.
- **Build your network.** Gold Award Girl Scouts recruit and lead teams to do amazing things! This experience will give you a network of supporters that lasts a lifetime.
- **Enlist at a higher pay grade when you join the military.**
- **Join the ranks of nearly one million girls who have earned the highest recognition in Girl Scouting.**

SOMETHING TO

REMEMBER: Do this for you—not for anyone else! This isn't your parent's or troop leader's project. The Gold Award is an opportunity to harness your passion and put your ideas into motion. It's challenging. It's immensely rewarding. And it's entirely up to you.

SOMETHING TO

REMEMBER: Once you've earned the Gold Award, you can proudly claim your Gold Award digital credential from Credly, our verification partner! You can display it on your social media profiles, including LinkedIn. This allows prospective employers, universities/colleges, military academies, and others to verify your achievement simply by viewing your profile.

Key elements of the Gold Award

The Girl Scout Gold Award is a **Take Action project** that must include **five elements**. Your project must (1) address a **root cause** of an issue that you feel passionate about that has a (2) **national and/or global link**. Through your actions, you must demonstrate (3) **leadership** while also creating (4) **sustainable** and (5) **measurable** impact.

What does “take action” really mean?

Taking action means working to understand the root cause of a problem so that you can develop a solution that continues to address that issue—even after your Gold Award project has been completed. Simply put, taking action goes beyond community service.

What’s the difference between community service and a Take Action project?

Take Action and community service projects are different, and both are essential to Girl Scouting. When you earn the Gold Award, you are transformed from living the Girl Scout Law to bringing it to life!

Community service projects are acts of kindness and important ways to help something or someone right now. They are commonly “one and done” activities. Performing community service almost always multiplies efforts that are already in place. Examples include collecting food for an existing food pantry, providing clothing or toiletries to people who have suffered a disaster, cleaning up a run-down playground, or picking up trash at a park, forest, or beach.

Girl Scout Take Action projects address an issue by tackling the factors that cause or contribute to it. As you may expect, these projects have a far-reaching impact. They are designed to change something for the better—forever.

Use this table to help determine whether an idea is a community service or Take Action project.

SOMETHING TO

REMEMBER: Collecting, beautifying, decorating, and cleaning can be part of a Take Action project; however these activities are not stand-alone Gold Award projects. Stay focused on unique solutions with long-term relief.

Community Service	Take Action
A short-term effort that helps something or someone fulfill an immediate need	A long-term project with sustainable and ongoing impact that addresses a root cause of an issue
Done FOR the community	Done WITH the community
Joining an existing effort to solve a problem	Creating a unique initiative to address an issue
Done as part of an existing team (usually as a volunteer)	Creating and leading your own team of volunteers
Working towards a goal that’s set by others	Setting the goals and leading a team to achieve them

What is a **root cause**?

Root causes are an issue's trigger—they identify *why* an issue is happening. Often, you'll have to look for the *why* in a lot of places in order to get to the root causes. Once you've identified your issue, you can create a "mind map" in [GoGold, the Gold Award web app](#). This will help you find its root causes. A mind map can help you understand what triggers your issue and will help you look further to find the root causes of those triggers.

ROOT CAUSE EXAMPLE: *Rachel is passionate about ocean conservation. She asks why ocean pollution happens and lists several causes, including acid rain, soil runoff, and oil spills. She remembers witnessing the harmful impact of a major oil spill in her local ecosystem and decides to learn more about why oil spills happen. Rachel reaches out to experts and, after additional research, learns that a lack of safety protocols for oil storage is one of the root causes. She chooses to create a project that addresses how oil storage can be made safer to prevent spills.*

Step 2: Investigate will walk you through how to use a mind map and then research your issue's root causes. When you're ready, visit **Step 2 of GoGold** to do it yourself!

How do I include a **national and/or global link** in my project?

Identifying a national and/or global link doesn't mean you need to travel or expand your project across the globe. It's likely that the issue you've been working towards addressing is relevant world-wide—it can be found in your own local, regional, or national community and across the globe, whether it's poverty, hunger, illiteracy, homelessness, or pollution.

Research how other areas, communities, or countries address your issue. Seeing how other people and places implement solutions might inspire your actions and will absolutely show you a national or global connection. Consider reaching out, explaining your ideas, and asking for their advice, ideas, and even collaboration. You can use what you learn to inform your project. Plus, these kinds of partnerships can be excellent ways to ensure your project's sustainability.

NATIONAL AND/OR GLOBAL LINK EXAMPLE: *For the past four years, Maria has volunteered at a local animal rescue group. It regularly operates at its maximum capacity and is unable to take in additional animals. Maria decides to tackle one of the root causes of this issue for her Gold Award. As she begins her research, she learns that animal rescue groups across the country share similar challenges and discovers various perspectives on animal welfare across the globe. Then, she reaches out to relevant animal welfare organizations to better understand the issue and to access the research that they have available. She decides to focus on a solution that she can implement at animal rescue groups in her community and share widely.*

Visit **Step 4 of GoGold** to identify your issue's national and/or global link. Be sure to include research that backs it up!

How do I show leadership in my project?

It isn't a leader's job to do everything; rather, it's the leader's job to make sure everything gets done. You will demonstrate leadership by recruiting and engaging a diverse team of volunteers from your network and around the community. Share your vision to help align your team—you can also map out activities, set schedules, create a communication plan, and solve challenges if they arise.

Take Action projects require partnering with the community you're serving, so be sure to enlist appropriate individuals, groups, or organizations before, during, and after your project to ensure they are engaged with and benefit from your project. Ideally, your project will provide the community you serve with a much needed solution, so they will help sustain your project.

LEADERSHIP EXAMPLE: *Caitlin elevated her passion for theater to raise awareness about substance abuse issues among high school students. She reached out to her high school's drama club for volunteer actors and backstage crew members. She found volunteers within her Girl Scout troop to design and distribute promotional materials for performances.*

At a local drug abuse education nonprofit, Caitlin learned about the extent of substance abuse in her town and found her project advisor. Her advisor connected her with volunteer educators who informed the educational components of Caitlin's project and hosted talk-backs after performances. Finally, Caitlin engaged other high school drama clubs to ensure that the program continued to reach her target audience.

Step 3: Get Help features important members of your team and the roles they might play. When you're ready, visit **Step 3 of GoGold** to list your team members and share how you plan to lead them as you implement your project.

What does a sustainable project look like?

Sustainability means that your project, as well as the work towards addressing your issue, carries on or continues even after you've done your part and earned the Gold Award. In a nutshell: you'll put a plan in place that ensures your Gold Award creates lasting change.

Sustainability is not one-size-fits-all. Here are three different ways you can ensure your project is sustainable:

1. Create a permanent solution ... and ensure it's used.

Short project description	How you know it's sustained ...
Brand-new girls wrestling team at your school	Get a letter of commitment from your school administration to sustain the team
Cultural competency club at a local community center	Provide a how-to manual with guidelines and your organization charter to the community center so they can maintain your project after you wrap up
Formal-wear lending boutique for military families	Establish a system for rotating and refreshing available items that outlasts your support

2. Educate others by inspiring them to change their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors ... and prove the changes by using a measurement tool and either 1) putting a plan in place to continue the education beyond your involvement or 2) enacting a call to action.

Short project description	How you know it's sustained ...
Stress-relief awareness campaign	Collect pre- and post-surveys to measure change in your audience's knowledge and perceptions and enact a call to action, like a pledge, to track who commits to adopting new self-care habits
Reading workshops to promote early literacy	Collect pre- and post-surveys to measure how audience reading skills improve and share the curriculum with a community partner to continue literacy education
School recycling presentations	Collect pre- and post-surveys to measure increase in recycling know-how and enact a call to action, like an online tracking system to count the number of students recycling at the school and total pounds of recycled material annually

3. Advocate to change a rule, regulation, or law ... and engage others in your advocacy.

Short project description	How you know it's sustained ...
Protecting sea turtle habitats	Get others to take up the cause by signing a petition as part of a campaign to enact a law that protects the animals' habitats. Your advocacy is what matters—bonus points if you get a law passed, but even if you don't, you can still change minds and behavior along the way.

Visit **Step 4 GoGold** to plan your project's sustainability. If you are partnering with a local organization for your project, a letter of support **MUST** be included with your Final Report! before it can be approved. Not sure what this means? Check out the letter of support guidelines for more information.

How do I **measure my impact?**

Your impact is measurable when you collect information or data throughout your project and use it to show that your actions have had a positive effect on the community and/or contributed to addressing your issue.

Think about what you can **count** in order to measure the effectiveness of your project. This means that you will need to set a goal or two! That way, when you measure your results, you'll know how effective your project was overall. Goals can feel intimidating, but remember, you're setting them for yourself—and they are adaptable.

SOMETHING TO

REMEMBER: When your goal is to change someone's mind, education can be a powerful tool. You can create and deploy a wide range of materials that will educate others about the issue you care about. We call this a "force multiplier" when someone makes a significant change to an attitude and/or behavior.

You can begin demonstrating your impact by asking “how much?” or “how many?”

- You can count **how many** people your project helped, involved, or educated, or how many people changed their behavior or attitudes. You can also count the number of members in a group (social media or in person) or how many clicks, shares, views, or comments your website or posts received.
- If you are introducing a new concept to a group, you can use a pre- and post-questionnaire to measure **how much** they’ve learned or assess what behaviors they’ve changed.

Successful Gold Award projects have goals and measure true impact. Be confident in setting and measuring multiple goals, so you can understand the impact of each part of your project. And don’t be shy about expanding your efforts as you go!

MEASUREMENT EXAMPLE: *Nancy is creating a technology class for women in the prison system to help prepare them for future employment. She sets two goals: to reach 50 women in the prison system with her technology class by the end of the school year and to be sure at least 75% of the women feel like they have increased their tech skills. To measure her impact, she plans to use two metrics: she will track participation to ensure she serves at least 50 women, and she will circulate questionnaires before and after the classes to assess if her participants are increasing their tech skills. By consistently tracking her progress, she can adjust her plan to better meet her goals.*

Visit **Step 4 of GoGold** to create your project’s goals and outline how you’ll measure your impact.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER: While goals are important guidelines, they may change as you go along. It’s OK—it’s all part of the learning process. Collecting and analyzing data throughout your project will help you gauge the impact your project is having, make improvements and adjust your goals as necessary, and ultimately tell a compelling story about your Gold Award. If you think you need to change your goals after your proposal has been approved, reach out to your council contact for advice and support.

Part 2: Achieving Your Gold Award

Now that you've learned about the Gold Award, you're ready to earn it—the greatest achievement in Girl Scouting! It may sound daunting, but we'll break it down into smaller, more manageable steps. Read on for more on how to get started. And remember: your council and the Girl Scout Movement will be there to support you every step of the way!

How do I know I'm ready?

You can begin working on your Gold Award proposal in GoGold after you've crossed certain items off your to-do list. You're ready when:

- You're in grades 9–12.
- You're a registered Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador.
- You've completed the Girl Scout Silver Award OR earned one Senior/Ambassador Leadership Award OR completed one Senior/Ambassador Journey.
- You've attended a mandatory GSSEM Gold Award Training
- You feel compelled to do something meaningful that will make the world a better place!

How much time does it take?

Plan to spend 80 hours bringing your project to life—that's the minimum. These hours will give you the time you need to properly plan and execute your project—though keep in mind that your schedule and other time commitments will influence how long it takes to complete your project. This is OK, whatever timeline you follow is just fine!

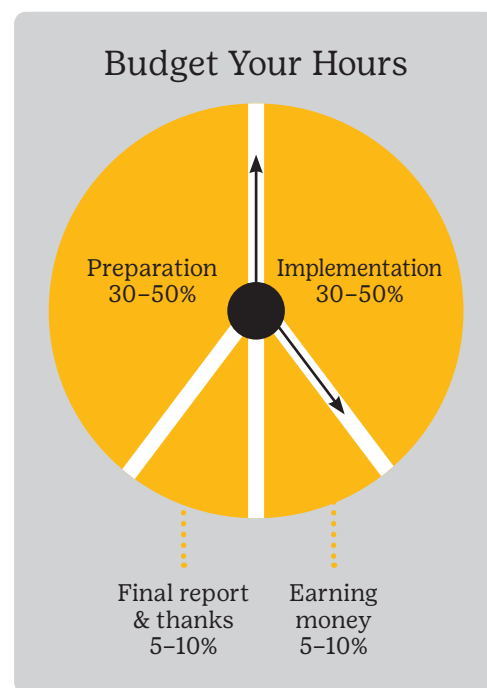
Use this chart—and the definitions below—as a guide to help you plan how to best invest your time for maximum efficiency and impact.

Preparation (30–50%) includes time planning pre- and post-approval.

- **Pre-approval (up to 25%)** is the process of preparing your project plan before council review and approval. *This includes some research, contacting possible community partners, investigating potential venues, finding prospective volunteers, and ultimately completing your project proposal.*
- **Post-approval (up to 25%)** is the work of finalizing your research and locking in your logistics after your proposal is approved by your council. *For example, you might contact your venue and set dates and times for workshops.*

Implementation (30–50%) is the process of leading and executing the plan you defined in your project proposal and making changes, when necessary, to achieve the project's goal. *This includes training your volunteers, leading your team to do your project, and more!*

Earning money (5–10%) is optional, and only includes time you spend earning money for your Gold Award. GSSEM allows Girl Scouts to count up to 3 hours total money earning toward their Gold Award.



Final report & thanks (5–10%) includes reflecting on your impact and appreciating your team, which are essential parts of the Gold Award, so make these a priority as you wrap up.

It's easy to forget an activity, email, or conversation, so use the "Track My Work" tab in GoGold to make sure you don't miss a thing.

Guidelines to Using AI in Highest Award

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) in any aspect of a Highest Award (Bronze, Silver, Gold) project, including but not limited to:

- Brainstorming a project
- Writing sentences, paragraphs, or any material included in a project proposal or final report
- Creation of content for a Highest Award project

Is expressly forbidden and considered a direct violation of the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

Writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes for all Highest Award projects. As such, all work, with a particular emphasis on project proposals and final reports, should be the work of the Girl Scout only.

Girl Scouts found to have used AI for any portion of their Highest Award Project will be immediately ineligible to earn the Highest Award they were pursuing when the violation was made.

Any future pursuits of a different Highest Award level by a Girl Scout found in violation of these guidelines must be reviewed by the Highest Awards Committee and Staff Specialist, with no guarantee of approval to move forward.

What is the process at GSSEM?

After completing your prerequisites including the mandatory GSSEM Gold Award Training, we suggest you start a log of your activities hours that will include all the steps throughout the process.

- _____ Submit Gold Award Notice of Intent to council.
- _____ Open an account on **GoGold Online** at <https://gogold.girlscouts.org/en/sign-in.html>
- _____ Begin to explore how to merge your passion and skills to take action in Step 1.
- _____ Next investigate and build your team in Steps 2-3. Identify a Project Advisor (expert) and obtain their electronic sign-off of the agreement.
- _____ **Step 4** Create your plan and be sure to include: how you identified an issue, how you will address the root cause of the issue, who is your target audience, then connect your issues to a national or global link, create and define measurable impact. Be sure to explain how you plan to tell others about your project and the impact you will create. Receive assignment of Highest Awards Committee Mentor.
- _____ **Step 5** Write a detailed Project Proposal. Submit it to your Gold Award Mentor. Your mentor will review your Project Proposal and help guide to ensure your proposal meets the Gold Award criteria. You **MUST RECEIVE APPROVAL** from the Gold Award Committee before implementing your project.
- _____ Once your mentor approves your Project Proposal, you may submit it online via GoGold for the Highest Awards Committee to review.
- _____ The GSSEM Highest Awards Committee will review your project proposal. They will either approve it as submitted, conditionally approve it and provide you with the clarifications they need or ask you to revise your proposal. **ONCE YOU RECEIVE APPROVAL FROM THE COMMITTEE** you may implement your project.
- _____ Receive Notice of Project Approval
- _____ **Step 6-7** Implement your Gold Award Project Plan. Include your Gold Award Mentor in your progress, and ask for clarification and answers to your questions along the way. Be sure to take pictures of your project as you will be asked for them.
- _____ If you are partnering with a local organization for your project, a letter of support **MUST** be included with your Final Report before it can be approved. Not sure what this means? Check out the letter of support guidelines for more information.
- _____ Write and submit your report for review by your Gold Award Mentor in GoGold online. Once they approve your report, they will let GSSEM staff know to reach out to schedule your exit interview with the GSSEM Highest Awards Committee.
- _____ Present your results to the GSSEM Highest Awards Committee. This will be scheduled after you submit your final report online in GoGold.

_____ To be completed on or before the interview: all required forms submitted electronically including a digital headshot photo and project summary.

Questions or concerns or if you do not have access to a computer please contact GSSEM staff at 800-482-6734 or highestawards@gssem.org.

What is the GoGold web app?

GoGold is a mobile-friendly web app you will use to track your progress towards completing the seven steps of the Gold Award—from idea to proposal, to taking action and final report—online!

You can use GoGold to brainstorm and submit your official Gold Award proposal as well as your final report. This system is designed with you in mind. It offers a lot more than just a place to upload documents.

GoGold takes you through each of the Gold Award steps while offering new ways to examine the issue you want to work on and its root causes, plan your project, set goals, map a timeline, and add your team members.

The functionality built into GoGold is going to save you time, too. The system includes options for your troop leader to virtually sign off on your prerequisite and for your project advisor to verify your proposal is ready for your council's review process. (We will tell you more about the role of a project advisor in **Step 3**.)

Think of GoGold as an interactive, informative, and enormous filing cabinet up in the cloud—where every single Gold Award proposal and final report is proudly safeguarded and cataloged for all the Girl Scouts who are on this amazing journey.

Do This	Not This
Pull a team of volunteers together and put your leadership skills to work.	Do it all yourself with just a few or no volunteers.
Choose a project advisor who is an expert on your issue and willing to be involved.	Choose a parent or troop leader as an advisor.
Plan ahead and anticipate obstacles.	Wing it without a plan.
Break up your work into small, manageable bundles and assign each bundle a timeline.	Procrastinate or try to do it all at once.
Update your project advisor and council contact and ask questions when needed.	Keep project progress, obstacles, and details to yourself until you submit your final report.
Document everything as it occurs so that the information you collect is accurate and honest.	Make up a timeline after you've finished the project or put together several small projects.
Measure your project's outcome—you can always look to your council contact for guidance on collecting data, conducting surveys, and doing pre- and postevaluations.	Complete your project with no real way to measure the impact you've made.
Make sure your project includes the five Gold Award elements.	Submit your project proposal without addressing root cause or including a national and/or global link, sustainability, measurability, or leadership.
Include detailed goals in your project proposal that show your anticipated impact.	Skip goal setting.
Do research to make sure any organizations you plan to work with want to sustain your project.	Assume that organizations need your help.
Create a dynamic project with measurable impact on a community.	Create a static website as the focus of your project or hold a one-day workshop.
Be original—this is your chance to shine!	Copy what others have done.

What are the seven steps to the Gold Award?

- **Step 1: Choose an issue**
- **Step 2: Investigate**
- **Step 3: Get help**
- **Step 4: Create a plan**
- **Step 5: Present your plan**
- **Step 6: Take action**
- **Step 7: Educate and inspire**

Let's break it down with a description of each step and tips for success. You'll complete these steps using **GoGold**. When you're ready, **create a GoGold account and get started!**

If you need help during any step you can reach out to highestawards@gssem.org.

Step 1: Choose an issue

In this step, you'll answer questions that will help you reflect on your personal values, education, experience, and interests in order to find an issue you care about.

Use the interactive question tree in GoGold to answer a series of questions that will help you explore how to merge your passions and skills to take action. It's easy! Simply answer the questions and GoGold will do the rest, compiling your responses into project themes that may interest you.

The Gold Award Project is your project, not your mom's or your Girl Scout Leader's. You have complete ownership, you are the one doing the work and attaching your name.

You are more likely to be successful if you choose an issue about which you are passionate.

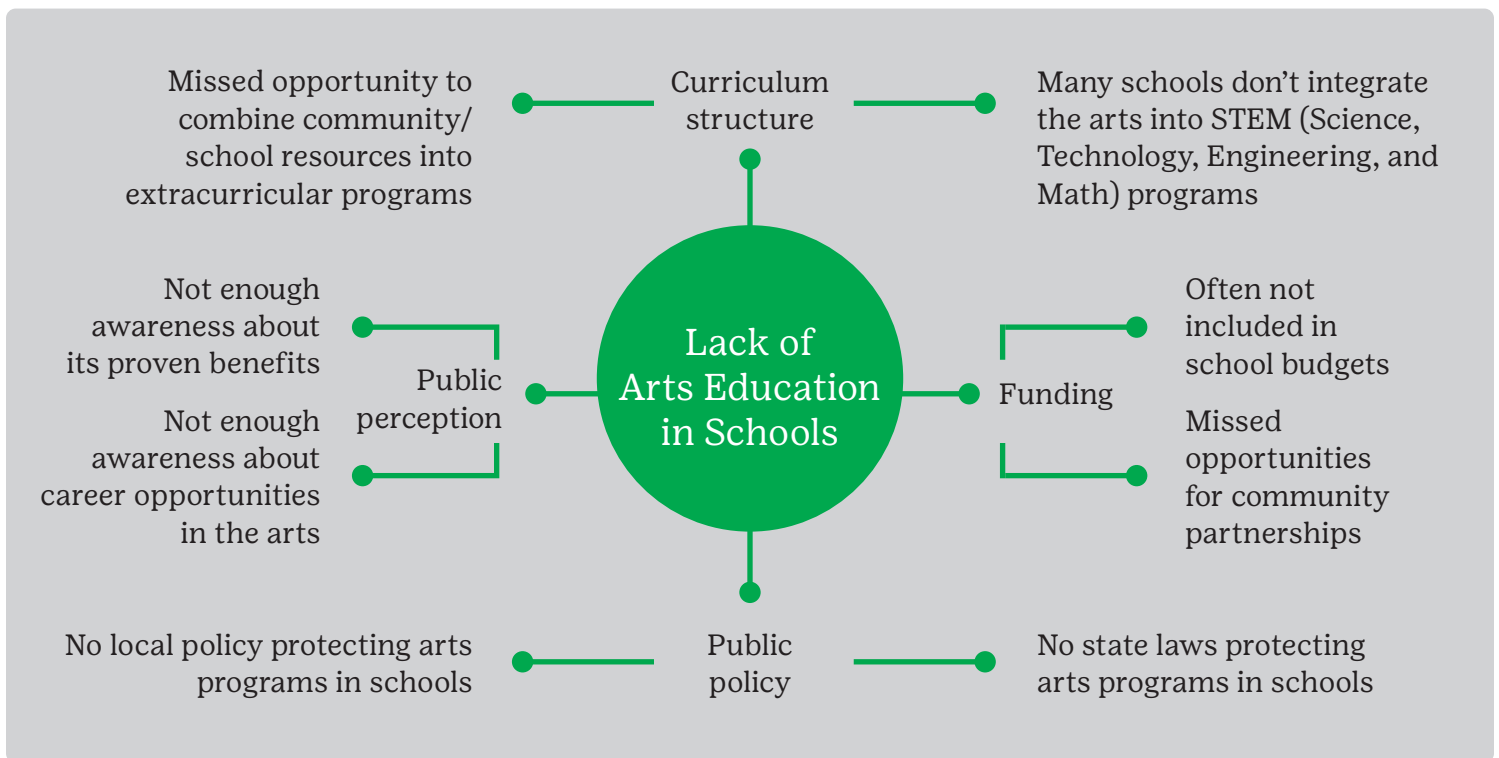
Why?	Who?	Where?	What?	How?
Why are you inspired? Do you care about poverty, women's rights, environmental sustainability, health and relationships, animals, human rights, veterans, sports, or something else?	Who do you want to help? The elderly, children, those less fortunate, nature, people with disabilities, or animals?	Where do you want to make an impact? Your school, neighborhood, city, state, country, or around the world?	What are your strengths and talents? Public speaking, math, community building, empathy, research, or people skills?	How do you want to make a difference? Will you change a law, lead workshops, start a club, develop curriculum, give presentations, teach a skill, or take action another way?

You can complete the quiz as many times as you want. And you'll leave the step with an issue or two you may want to explore further.

Step 2: Investigate

In Step 1, you identified a community issue or two that you're interested in exploring further. You'll need to trace back the issues to their root causes for your project and then connect with issue experts to plan your project. By addressing the root causes of your issue and involving your community in the solution, you'll be primed to make a sustainable impact.

Start by using a mind-mapping tool to explore the root causes of the issue you've chosen. Here's an example mind map:



Notice that the community issue “lack of arts education in schools” is placed in the center and that things that trigger it, like funding, public policy, public perception, and curriculum structure are explored further. When you explore further, you find **root causes**. In this example, the root causes are in the outer prongs. For example, the root causes of the public’s perception of lack of arts education in schools include not enough awareness about proven benefits and not enough awareness about career opportunities in the arts.

Once you’ve identified root causes, take your research further to make sure:

- You’ve identified a real need in the community.
- You can make your project idea happen—it’s realistic.
- You can learn about resources and develop a network beyond your friends and family to help you.

Get online. Check news and organizations’ sites related to your issue. Explore how the media in other countries cover your issue.

Get reading. Find books that offer in-depth analysis of your issue, read your local newspaper, and look for magazine articles that offer different perspectives.

Clarify the need:

- If your particular project is not implemented now, what will happen?
- Who else is working on these needs, locally, regionally, nationally or globally? What have they learned that is applicable to your project? What evidence do you have that your efforts do not unnecessarily duplicate those of others'?
- Is the need solvable? Can an answer be found and implemented? Can your project really address the needs you have identified?

SOMETHING TO

REMEMBER: Before you meet with new people, get safety tips from your troop/group volunteer and always make sure your family knows who you're talking to or meeting with—safety first!

Interview experts. Talk to friends, neighbors, teachers, business owners, community partners, and others who can offer information or insight about the issue you've chosen.

Need help identifying organizations or people who have knowledge of your issue or finding an expert to interview? Click the help icon next to the "Research" tab in GoGold for suggestions, including a community map, a short list of thought starters, and interview tips.

Step 3: Get help

In Step 3, you'll form a team of volunteers. Working together to put your plans into action allows you to flex your leadership muscle and make a bigger impact than you would on your own. Anyone can be on your team—you don't need to limit yourself to just people your age or those who are Girl Scouts. But do choose a diverse group of volunteers with different skill sets who will work to put your project into action and stick it out until you're done.

Here are some important members of your team:

Your project advisor is an adult you approach and invite to be on your team, who has some level of expertise in one or more areas of the issue your project addresses. Think of your project advisor as a professional consultant; they can guide you as you plan and implement your project. The project advisor does not design your project but does offer valuable insight, advice, and guidance.

Parents/guardians and troop volunteers cannot be project advisors. Sometimes adult siblings or family members such as aunts or uncles can be approved project advisors if they are experts on your issue. However, we strongly encourage you to reach outside your familiar circle and grow your network. The [Project Advisor Guide](#) will help your advisor understand their role and how they can support you.

Parents or guardians are amazing supporters! They can act as cheerleaders, sounding boards, and chauffeurs. They can also help you out with safety, transportation, and travel guidelines. The [Guide for Adults](#) lists helpful ways your parents or caregivers can help you; however, as we said above: parents/guardians cannot act as your project advisor.

Troop volunteers and individually registered member mentors can help make sure you've met Gold Award prerequisites and may also agree to be a part of your volunteer team. They can also review Gold Award funding, safety, and travel guidelines with you. The [Guide for Leaders](#) will get them started!

Friends and family may want to help you implement your plan. Troop sisters, relatives, friends, siblings, and cousins can all make terrific team members. Feel confident about giving them hands-on roles and delegating tasks to them, too!

Use Step 3 of GoGold to keep a list of your confirmed team members. You're required to work with at least one adult volunteer—your project advisor, so be sure to list them first. Then, **add at least three to five additional team members who are not your parent/guardian or troop volunteer**. From there, you can add as many others as you'd like!

Keep in mind that a good leader identifies specific team members with varied backgrounds and skill sets to assist with specific tasks associated with their project. While you may be inclined to primarily enlist your peers, adult support can help you form partnerships with organizations, access resources, and provide important safety measures (your council can help make sure you're covered). So, be ready to identify each volunteer's role and don't worry about missing someone—you can add more team members as you go along.

Gold Award Mentors are assigned by GSSEM staff to help guide you as you earn your Gold Award. They are an expert in the Gold Award process and will help you meet the Gold Award national guidelines. Before you submit your project proposal or final report they provide feedback and suggestions. If you have any questions or roadblocks they should be your first call for help. You will establish a communication schedule with your mentor and should stick to it. They are volunteers who are committed to the success of every Girl Scout they mentor so their time should be respected.

Inactive Status

If you go two months without contacting your mentor they will notify GSSEM staff. Staff will reach out to you, and if no response is received you will be moved to Inactive Status and your account on GoGold will be locked. If you want to return to your project and you will need to contact highestawards@gssem.org. Your mentor maybe reassigned during this time so you may have to wait for a new mentor assignment.

If you know you are going to need to take a break from your project for a bit, for example to be in the school play, if you let your mentor know and when they can expect to hear from you again, you will not be put on Inactive Status.

SOMETHING TO

REMEMBER: When you expand your circle, you expand your impact. You may feel a little bit uneasy to approach and invite those outside your network to join your team, but remember to use your proposal as your guide to explain your plans. Chances are—they will be impressed!

Step 4: Create a plan

In Step 4, you'll bring together the work and research you did in Steps 1–3 to show how you will achieve your project's purpose. You'll work out the specific details of your project proposal, including a project description, proposed budget and timeline, and your thoughts on how the project will impact you, your target audience, and your wider community. You'll also define your project's national and/or global link, set goals to measure your impact, and plan how you'll sustain your project (refer back to **Part 1** for a refresher).

Provide as much detail as you can so your council can evaluate your timeline and proposed scope of work. Ensure you've clearly articulated your ideas and plans, identified your team, set clear goals, and determined how your impact will be measured so it can be easily understood and evaluated. The people reviewing your proposal may not know you personally; be specific so your vision is clear to them.

Before you submit, be sure to upload any additional files your council requires and download a copy of your proposal to keep for your records. Then, get your troop leader/volunteer to verify that you completed your prerequisites and obtain project advisor support of your proposal before submitting it. You'll be able to use GoGold to send an email request for verification that they can complete online in just a few clicks.

Before you submit your first draft of your Project Proposal on GoGold, share it with your Gold Award Mentor to review it and provide you with feedback.

Once your Gold Award Mentor approves you and can submit your Project Proposal through GoGold.

If you share your project on any social media be sure to tag GSSEM to further your reach.

GSSEM Social Handles:

Instagram: @gssem

TikTok: @gssem_

Twitter (X): @gssem

Facebook: Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan-GSSEM

LinkedIn: Girl Scouts of Southeast

Funding Your Gold Award Project

Your Gold Award project may take little to no funds or it may require the need for more funding. This will depend on the scope and type of project you select and the issue you are addressing. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind and ways you can work towards securing the funding needed. Remember to always check and follow Safety Activity Check Points, Volunteer Essentials and the GSUSA Basic Blue Book of Documents.

Q. If I need funding, how should I begin?

A. Create a projected budget so you will know what you need. You can fund your Gold Award Projects by using troop funds to cover expenses. Money earned through our Product Program and troop/group money earning projects belongs to the whole troop. You will need permission from your troop to use any of these funds. Present your Gold Award project and your proposed budget to your troop and ask for their support. Let your troop decide if they will help fund your project. **You may not start earning money for your project, outside of council product sales, until you have received approval from the GSSEM Highest Awards Committee to begin implementing your project.**

Q. After participating in the most recent council product sales and I still need funding what do I do?

A. You can move on to money-earning activities with council approval, by submitting the Gold Award Money Earning Project Request Form found on page 22 of this packet.

Q. Can I run money-earning events for Girl Scouts to earn funds?

A. Yes, as long as all Money Earning Guidelines are followed, please refer to the Requirements for Events, Activities, Money Earning and Donations from the gssem.org website.

Examples:

Collections/Drives

- Raking leaves, shoveling walks, weeding gardens
- Pop bottle drives
- Collect & redeem recyclable materials (cell phones, used ink cartridges)
- Garage sale

Services

- Gift-wrapping for the holidays
- Babysitting at community meetings, school meetings, or other public places
- Car wash
- Birthday party service

Food/M meal Events

- Lunch box auction
- Themed meals

Be creative! You can earn money in many more ways!

Q. I am a Juliette, can I raise money for my Gold Award Project?

A. Yes. Juliettes may use the above methods to raise money for their Gold Award Project. Any money raised must be turned into council for management. To use the raised money, the guardian will need to contact council requesting reimbursement, including a receipt for the amount. An invoice to be paid to a company will also be accepted. Contact gssem-finance@gssem.org with questions.

Q. Can I solicit cash donations for my Gold Award Project?

A. According to the Blue Book of Basic Documents, Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors can solicit cash and in-kind donations for their Gold Award projects, as long as the donation is being used exclusively for your Gold Award project.

- For donations of \$250 or more, a Solicitation Approval Form is submitted prior to making the ask. The full donation is sent to Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan and funds are distributed the following ways: 1) Submit a request for a check to be made out to a specific vendor to cover expenses like to a printing company, etc. 2) Submit receipts for reimbursement. 3) Request up to \$50 as a cash advance. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan will send a tax receipt to the donor. You are encouraged to use all of the funds for your Gold Award Project and any remaining funds remain with the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan to benefit its members and volunteers. The solicitation form can be found in this packet.
- If the donation is \$249.99 or less you can accept the full donation. They will not receive a tax-deductible donation letter and the donation is not tax deductible. The same donor cannot repeat the donation in the same membership year.

Q. Can I hold a “walk-a-thon”?

A. Yes, as long as all funds raised from the event are dedicated to your approved Gold Award project. This means girls will have to launch and participate in their own walk-athons created for their own particular causes (their projects). Girl Scouts may not do walk-a-thons or solicit funds on behalf of another organization.

Q. Can I sell products to raise funds for my Gold Award Project?

A. Avoid selling or endorsing commercial products: “Commercial products” is any product sold at retail. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.

Q. Can I use my own money to fund my Gold Award Project?

A. You can use your own money. However, going for the Gold Award is not meant to be a burden on you or your family. It is more of a learning opportunity. So think about where you can get the materials you need without incurring expenses. Whom can you ask? Are there other ways to accomplish the goals of your Gold Award project without funds? If not, refer to the ways you can earn money.

Q. Can I use a crowdfunding website?

A. At this time, GSSEM does not allow crowd funding.

Q. Can I ask for In-Kind donations?

A. Yes, you can present the project and ask for supplies. The In-Kind Donation for should be used when receiving any In-Kind donations.

Q. Can I charge an event fee for my Gold Award Project?

A. No, a Gold Award project should never make money and needs to be open to attendees without any financial implications.

Q. Can I apply for a grant?

A. Yes, you can apply for a grant that is less than \$500 and all funds must be accounted for and spent on your Gold Award Project. You are responsible to fulfill the grant requirements and reporting. All funds must run through GSSEM and funds distributed in the following ways: 1) Submit a request for a check to be made out to a specific vendor to cover expenses like to a printing company, etc. 2) Submit receipts for reimbursement. 3) Request up to \$50 as a cash advance.

Q. Can I apply for a grant of more than \$500?

A. No, girls working on their Gold Award cannot request a grant of over \$500 in their name. However, you can work with an organization that you are collaborating with to secure a grant for your project. In this case, monies would be held by and accounted for by the collaborator you are working with.

Q. Are there inappropriate money-earning activities that I should avoid?

A. Games of chance, raffles, home demonstration parties and reselling of products: Avon, Mary Kay, Pampered Chef, etc are not allowed. Restaurant givebacks. Receiving a percentage of sales (where a portion of the sales is donated back) from a business during a specific time frame where those sales generate a profit for a specific company. Example: Applebee’s fundraisers are prohibited. No funds may be earned or raised for any other organization besides Girl Scouts.

Q. Do the money-earning hours count toward the 80 hour Gold Award Project?

A. GSSEM allows Girl Scouts to count up to 3 hours of money-earning toward their Gold Award project.

Q. Do the hours when a Girl Scout is presenting her project to get donations count?

A. Yes. She is educating her community about her project.

Q. What if I have money left over after completing my project?

A. Gold Award Projects are not allowed to earn a profit. If you have money left over after completing your project be prepared to return it to whoever donated it or find a way to expand your project and spend it. Your revenue in your final report should equal your expenses for the project.

Raising Money for Your Project

When raising money for your project, or asking for donations of goods, there are three forms you need.

Money-Earning Event Approval Form - Use this form if you are hosting an event to raise funds for your project and expect to make more than \$250. This form must be submitted before at least 21 days you host your event, and you must receive approval from GSSEM before continuing.

Solicitation and Sponsorship Approval Form - Use this form if you're asking businesses or organizations for donations of money or materials totaling \$250 or more, or if you are applying for a grant. This form must be submitted before you ask for donations, and you must receive approval from GSSEM before continuing.

In-Kind Donation Form - Use this form for individuals, organizations, or businesses that have given you any materials or supplies for your project. This form allows GSSEM's Fund Development department to send your benefactor a tax receipt and thank you note.

Money Earning Event Approval Form

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan

c/o Money Earning Project

1333 Brewery Park Blvd, Suite 500

Detroit, MI 48207

Email: highestawards@gssem.org Fax: 313-870-2600 Phone: 800-482-6734

Please submit **at least 21 days**

prior to planned start date.

Keep a copy for your records.

Project Information

District: _____ Troop/Group # _____

Grade(s): Grade 9 Grade 10 Grade 11 Grade 12

Leader's Name: _____ Girl Scout's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ Cell: () _____

Email: _____

Explain the type of money earning project you are requesting permission to undertake and how you plan to spend the proceeds: (explain on reverse if more room is needed. BE SPECIFIC!)

I expect to earn \$: _____

Location & Time

Date(s) and time (s) of proposed money-earning activity: _____

Site(s) of project: _____

Have you secured permission from the proper site authorities to do your project?

☐ YES: List contact name, position, contact info

☐ NO (Please explain, use reverse if needed)

Money Earning History

I have had _____ other money-earning projects this year. Current balance in troop bank account \$ _____

I participated in the Fall Product Program as of _____ and earned \$ _____ profit.

Date

I participated in the cookie sale as of _____ and earned \$ _____ profit.

Date

☐ I've read & understand the Money Earning Project Standards. **Gold Award Mentor Signature** _____ **Date** _____

Girl Signature _____ **Date** _____

GSSEM Approval (For internal use only)

☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved

GSSEM Representative X _____ **Date** _____



Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan

Solicitation & Sponsorship Approval

Purpose of this Form

1. To ensure that donors and business sponsors are not receiving duplicate requests for large sums from Girl Scouts, and
2. To trigger a proper tax-deduction verification letter for the donor/sponsor.

Additional information about donations or sponsorships is found in "Managing Group Finances" in the Volunteer Essentials policy manual to be found on the www.gssem.org website.

Donations and Sponsorships

Organizations, businesses, and individuals may provide monetary and/or nonmonetary support for a troop, group, or individual girl pursuing her Highest Award. It's a good idea to recognize the support of donors and sponsors by having the girls send thank you notes, or inviting the donor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a Take Action project. Donations of \$250 or more require prior approval.

Process for donations or sponsorships valued at \$250 or more:

- Complete one form for each donor/sponsor prior to seeking their support. Remember, girls may not solicit cash.
- Allow 14-21 days for an approval to be issued from the Fund Development Department.
- For approved donations, checks must be written to **Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan** to be tax-deductible.
- Upon approval, a tax-deduction verification letter will be sent to the donor (only for donations of \$250 or more) and the Finance Department will reimburse the troop/group through a check sent to the address listed below.
- Troops may not issue any tax-deduction verification letters because they are not independent nonprofit organizations.

Troop/Group/Individual Seeking Approval to Seek/Accept a Donation or Sponsorship

Today's Date: _____ Troop #: _____ District / Community #: _____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Alternative Phone: _____

Purpose of the Donation or Sponsorship

How will this donation or sponsorship benefit your project? _____

Donor or Organization Making the Donation

Name of Donor or Organization: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Alternative Phone: _____

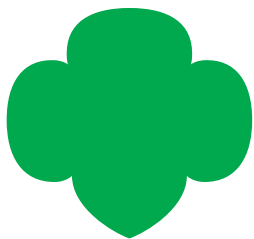
Description of Donation or Sponsorship

Type of Donation	Amount or Description of Donation/Sponsorship	OFFICE USE ONLY: APPROVED	
		YES	NO
Monetary Donation			
Goods or Services			
Meeting Space			
Equipment			

Submit this Form

- By mail: GSSEM Fund Development, 1333 Brewery Park Blvd, Suite 500, Detroit MI 48207
- By Fax: (313) 309-1193
- Scan forms and documents and email to moneyearning@gssem.org

OFFICE USE ONLY	
☐ Solicitation has been approved	
☐ Solicitation has not been approved. Explain;	
☐ Volunteer has been notified by who (specify): _____	How: _____ Date: _____



Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan

In-Kind Donation Form

Please print

Donor/Company/Name _____

Contact Person _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Email _____

Social Media _____

Item Donated _____ Value \$ _____

Item Description _____

The Donation: ☐ Has been delivered to _____ on _____

☐ Available for pick-up

I/we would like our tax receipt ☐ mailed ☐ emailed

Donor Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you for this donation and your commitment to help empower girls through leadership. Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan is a 510(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Tax ID number 38-1598947. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Please return form by email or mail to our address:

Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan
ATTN: Fund Development Department
1333 Brewery Park Blvd.
Suite 500
Detroit, MI 48207
development@gssem.org

Step 5: Present your plan

You will know when your proposal is ready to submit to the GSSEM Highest Awards Committee for review and approval when you can confidently check all the boxes below:

- ☐ You've met the prerequisites (see "How do I know I'm ready?")
- ☐ You've created a unique project
- ☐ You've chosen an expert project advisor (Step 3: Get Help)
- ☐ You've engaged a team of volunteers who will take action with you
- ☐ You've addressed the root cause of an issue
- ☐ You've tackled your target audience's needs
- ☐ You've set clear goals. You can say, "Here is the change I plan to make, and here's how I'll know I've made it."
- ☐ You've designed a sustainable project
- ☐ You've identified a national and/or global link
- ☐ You've developed a realistic budget and identified the resources you need to carry out the project
- ☐ Your project will take at least 80 hours to complete
- ☐ You have the skills to get started
- ☐ You've created a plan to inspire others about your project and its impact

The Highest Awards Committee will review your proposal and let your mentor know their decision.

There are four possible responses you might receive from the committee regarding the approval status:

- ☐ Proceed as written
- ☐ Proceed with these recommendations
- ☐ Resubmit your Project Proposal Plan with specified changes
- ☐ As written your Project Proposal Plan does not meet the criteria of the award and has been denied, you may not proceed. Please submit a new Project Proposal Plan

Step 6: Take action

Once your proposal is approved, it's go time! Lead your team to carry out your plan. Log your hours and track your income and expenses as you put your proposal into action. Use the Experience Log to upload photos, videos, and/or text posts showing your project in action. These posts will be shared with your council when you submit your final report in Step 7.

Make sure to check in with your Gold Award Mentor regularly following your mentorship agreement, or if you have any questions while you are taking action!

Check the "Summary" tab in Step 6 of GoGold for an overview at any time.

Step 7: Educate and inspire

By Step 7, you're in the home stretch and completing your final report. It's time to tell your story—to tell others what you did, what you learned, and the impact your project had on your target audience. This is your chance to shine, so be sure to fully reflect on each question and provide thoughtful, detailed answers.

As you're working on your final report, make sure you include documentation of the work you did.

The Highest Awards Committee expects to read and to see the work completed through pictures, metrics, copies of your survey and results, counts of anything you said you would measure etc. This includes live links to websites, videos, social media accounts, or QR codes you created for your project.

The job of the Highest Awards Committee is to verify your work, ensuring it meets the national standard. Without these materials being included in your final report it is considered incomplete and you will not receive approval to earn the Gold Award.

Upload any files including your Community Partner Letter of Support or Letter of Sustainability and download a copy of your final report for your records. You'll obtain project advisor verification for the great work you completed and then share your final report with your Gold Award mentor for their review and approval.

Once your Gold Award Mentor approves your Final Report, submit it online to the Highest Awards Committee through GoGold. If you partnered with a local organization for your project, a letter of support **MUST** be included with your final report before it can be approved. Not sure what this means? Check out the letter of support guidelines for more information. GSSEM staff will reach out to schedule your exit interview with the Highest Awards Committee. This interview is the final step for approval of earning your Gold Award.

What to bring to the interview:

- PowerPoint or similar presentation

When your final report is approved, you're officially a Gold Award Girl Scout.

Celebrate and be sure to thank your project advisor, your team, and all the other people who helped you along the way!

All girls have until September 30 of their final Ambassador year to submit their final report. Reports must be submitted by March 1st to attend that membership year's honor reception. The honors reception is held in the spring each year and formal invitations will be mailed to you in advance. If you submit your report after March 1st, you will be honored at the next memberships year's honor reception.

12th Grade Gold Award Timeline

Thinking about starting your Gold Award during your 12th grade year? That's not too late!

Twelfth-grade graduating seniors (Ambassador-level Girl Scouts) seeking to earn their Gold Award must submit their Gold Award Proposal, at the latest, by January 31st of their graduation year. **No exceptions will be made for late submissions.**

- The committee will approve or reject the proposal based
 - Proposal is submitted to GSSEM on the Go Gold website
 - Proposal completeness -Meeting the Gold Award standard for the majority of categories on the Gold Award Project Proposal Rubric
 - Both Troop Leader and Project Advisor signatures are on the proposal by January 31st of the Girl Scout's twelfth-grade year
 - A project timeline that reflects the following deadlines (required to be followed while implementing the project):
 - June 1st deadline for any aspect of a project taking place in a school setting
 - August 1st deadline for implementing a project
 - September 1st deadline of submitting first draft of Gold Award Final Report to assigned GSSEM mentor
- You can find a visual representation of this timeline [here](#).

The Highest Awards Committee reserves the right to request an interview with a twelfth-grade graduating senior (Ambassador-level Girl Scout) for more clarification on a proposal or to provide feedback. After interviewing, there may be deadlines for revisions. It is important to follow these deadlines to continue in the Gold Award process. Graduating Girl Scout Ambassadors have until January 31st of the year they graduate to submit a Project Proposal. No exceptions will be made for late submissions.

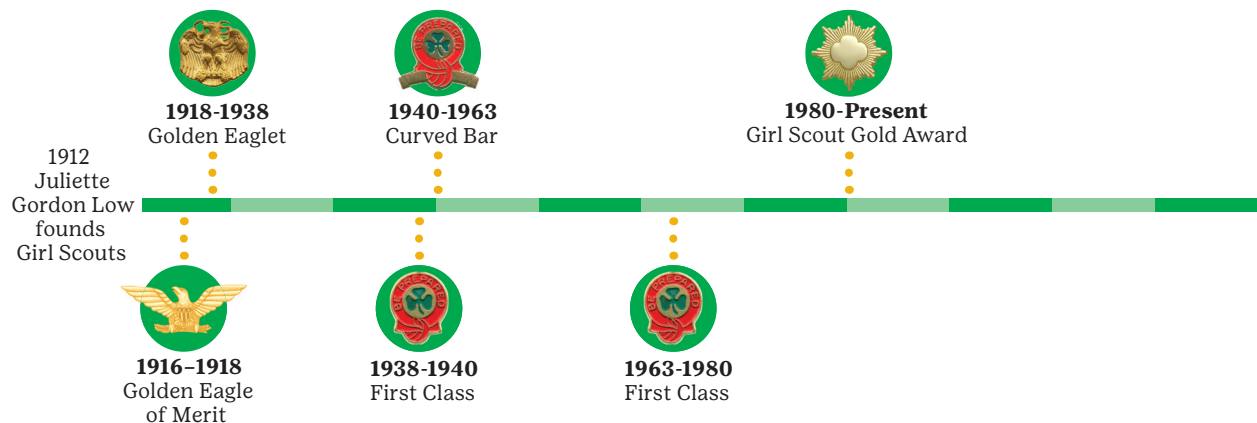
Congratulations—you're a Gold Award Girl Scout!

You've earned the Gold Award, the most highly regarded award in the world for girls. It's the mark of the truly remarkable. Becoming a Gold Award Girl Scout marks an important milestone in your Girl Scout career. The same vision, commitment, and leadership that brought you through the Gold Award process will now carry you to new heights. This will distinguish you on scholarship applications, college admission essays, and on your résumé—forever. What you have earned will set you apart, in all the best possible ways!

In addition to accomplishing this challenging personal goal, you can now join an esteemed group of Girl Scouts who share this distinction.

From its beginning in 1916, the greatest achievement in Girl Scouting has been a symbol of excellence and leadership that recognizes the extraordinary efforts of extraordinary girls. While the Gold Award has gone by many names, now all Girl Scouts who earned the First Class, Curved Bar, Golden Eaglet, or Golden Eagle of Merit are part of the Gold Award Girl Scout Family (see GSUSA's proclamation). Its timelessness has inspired generations of young women to find greatness inside themselves and share their ideas and passions with their communities and the world. Congratulations on joining this network of talented and inspirational women!

You've Joined History—Welcome to the Gold Award Girl Scout Family!



Share your accomplishment with the world!

How many other teenagers can say they led a team that tackled an issue in their community to create lasting change? We know you can say it! You stand out in a crowd—own it!

Now that you're a Gold Award Girl Scout, it's time to leverage your accomplishment and share your passion:

- **Capture the skills you gained.** Remember all the things you learned while earning the Gold Award. Things like project management, team building, public speaking, and resource development are real-life skills that need to be highlighted. Make sure you add your new skills and competencies to your future applications and résumés.

- **Apply for scholarships.** When applying for scholarships (and you should be!), you'll want your Gold Award to be a highlight. The work that goes into earning it will show you as a well-rounded, community-minded, forward-focused can-doer! Be sure to review these specific [scholarships](#) designed *just* for Gold Award Girl Scouts.
- **Expand your network.** Think of all the people you met and engaged with while working towards the Gold Award. Keep all those contacts and add them to your professional social media accounts, like LinkedIn, whenever possible. Those individuals will be proud to be connected to you, and the Girl Scout Gold Award, forever.
- Get paid more. If you join the military, you can enlist at a higher pay grade.
- Get the job. Highlight your Gold Award on your résumé—as well as all of the skills you gained while earning it. Don't underestimate the power of a Girl Scout alum, or sister Gold Award Girl Scout, receiving your résumé or application!

Résumé Tips:

Describe what the Gold Award means for anyone who may not be familiar with it (ideally one sentence or less). For example:

- Earned the Girl Scout Gold Award by planning and executing an 80-hour service-learning project and managing a team of volunteers and community partners

Quantify, quantify, quantify! Include measurable outcomes from your project to tell about your leadership experience and impact. Instead of saying:

- Developed a robotics program for girls

Try something more powerful, like:

- Created a robotics curriculum that reached 80 girls—90% of whom reported an increased interest in STEM careers
- Partnered with two school districts to add the curriculum to 10 school clubs
- Implemented a social media strategy to educate girls on STEM opportunities, achieving more than 5,000 impressions in total

List skills that you developed in pursuing your Gold Award. Shine a light on transferable skills like project management, communication, strategic planning, research, budget oversight, fundraising, team building, and social media marketing.

Elevate your online story. If you created a website as part of your Gold Award, consider adding a link. You can use a free URL shortener to make the link memorable.

Our resource roundup for Girl Scouts

Here you'll find a roundup of internet resources that will help you become a Gold Award Girl Scout. We recommend referencing this list as you work on your project, then again once you're officially a Gold Award Girl Scout.

Building a Team and Network

The Gold Award Guide for Project Advisors

The Gold Award Guide for Adults

Designing and Carrying Out a Project: Gold Award Girl Scouts Share their Wisdom on YouTube

Go for the Gold—Tips from Gold Award Girl Scouts

Ready To Get Started?

Create a GoGold Account

FAQs (GoGold Account Required)

You're a Gold Award Girl Scout! What's Next?

Search the Scholarship Database for Opportunities for Gold Award Girl Scouts

Share your Project on the Girls Changing the World Map

Get your Gold Award Credential