

Volunteer Essentials 2012–2013

Section five: Managing group finances

Helping girls earn and manage money is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Your Girl Scout group is responsible for planning and financing its own activities with your guidance. This puts girls in charge, giving them the opportunity to cooperatively set goals, manage a budget, spend responsibly, maintain records, learn social skills and develop good marketing, entrepreneurial, math and financial skills.

Girl Scout groups are funded by a share of money earned through the River Valleys Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity and Fall Product Program, approved group money-earning activities and any dues your group may charge (this is in addition to the \$12 annual membership dues that go to the national organization). This section gives you the ins and outs of establishing a group account, helping girls manage their finances, practice successful sales techniques, review the safety requirements around product sales and understand how to collaborate with sponsors and causes.

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Establishing an account

If your group is earning and spending money, you need to set up a bank account. If you're taking over an existing group, you may inherit a checking account. This usually happens when there is money to deposit, such as from group dues, product sales or group money-earning activities. Consider these tips when working with a group account:

- Keep group funds in the bank before an activity or trip and pay for as many items as possible in advance of your departure.
- Use debit cards during the activity or trip.
- Make one person responsible for group funds and for keeping a daily account of expenditures.
- Have one or more back-up people also carry debit cards in case the main card is lost.

Follow River Valleys' financial policies and procedures for setting up an account. Information will be provided in the Fast Start Meeting for new leaders and a Troop Finance Packet is available at GirlScoutsRV.org.

Closing a bank account

If a troop disbands, the girls are encouraged to use existing money for activities prior to disbanding. If funds are left, the money is to be turned over to River Valleys. Money is not to be given to individual girls or adults. Disbanded troops are required to submit a completed Troop Finance Report (and Troop Disband Form), along with remaining funds, if any, to the council.

Helping girls reach their financial goals

One of your opportunities as a volunteer is to facilitate girl-led financial planning, which may include the following steps:

1. **Set goals for money-earning activities.** What do girls hope to accomplish through this activity? In addition to earning money, what skills do they hope to build? What leadership opportunities will be presented?
2. **Create a budget.** Use a budget worksheet that includes both expenses (the cost of supplies, admission to events, travel, etc.) and available income (the group's account balance, projected cookie proceeds, etc.).
3. **Determine how much the group needs to earn.** Subtract expenses from available income to determine how much money your group needs to earn.
4. **Make a plan.** The group can brainstorm and make decisions about its financial plans. Will participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity and Fall Product Program—if approached proactively and energetically—earn enough money to meet the group's goals? If not, which group money-earning activities might offset the difference in anticipated expense and anticipated income? Will more than one group money-earning activity be necessary to achieve the group's financial goals? In this planning stage, engage the girls through the Girl Scout processes—girl-led, learning by doing and cooperative learning—and consider the value of any potential activity. Have them weigh feasibility, implementation and safety factors.
5. **Write it out.** Once the group has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a group money-earning activity, fill out a Troop Money-Earning Project Approval form (available at GirlScoutsRV.org) and submit it along with the budget worksheet your girls created.

Remember: It's great for girls to have opportunities to earn funds that help fulfill their goals as part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. As a volunteer, try to help girls balance money-earning with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money.

Money-earning basics

Girls earn money in two distinct ways:

- Council-sponsored product program activities are council-wide sales of Girl Scout authorized products—such as Girl Scout Cookies, magazines and nut/chocolate items—in which members participate as part of the Girl Scout program.

- Group money-earning refers to activities organized by the group (not by River Valleys) that are planned and carried out by girls (in partnership with adults) and that earn money for the group. These activities must be approved by River Valleys in writing utilizing the Troop Money-Earning Project Approval form located at GirlScoutsRV.org.

Girls' participation in both council-sponsored product program activities and group money-earning projects is based on the following:

- Voluntary participation
- Written permission of each girl's parent/guardian
- An understanding of (and ability to explain clearly to others) why the money is needed
- An understanding that money earning should not exceed what the group needs to support its activities
- Observance of local ordinances related to involvement of children in money-earning activities as well as health and safety laws
- Vigilance in protecting the personal safety of each girl
- Arrangements for safeguarding the money

Money-earning project guidelines

To ensure the safety of girls and protect River Valleys' nonprofit and GSUSA charter status, groups must adhere to the following policies when implementing money-earning projects. The policies have four main guidelines: River Valleys' policies, safety, girl-led activities and non-endorsement of a specific business/organization.

River Valleys' policies

River Valleys offers two council-approved product program activities—the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity and the Fall Product Program. These programs feature supporting materials, volunteer training, an established calendar and program materials to help girls/troops develop five essential skills—goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills and business ethics. From there, your group may decide to earn additional funds on its own, if the need is warranted.

- Obtain written approval from River Valleys before a group money-earning event and submit a Troop Money-Earning Project Approval form.
- Funds acquired through group money-earning projects must be reported and accounted for by the group in accordance with River Valleys' procedures.
- Money raised is for Girl Scout activities and is not to be retained by individuals. Girls can, however, be awarded incentives and/or may earn credits from their Girl Scout product sales.
- Girl Scouts forbids use of games of chance, the direct solicitation of cash and product-demonstration parties.
- Troop money-earning projects cannot take place during the entire Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity, the order-taking period of the Fall Product Program or in conjunction with your service unit's Family Giving Campaign.

Overall safety

- Troop money-earning projects, except the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity, must not be conducted on a door-to-door basis.

- Girls implementing babysitting projects must sign a council contract to follow guidelines surrounding child safety. You can download Babysitting Guidelines at GirlScoutsRV.org.
- Girls can *market* cookies and other products by sending emails to friends, family members and former customers, as long as they use a group email address, the address of a parent/guardian or adult volunteer, a blind email address (in which the recipients cannot see the sender's email address), or the online email tools provided by cookie vendors. Girls **13 years and older** can also use a parent's/guardian's or adult volunteer's social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn) to do the same.
- Sales may not be *transacted* on the Internet (for example, through a site that has an electronic shopping cart) except for magazine sales. Girls can, however, receive order commitments for cookie sales via email or the Internet.
- Money-earning projects that involve the participation of non-Girl Scout members may require purchasing non-member event insurance through River Valleys.
- For any money-earning project involving the sale of food, a troop must contact one or more of the following agencies for information on appropriate licensing:
 - **Minnesota Department of Health:** www.health.state.mn.us 651-201-5000 (food stand/community dinner)
 - **Minnesota Department of Agriculture:** 651-201-6622 (bake sales)
 - **Iowa Department of Public Health:** www.idph.state.ia.us (food stand/community dinner)
 - **Wisconsin Department of Health Services:** www.dhs.wisconsin.gov (food stand/community dinner)

Girl-led and age-appropriate activities

- Group money-earning activities must be girl-led, suited to the age and abilities of the girls and consistent with the principles of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.
- Girl Scout Daisies (kindergarten and first grade) may be involved in council-sponsored product program activities, but they cannot raise or collect money in any other way except through group dues or parental contributions.
- Service units cannot host or conduct money-earning projects (**other than River Valleys' annual Family Giving Campaign**) but can assist troops in developing and implementing the projects (proceeds must go back to troops).

Non-endorsement

- Advertising or promoting for money-earning projects must not link the name "Girl Scouts" to another organization or product in any way that implies endorsement. When working with supporting organizations, you may use language such as, "Come to a spaghetti dinner to support Girl Scout Troop 98765 hosted at the American Legion."
- Troops may not receive a percentage of sales for any money-earning project. Troops must receive 100 percent of profits and this includes funds raised at community dinners and concession stands. Partnerships with restaurants such as Culver's and Applebee's are not approved money-earning activities.
- Troops may not take orders for or sell a commercial product of any kind. This includes selling tickets for businesses, prepackaged fundraisers, taste testing, test driving, coupon booklets (e.g., Herberger's, Panera Bread), home product demonstration parties (e.g., Avon, Tupperware) or selling any commercially branded items. Girls are allowed to sell wholesale/non-branded items (e.g., holiday wreaths) and must be responsible for the purchase, ordering and delivery of the items they are selling.

- Troops cannot raise money on behalf of or for another organization or charity. However, girls may donate a portion of the proceeds they earn to a charity of their choice.
- Charging a fee to show a copyrighted movie is not an approved money-earning project.
- A business or organization may not advertise a troop's money-earning project and paid advertising is prohibited. A troop can advertise its project with signs, word of mouth or flyers.

Money-earning for troop trips

If girls and troops are participating in money-earning activities for a Girl Scout trip, the troop must submit the Girl Scout Trip Request to Plan form to the Brooklyn Center Service Center and submit the Troop Money-Earning Project Approval form to the Rochester Service Center. Once the request to plan your troop trip has been approved, the Troop Money-Earning Project Approval form will be processed.

Money-earning and the Internet

Before conducting any marketing on the Internet, girls must complete the online safety pledge. To download the pledge, visit: http://www.girlscouts.org/help/internet_safety_pledge.asp

Girls can market cookies and other products by sending emails to friends, family members and former customers, as long as they use a group email address, the address of a parent/guardian or adult volunteer, a blind email address (in which the recipients cannot see the sender's email address), or the online email tools provided by cookie vendors. Girls **13 years and older** can also use a parent's/guardian's or adult volunteer's social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn) to do the same.

Actual sales may not be transacted on the Internet.

Additional group money-earning

Most program and activity plans within Girl Scouting should, and can be, supported through troop participation in the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity, Fall Product Program and troop dues (troop dues are typically a first-year income source). If the budget goal for a specific program or activity plan has not been met, girls are allowed to participate in money-earning projects. All projects \$100 or more require the submission of a Troop Money-Earning Project Approval form for River Valleys' approval prior to beginning the money-earning project. You may find the Troop Money-Earning Project Approval form at GirlScoutsRV.org.

Troop money-earning projects should be planned and implemented by girls in partnership with volunteers/parents/guardians. Planning and participating in money-earning projects should be carried out to maximize girls' skill development in areas such as goal setting, budgeting, good business practices, customer service and customer relations.

Building upon the following list of ideas, facilitate a group brainstorming session to determine how your group will earn money.

Troop money-earning project ideas:

- Calendar sale
- Garage sale
- Childcare at special events (with an adult who is certified in first aid and CPR)
- Recycling drive (e.g., cans, paper or ink cartridges)

- Themed car wash
- Talent show
- Troop cookbook
- Craft sale (jewelry, artwork, scarves, cards, bookmarks, candles or other homemade goods)
- Handmade bird feeder or bird house sale
- Wreath, flower, plant or tree sale (items must be wholesale/non-branded)
- Sock hop or dance in the community (for the general public)
- Raking lawns/shoveling sidewalks
- Dog-walking service
- Holiday photos
- Haunted house
- Bagging groceries or gift wrapping for donations (cannot replace a paid employee's regular position)
- Tutoring
- Refereeing sporting events
- Clown activities or face painting at community or school events
- Organizing a fall or international festival (accept donations or charge a small fee)
- Community dinner or breakfast (must have appropriate food license and follow promotion guidelines)
- Concession stand (must have appropriate food license and receive 100 percent of the profits)
- Facilitate badge/patch workshops for younger troops
- Cookie or cocoa mix in a jar

Collaborating with sponsors and other organizations

Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations and individuals may be sponsors and may provide group meeting places, volunteer their time, provide activity materials or loan equipment. The sponsor's contribution can then be recognized by arranging for the girls to send thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony or working with the sponsor on a Take-Action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult River Valleys fund development staff, who will give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting responsibility and any council policies or practices that must be followed. River Valleys already has relationships with some organizations and may know of reasons *not* to collaborate with certain other organizations.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

- **Avoid fundraising for other organizations.** Girl Scouts are not allowed, when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts (such as wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, etc.), to solicit money on behalf of another organization. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. You and your group can, however, support another organization through take-action projects or by making a donation from your group's account. As *individuals*, Girl Scouts are free to participate in whatever events they choose, as long as they do not wear anything that officially identifies them as Girl Scouts.
- **Steer clear of political fundraisers.** When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your group may not participate (directly or indirectly) in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate

for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor are participating in a political rally, circulating a petition or carrying a political banner.

- **Be respectful when collaborating with religious organizations.** Girl Scout groups must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.
- **Avoid selling or endorsing commercial products.** Commercial products are any product sold at retail. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for or sell such products.

Solicitation

Service units and troops may solicit financial donations for the council-sponsored annual Family Giving Campaign. Service units and troops may accept unsolicited donations from community and civic organizations. Donations of \$250 or more must be receipted at a council service center. Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys is a charitable/public non-profit organization granted a 501(c) (3) status by the IRS. To protect this tax status and to ensure a donor's gift is tax-deductible, you must adhere to the following rules. Questions regarding solicitation may be directed to the council's fund development department.

Unsolicited gifts of \$250 and above

Donations of \$250 and above must be receipted at a council service center. All original checks of \$250 and above and any written documentation from the donor should be sent directly to a council service center by the donor. Identify if the donation is directed to the council for programs and services or restricted to a specific purpose. This is based on the IRS ruling that gifts must be acknowledged with an official letter from the council staff that states the donor did not receive any goods or services for their contribution. For gifts restricted for service unit, troop, or other use, the donor must include a description for which the funds were provided.

If the council receives a restricted gift, the council staff is legally bound to honor the donor's request; council staff will reissue the same dollar amount donated to the service unit or troop to be deposited in the service unit or troop bank account. Checks will be deposited into River Valleys' account and reissued to the service unit or troop to be used for the described purpose. The check will be made out to the service unit or troop. Include the service unit name or troop number with the name and address of the volunteer who should receive the check.

Unsolicited gifts of less than \$250

As of 2008, all gifts require an official acknowledgment letter from council staff. Because providing acknowledgement letters for all small donations is not practical, River Valleys will continue to acknowledge gifts of \$250 and above. In some instances, some donors will want verification of their contribution for tax records. This verification may only be given by council staff. Therefore, if an acknowledgment letter is requested, you will need to follow the same procedures as outlined above regarding gifts of \$250 and above. Also, donors may use canceled checks to verify donations.

Soliciting to corporations

GSUSA and River Valleys do not permit service units or troops to contact corporations or foundations because they are solicited by council staff for council-wide program support. Troops may contact individually owned local businesses, such as hardware or gift shops, to get in-kind donations, such as art supplies, snack items, books, or other troop supplies, within the scope of

sponsorship. Troops should not contact corporations (or their local branches) such as Target, Michaels, Wal-Mart, Rainbow Foods, Cub, Malt-O-Meal, etc.

Soliciting for money

A gift freely offered to a service unit or troop is quite different from a gift that is solicited. Troop adults can solicit contributions for their troop within the scope of sponsorship (detailed on page 26); troop adults interested in soliciting contributions need council approval from the fund development department prior to solicitation. At no time are girls allowed to be involved in direct solicitation for cash.

Girls may not raise money for other organizations as representatives of Girl Scouts. Girl Scouts are encouraged to help other organizations with service projects. *Safety-Wise* states: "Girl Scouts, in their Girl Scout capacities, may not raise or solicit money for other organizations or participate in walkathons or telethons or similar activities that raise funds for other organizations. However, girls may contribute a portion of their troop treasury to organizations or projects they consider worthwhile." Girl members are also allowed to do supply drives among neighbors and within faith communities and schools.

If you have any questions about solicitation, please contact the fund development department at 800-845-0787.

Troop sponsorship

Troop sponsorship is a partnership between a Girl Scout troop and a community organization or business, working together to promote the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. Troop sponsorship is a way to strengthen relationships between Girl Scouts and the community. Sponsorship is a voluntary association (on behalf of a troop) between the council and a community organization or business whose aims and objectives are compatible with Girl Scouting.

Troop sponsorship step-by-step

- Each troop is encouraged to locate a sponsor. Possible sponsors may include: service or social clubs; places of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques, or temples); recreation or community centers; civic clubs or men's/women's groups; neighborhood businesses; schools or educational groups; and other organizations whose aims for youth are compatible with those of Girl Scouting.
- A troop can only have one sponsor but an organization can sponsor more than one troop.
- Formalizing a sponsorship includes signing an agreement, accounting for any donations, offering service, and acknowledging the sponsor.
- Official sponsors are those who have a signed sponsorship agreement on file with the council's development department. Sponsorship Agreement forms are available through the council service centers or on the website.
- Soliciting sponsorships without council staff approval may jeopardize the council's not-for-profit and/or tax status. Please be sure to inform the council's fund development department before contacting an organization for sponsorship.

A troop sponsor can enhance troop experiences by:

- Providing a space for meetings or special events.
- Suggesting potential volunteers for support of the troop.

- Serving as a source for program opportunities, craft supplies, and troop materials.
- Providing career exploration opportunities for girls.
- Securing community support and resources.
- Working with the troop on community service projects.
- Providing troop adult-solicited “start-up funds” for troops, limited to \$100 and within the scope of solicitation; troop must have a signed sponsorship agreement on file before soliciting money.
- Providing gifts in-kind for specific troop program activity uses, within the scope of solicitation; troop must have a signed sponsorship agreement on file before soliciting gifts in-kind.
- As a general rule, troops should seek sponsors within their own service unit geographic area. They should approach smaller, local businesses. Troops should not ask large or mid-sized business or organizations to be sponsors or to donate products, tickets, etc.
- Please contact the council’s fund development department with any questions regarding sponsorships before you proceed.

Financial and sales abilities by grade level

As within other activities, girls progress in their financial and sales abilities as they get older. This section gives you some examples of the abilities of girls at each grade level.

Girl Scout Daisies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records and does all group budgeting.

Parents/guardians may decide if they will contribute to the cost of activities.

Girls can participate in Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales.

Girl Scout Daisies are always paired with an adult when selling anything. Girls do the asking and deliver the product, but adults handle the money and keep the girls secure.

Girl Scout Brownies

The group volunteer handles money, keeps financial records and shares some of the group-budgeting responsibilities.

Girls discuss the cost of activities (supplies, fees, transportation, rentals, and so on).

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls may decide to pay dues.

Girl Scout Juniors

The group volunteer retains overall responsibility for long-term budgeting and record keeping, but shares or delegates all other financial responsibilities.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls decide on group dues, if any. Dues are collected by girls and recorded by a group treasurer (selected by the girls).

Girls budget for the short-term needs of the group, on the basis of plans and income from the group dues.

Girls budget for more long-term activities, such as overnight trips, group camping and special events.

Girls budget for take-action projects, including the Girl Scout Bronze Award, if they are pursuing it.

Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors

Girls estimate costs based on plans.

Girls determine the amount of group dues (if any) and the scope of money-earning projects.

Girls set goals for and participate in council-sponsored product sales.

Girls carry out budgeting, planning and group money-earning projects.

Girls budget for extended travel, take-action projects and leadership projects.

Girls may be involved in seeking donations for take-action projects with council approval.

Girls keep their own financial records and give reports to parents and group volunteers.

Girls budget for take-action projects, including the Girl Scout Silver or Gold Awards if they are pursuing them.

One critical task for each group, no matter what their grade level, is to keep excellent records and establish a clear accounting system for all money earned and spent. As the group's volunteer, you're in charge of making sure that money is spent wisely, that excellent records are maintained (keeping copies of all receipts in a binder or folder), and that tracking of all income is complete. With older girls, your job is to oversee their work as *they* learn to keep impeccable records.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity

Did you know that the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity is the largest girl-led business in the country, with sales of over \$700 million per year for girls and their communities nationwide? That's right. The Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity is the leading entrepreneurial program for girls: No university has produced as many female business owners as the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity.

If you have a moment, watch the latest Girl Scout [What Can a Cookie Do?](#) video for an inspiring look into just how powerful those treats—and the girls who sell them—can be.

Girl Scout Cookies and other council-sponsored products are an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. With every season of cookies, another generation of girls learn five important skills:

- Goal setting
- Decision making
- Money management
- People skills
- Business ethics

And most of all, girls gain tremendous amounts of self-confidence. It's not easy to ask people to buy something—you have to speak up, make eye contact and believe in what you're doing—all skills that help a girl succeed now and throughout the rest of her life.

A Sweet Tradition

It has been more than 90 years since Girl Scouts began selling home-baked cookies to raise money. The idea was so popular that, in 1936, Girl Scouts enlisted bakers to handle the growing demand.

Two commercial bakers are currently licensed by Girl Scouts of the USA to produce Girl Scout Cookies—Little Brownie Bakers and ABC/Interbake Foods—and each council selects the baker of its choice. Each baker gets to name its own cookies, which is why some cookies have two names, and gets to decide which flavors it will offer in a given year. For additional information on cookie varieties, including nutritional details, visit [GirlScoutCookies.org](#).

River Valleys' partner for the 2012–2013 Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity is Little Brownie Bakers. Up to eight varieties of Girl Scout cookies are offered each year, including three mandatory flavors:

- **Thin Mints:** Round, dark-chocolate, mint-flavored cookies
- **Do-Si-Dos®/Peanut Butter Sandwich:** Two oatmeal cookies with a layer of peanut butter sandwiched in between
- **Trefoils/Shortbread:** Shortbread cookies shaped like the Girl Scout trefoil

Other varieties offered by Little Brownie Bakers include:

- **Samoas®:** Tender vanilla cookies, covered with caramel, rolled in toasted coconut and striped with a rich, chocolaty coating
- **Tagalongs®:** Tasty cookies topped with creamy peanut butter and covered with a luscious chocolaty coating
- **Dulce de Leche:** Inspired by the classic confections of Latin America, these sweet, bite-size cookies are rich with milk caramel chips
- **Lemon Chalet Cremes:** Uniquely designed to feature Our Chalet, this delicious vanilla sandwich has a hint of cinnamon-ginger spice and a refreshing zesty lemon crème filling
- **Thank U Berry Munch:** Real premium cranberries provide a delightful tartness in these hearty cookies sweetened with creamy, white fudge chips. Crispy rice delivers a satisfying crunch

Note: All cookies are kosher and have zero trans fat per serving (at the minimum serving, based on FDA guidelines). Several varieties are also nut-free. Complete nutritional information and descriptions of each year's varieties are available online at Girlscoutcookies.org.

In addition, River Valleys also offers girls/troops the opportunity to participate in the Fall Product Program where magazines and nut/chocolate items are offered to friends and family.

Product sales: financial literacy and the Girl Scout Leadership Experience

Selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products (which may include nuts, candies and magazines) gives girls a chance to run a business and practice leadership skills they can use in their lives. Girls will enjoy all the benefits this important component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience has to offer: they will engage in planning and goal setting (aiming to achieve their personal best), teamwork, marketing, money management (including the importance of saving for future needs) and the enduring skill of customer service. As girls grow, they will get to know their products (ingredients and calories, for example), and they will design innovative and creative marketing strategies and tools. Girls will also be encouraged to share with customers how product sales help their council and their community. Volunteers can help girls develop leadership skills while they engage in Girl Scout Cookie activities by using the Girl Scout processes of girl-led, learning by doing and cooperative learning. And as they participate in product sales, girls will:

- **Discover** a strong sense of self and gain practical life skills when they create personal goals, deliver presentations and find ways to customize a marketing plan. A girl discovers a lot about herself and her values as she makes decisions about money earning, customer management and so on.
- **Connect** with their group members as they set group goals and develop a list of positions related to cookie activities such as accounting manager, event planner, public relations specialist and graphic designer. Girls learn about their communities as they meet families, mentors and business owners who have worked in those roles. Girls can also use the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity as an opportunity to talk to customers about ways to improve the community or to solicit ideas for a local take-action idea bank.
- **Take action** as they learn to map neighborhood businesses and other resources that can help them consider community service needs. Girls use product-sale money to make a difference in their communities, whether through a take-action project or a philanthropic donation. And, money that goes to the council from product sales allows councils to take action by serving all Girl Scouts.

Determining who can participate

All girl members, including Girl Scout Daisies, are eligible to participate in council-sponsored product program activities under volunteer supervision. River Valleys provides learning opportunities (through a cascading staff and volunteer effort) on the procedures to follow during each product program activity. River Valleys also establishes guidelines and procedures for conducting the product program and determines how the proceeds, awards and recognition program will be managed.

Knowing where proceeds go

River Valleys provides a breakdown of “how the cookie crumbles” in the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity materials and also on the River Valleys website. The price of a package of cookies in River Valleys for 2012–2013 will be \$4.00. Of that total package price, 18 percent is used for troop proceeds, 4 percent goes to girl award and recognition items and 24 percent represents the cost of the product from the baker. The remaining 54 percent is used by River Valleys to provide council-sponsored program events for girls, maintain River Valleys properties (including River Valleys camp facilities) and provide volunteer training and services.

The income from product program activities does not become the property of individual girl members. Girls, however, may be eligible for incentives and credits that they put toward Girl Scout activities, such as camp, travel and Girl Scout membership dues for the next year.

Girls may earn official Girl Scout grade-appropriate awards related to product program activities. River Valleys also offers an awards and recognition program that provides items such as patches, other award items and credits to be redeemed for council-sponsored program events, camp fees, council-approved extended troop trips, membership dues and other options outlined in the credit. River Valleys’ plan for awards and recognition applies equally to all girls participating in the product program activities. Whenever possible, River Valleys involves girls in the selection of awards and recognition items and the administration of money given to girls from product program proceeds.

Steps to cookie success

Here are several steps that can help ensure a successful Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity:

- Participate in the Fall Product Program. Research shows girls/troops enjoy even more success in their Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity when they participate in the Fall Product Program.
- Register all girls, and select and register an adult (or more than one adult) to serve as volunteer troop cookie manager early in the Girl Scout program year. It is strongly encouraged that troop leaders don’t also take on the role of troop cookie manager.
- Utilize the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity Kit provided to the troop with meeting ideas and other fun activities to create excitement before Cookie Go Day.
- Have your troop cookie manager complete the online self-study training found on the River Valleys website and connect with your service unit cookie manager for materials and additional support in November/December.
- Work with your troop cookie manager to ensure that the troop/girls are properly entered into eBUDDE (the online cookie management tool from Little Brownie Bakers) by January and that s/he has utilized the online resources to become familiar with the system.
- Participate in a Cookie Rally (council-sponsored, service unit, or troop).
- Conduct a parent/family meeting to share troop and individual goals, planned participation and use of earned troop proceeds.
- Look for additional River Valleys Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity information in the Program Essentials Charts and Meeting Plans, as well as other River Valleys communications.

Using online resources to market cookies and other products

Girls are texting, calling, emailing, Tweeting, and Facebooking—all effective ways for girls **13 and older** to promote their product program activities. The following sections detail how girls can use electronic marketing, social networking and group websites to gather order commitments from family, friends and previous customers. But first, please keep in mind that girls:

- *Can* market to and collect indications of interest from customers within River Valleys' ZIP codes. Refer prospects that come from outside council jurisdiction to the council finder at Girlscoutcookies.org. Family members are the exception to this rule.
- *Cannot* have customers pay online (such as through a shopping cart function on a website the girls create). Girl Scout magazine sales are the exception to this rule.
- *Must* sign the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge (available at gsusa.org) before doing any online activities, and all online activities must be under the supervision of adults.
- *Cannot* expose their email address, physical address or phone number to the public. When writing email messages or online announcements, girls should sign with their first name only, along with their group number or name and their council name.

Have your girls in fifth grade and above visit [Let Me Know](#), a site addressing Internet safety for teens and tweens. Girls can even earn an online award for completing site activities.

Girl Scout Daisies: Stay Especially Safe!

Girl Scout Daisies are too young to go online and market through their group, parent or guardian websites or social networking sites. For this reason, Girl Scout Daisies are allowed to send out emails only when working directly with an adult. Girl Scout Daisies and their adult volunteers use only blind emails or the online marketing tools provided by GSUSA product vendors on their websites.

Contacting prospects electronically

Girls may use phone calls, text messages, IMs and emails as online marketing tools to let family, friends and former customers know about the product program activity and collect indications of interest. Product-related email is not intended to be spam (unwanted texts or emails) but rather simply a reminder for girls to be sure that their messages will be welcomed by the receiver.

When girls are marketing a product program online, remind them to always use a group email address (such as troop457@yahoo.com), an adult's personal email address or a blind address (one that does not reveal the address to the recipient). In addition, be sure to discuss with girls the need to treat customer email addresses from current and past years—as well as phone numbers, IM addresses, Facebook accounts and mail addresses—with respect.

Utilizing Social Networks

A girl (or group of girls) **over the age of 13** may work in partnership with an adult to market cookies and other products online, using social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace or LinkedIn) of the adult. Social networking sites are fun and fast ways to get out an urgent message, such as, "It's Girl Scout Cookie time!" Posting or tweeting such a message will get the attention of friends and family.

Before girls use social networks as a marketing tool, keep the following in mind:

- Girls must have parental/guardian permission to use social networks.
- Girls must meet age limits set by the provider, which is 13 and above in most cases, as per the United States Child Online Privacy and Protection Act and the Child Online Protection Act.

- Any use of photos requires a photo-release form signed by parents/guardians of all the girls pictured and the signature of any adults pictured. You may find this form on the River Valleys website at GirlScoutsRV.org.
- Any use of online video sharing sites (such as YouTube) where the video is representing Girl Scouts or Girl Scout products must follow specific requirements for that site, as well as council guidelines. Girl Scout photo-release forms must also be signed by parents/guardians and any adults pictured. (In other words, this is not an easy venture, but if you and the girls are willing, it's worth the investment.)

Setting up a group website

Groups whose girls meet age criteria (**13 years or older**) and have parental/guardian permission may set up a group website or social networking site. This site must be approved by River Valleys and can be a fantastic way for girls to share information, market their Girl Scout product program activities and talk about their take-action projects.

Before you and the girls design a website, remember that the Internet is an open forum for anyone, including potential predators. Documented instances of cyber-stalkers make it imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and adults is not disclosed on a website.

To ensure the girls' safety:

- Use girls' first names only.
- Never post girls' addresses, phone numbers or email addresses.
- Never post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events or trips (an adult volunteer who wishes to communicate upcoming events with families of girls should use email instead of posting details on a website, unless that site is password protected).
- Always have a parent's/guardian's signature on a photo-release form before using pictures of girls on a website.
- Make a static website that does not allow outsiders to post messages, or make sure all postings (such as message boards or guest books) have adult oversight and are screened prior to posting live.
- Do not violate copyright laws by using designs, text from magazines or books, poetry, music, lyrics, videos, graphics or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder (and generally, this permission is pretty tough to get).
 - Girl Scout trademarks (such as the trefoil shape, Girl Scout pins and badges and patches) can be used only in accordance with guidelines (the Girl Scout trefoil, for example, may not be animated or used as wallpaper for a website).
 - Check GirlScoutsRV.org for complete Girl Scout graphics guidelines and approvals.

Safely selling Girl Scout Cookies and other products

A few other considerations will help keep girls safe:

- Girls sell cookies and other products, not volunteers or council staff.
- Parents/guardians must grant permission for girls to participate and are informed about the girls' whereabouts when they are engaged in product-sale activities.
 - Specific permission must be obtained when a girl intends to use the Internet for product marketing.
 - A parent, guardian or other adult must know each girl's whereabouts when she is engaged in a product program, and if and when she is involved on the Internet.

- Girls should be identifiable as Girl Scouts by wearing a membership pin, official uniform, tunic, sash, vest or other Girl Scout clothing.
- Adult volunteers must monitor, supervise and guide the product program activities of all age levels.
- Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies and Juniors must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors who participate in sales must be supervised by (but do not need to be directly accompanied by) an adult and must always use the buddy system.
- Money due for sold products is collected when the products are delivered to the customer.
 - Magazine money is the only exception to this policy; magazine money is due at the time the customer places the order (in person or online).
 - Review River Valleys' Product Program Activity materials for details on River Valleys' check acceptance policy and other money-related issues.
- Personal customer information should remain private (customer credit card information should not be collected by girls and should not be asked for on any form collected by girls).
- Girls can participate in no more than two council-sponsored product program activities each year, and only one of these may be the Girl Scout Cookie Program Activity.
- A girl's physical address, social networking page address, IM name, Skype name or number, or phone number should never be revealed to anyone outside her immediate circle of family and friends.
- Girls can market cookies and other products by sending emails to friends, family members and former customers as long as they use a group email address, the address of a parent/guardian or adult volunteer, a blind email address (in which the recipients cannot see the sender's email address), or the online email tools provided by cookie vendors. Girls **13 and older** can also use a parent's/guardian's or adult volunteer's social networking site (such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn).
- Sales may not be transacted on the Internet (for example, through a site that has an electronic shopping cart), except for magazine sales. Girls can, however, receive order commitments for cookies sales via email or the Internet. In other words, potential customers can relay (via email or a Facebook post, for example) that, "Yes! I'd like four boxes of Thin Mints and three boxes of Shortbread cookies."
- Before beginning any cookie sales or other product program activities with your group, refer to the cookies section of [Girl Scout Central](#) and [Girlscoutcookies.org](#).