



The Girl Scout Gold Award



Toolkit

for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors



Table of contents

The Girl Scout Gold Award Toolkit contains tools, planning guides and advice to help with each step of your Gold Award project. Refer to the Girl Scout Gold Award Packet for more information on requirements, the Girl Scout Gold Award project proposal form and the Girl Scout Gold Award final report form.

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Standards of Excellence tracking sheet

Girl Scout Gold Award steps	Notes regarding your progress, significant dates and contact information	Standards of Excellence
1. Choose an issue.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live the Girl Scout Promise and Law. • Demonstrate civic responsibility.
2. Investigate.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of sources: interview people, read books and articles, find professional organizations online. Remember to evaluate each source's reliability and accuracy. • Demonstrate courage as you investigate your issue, knowing that what you learn may challenge your own and others' beliefs. • Identify national and/or global links to your community issue.
3. Get help.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out and recognize skills and strengths in others. • Respect different points of view and ways of working. • Build a team and recruit a project advisor who will bring special skills to your Gold Award project.
4. Create a plan.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the planning of your Gold Award project. • Work collaboratively to develop a plan that creates lasting change.
5. Present your plan and get feedback.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a project proposal that is concise, comprehensive, detailed and clear. • Describe your plan including the Girl Scout leadership outcomes you want to achieve and the impact you plan to make on yourself and the community. • Articulate your issue clearly and explain why it matters to you. • Accept constructive suggestions that will help refine and enhance your project.

<p>6. Take action.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take action to address the root cause of an issue, so that your solution has measurable and sustainable impact. • Actively seek partnerships to achieve greater community participation and impact for your Gold Award project. • Challenge yourself to try different ways to solve problems. • Use resources wisely. • Speak out and act on behalf of yourself and others.
<p>7. Educate and inspire.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on what you have learned when you submit your Girl Scout Gold Award final report. • Summarize the effectiveness of your project and the impact it has had on you and your community. • Share the project beyond your local community and inspire others to take action in their own communities.

Choose an issue

Use your values and skills to choose a community issue that you care about. Check out the decision-making tips below. If you have more than one issue that you are passionate about, interview others to help you decide. Practice making your pitch and see how it feels. You can also make a 15-second video, write a bumper-sticker slogan or come up with another fun way to sum up why this issue is important to you.

Decision-making tips

You are about to make a big decision that will have a significant impact on your life and may even change it forever. Take some time to reflect and get inspired. Start with yourself.

- What inspires and motivates you? Is it something in your school, community, country or the world? Is it people, events, activities or places?
- What skills, talents and strengths do you have to offer?
- How do you want to make a difference? As an advocate for justice? A promoter of environmental awareness? As a trainer, mentor or coach? As an artist, actor or musician? As an organizer of petitions or campaigns? As an entrepreneur? Can you think of another role?
- What motivates, inspires and interests others? Can you build a team to support your idea?
- What would benefit the community both immediately and long-term?
- Check back through your Girl Scout Leadership Journey(s). What interested you that you might be able to translate into a Gold Award project?

Need some inspiration? Search through these sites to see what others are doing to address issues in their community.

- GSUSA Map It: <http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/map-it-girls-changing-the-world/>
- United We Serve: www.serve.gov
- Global Citizens Corps: www.globalcitizencorps.org
- Global Youth Service Day: <http://gysd.org/share>
- Learn and Serve America: www.learnandserve.gov
- Prudential: www.spirit.prudential.com
- Taking IT Global: www.tigweb.org
- United Nations Millennium Development Goals: www.un.org/millenniumgoals
- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts: www.wagggg.org
- Youth Venture: www.genv.net

Interview tips

Interviews can be a great way to gather additional information about your issue and connect with people that may be able to assist you in achieving your project goals.

Making arrangements

Decide whom you would like to interview, contact the person and set up a date and time. When contacting someone for an interview, be sure to clearly explain who you are, what the Gold Award is and why you are interested in speaking with them.

Preparation

Gather research and background information to help you formulate questions to ask the interview subject(s). Use these sample interview questions to get you started, and then add some of your own. If you need help choosing an issue, you'll want to ask the following types of questions:

- What are the biggest challenges/problems that you have faced or are facing?
- What do you think is the root cause of these issues?
- What will it take to address these issues?
- Are there any resources available to do that?
- What do you consider to be the strengths of the community?

Once you have chosen a specific issue, you may ask specific questions related to your project.

Conducting the interview

Bring a notebook to take notes. Here are some tips:

- Find a quiet place where you'll have each other's full attention, and agree to turn off your cell phones.
- Start by thanking the interviewee for her/his time, and then briefly describe your project.
- Keep questions simple and related to the issue at hand. Do your research.
- Preparation is key!
- Ask the person you interview if she or he would like to hear more about your project as it develops.
- Send a thank-you note to everyone you interview within a week of the interview. Mention the possibility of a follow-up interview.

Reviewing information and setting up a possible follow-up interview

After the interview is over, sift through your notes and focus on information that's relevant to your project. If there are some gaps that you need to fill, contact your interview subject(s) to get more information and to find out whether or not you have your facts correct. Remember to check and recheck your facts!

Making your pitch

Now that you've chosen your issue, think of a way that you can let people know about it. You should be able to describe the issue you've chosen in about 15 seconds. Here are some tips to help you do that.

- **Make it memorable:** Develop a slogan. What makes you remember slogans in commercials on TV? How can you incorporate that into your pitch?
- **Target your audience:** Who are you trying to reach? If you are aiming for kids, think of a story or riddle that relates the issue to them. Young kids love to rhyme. If you're reaching out to adults, no cute stories! Think about your audience and try to tailor your pitch so that it connects with them.
- **How you will help:** Your story got their attention. Now tell them what your project will do to make their lives better.
- **Personalize it:** Why this project? Why this target audience? How will doing this make you a better person?
- **Do it:** Put it all together. Explain your idea in a short and motivating way that resonates with you, your potential team, target audience and supporters. Remember, 15 seconds. Go!

Investigate

Use your sleuthing skills to learn everything you can about the issue you've identified. Zoom in on your issue to identify a specific aspect of it that you would like to address. Focused effort has more impact than a big idea that's scattered.

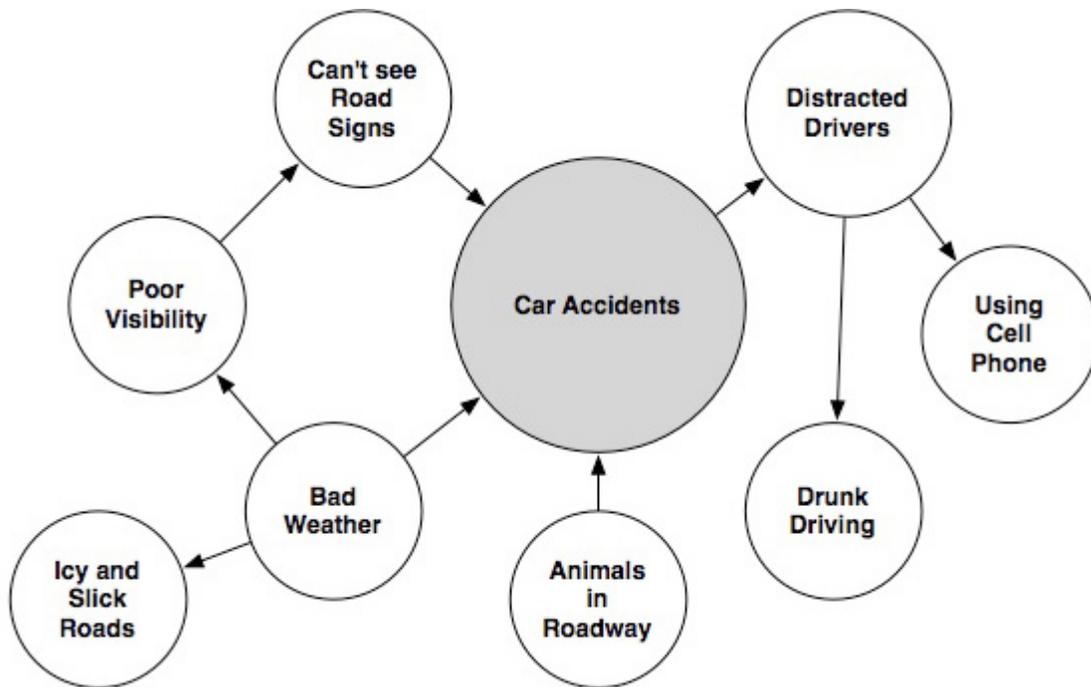
Getting started

- **Log on:** Check news sites and the sites of organizations related to your issue. Explore how the media in other countries cover your issue. Note: Before doing your online research, take the Girl Scout Internet safety pledge at GirlScoutsRV.org.
- **Go to the library:** Find books that offer in-depth analysis about your issue, read your local newspaper and look for magazine articles that offer different perspectives on your issue.
- **Interview people:** Talk to your friends, neighbors, teachers, business owners and others who can offer information or insights about the issue you've chosen.
- **Organize the information:** Knowing the various causes of a problem enables you to figure out unique ways to solve it. Use the mind-mapping tool on the next page to create a diagram that tracks a problem and its possible causes.

Mind-mapping tool

Create your own mind-mapping diagram like the one shown here, using one of the issues facing your community. Follow these instructions:

- Write the community issue in the middle of a piece of paper or anywhere that works for you.
- Think about what some of the causes of this issue could be. In this example, one of the main causes of car accidents is bad weather. Notice how many different causes connect from bad weather.
- Now, try connecting the different causes you come up with to each other and to the main issue. How do the causes connect to each other?
- Do you see a pattern? This activity will help you come up with different ways to approach a problem, as well as different ways you might go about addressing it.



Get help

Invite other people to join your team and help you take action. Consider reaching out to classmates, teachers, friends and experts from organizations and businesses. Networking with people can make you a more effective leader. Also, the more people you have behind you, the more likely you will positively influence your community. You are the leader of your team—plan your project, motivate your team, learn from others. Choose a project advisor, a person with expertise in the topic of your Gold Award project, but not your parent/guardian or troop leader. An advisor can help you identify resources, provide insights, solve problems and provide additional information on your chosen issue.

Teaming tips

Think about the people who might be able to help you put your project into action.

Choose people who will stick it out until the project is complete. You don't have to limit your team to people your age or just Girl Scouts.

Working in a group will help you make a bigger impact and cover more ground than you would on your own. It might be challenging at times, but remember to always be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, and responsible for what you say and do. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you build your team:

- Promote a sense of trust and belonging
- Share ownership
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Communicate regularly and openly
- Respect diversity
- Have fun and be creative
- Be open to new ideas and different ways of working
- Keep learning and growing

Project advisor tips

Here are tips for selecting and working with your project advisor.

- **Reach out:** After you figure out the issue you're going to address with your project, find an expert to help along the way and give you advice and suggestions. Ask your troop volunteer or your council for suggestions. Then select a few people who have expertise on your issue with whom you'd like to work.
- **Safety first:** Before you meet with new people, talk to your troop volunteer for some safety tips. Make sure your family knows who you're talking to and meeting.
- **Ask:** Start with your first choice, and if she or he can't help, go to your next choice. (Hint: There may be many others who are willing to help!) Introduce yourself by sending a brief letter or email, explain what you're working on and the advice you would like. Give some background about the Gold Award and your project. Speak with them about possible time commitments and ask them what their preferred method of contact is.
- **Say thanks:** When an individual accepts, send her or him a thank-you note, along with a brief description of your project and a list of areas where you think you'll need the most help.
- **Think ahead when asking for help:** Before you compose an email or call your project advisor, think about how you can simplify a problem you're having, so that she or he can offer quick suggestions.
- **Share your progress:** Make sure to tell your project advisor (in a quick email or phone call) about your progress and how her or his help is making your project better, easier and so on.
- **Celebrate together:** After your project is completed, invite her or him to your Girl Scout Gold Award ceremony and/or your own celebration. Don't forget to send a thank you note!

Create a plan

Review the sustainability tips below for more ideas about how to address the root cause of an issue. Then create a plan that outlines the best use of your time and talent, your resources and your team’s talents—that’s your challenge!

Project planner

A Girl Scout Gold Award project addresses the root cause of an issue, produces impact that is measurable and sustainable, and is a local project that links to a national and/or global issue. Here are a few tips to help you lay out your project plan:

Set project goals

What is your project? _____

Why does it matter? _____

Who will it help? _____

The difference I intend to make in the world is _____

List steps to meet the goals: List step-by-step what it will take to reach your goal. Think about specific tasks you will need to accomplish. Be as specific as possible so that you can put together a timeline and draw on your team to help you reach your goals.

Develop a timeline: This will help you determine how much time should be allotted to each part of your project.

Think about money-earning: Brainstorm ways to finance your project. If needed, speak with your troop volunteer to make sure that your ideas are in line with Girl Scout policies outlined in Volunteer Essentials and River Valleys’ Troop Money-Earning Project Approval Form. Remember, you can make an impact without spending money by influencing policy, educating others, etc. See pages 13–14 of this toolkit for more information.

Establish a global link: Consider how to connect your project to an issue that affects people in other parts of the country or the world. How are people in other cities, states and countries addressing this issue?

Sustainability tips

You can ensure your Gold Award project creates lasting change by setting clear timelines, collaborating with community organizations, building alliances with adults and mentors, and keeping good records. Sustainability often involves influencing others to pitch in. Here are some examples of sustainable projects:

Sustainability example 1

Community issue: Waste from school lunches poses a danger to the environment

Root cause: No community composting or recycling program

Take action: Create a food-waste composting program for the school

Making the solution sustainable:

- Work with school officials to find biodegradable plates and cups to use in the cafeteria.
- Work with town/state food waste officials to ensure the system is in place.
- Implement a plan in your school to separate cafeteria waste into composting, recycling and trash bins (farmers can use the compost to fertilize crops, improve the quality of the soil, decrease soil runoff and so on)
- Get a commitment from school administrators to carry on when your project is complete.

Making your project bigger (national and/or global link): Recruit students at schools in the area to develop the program for their schools or contact local and state officials about adopting the program.

Sustainability example 2

Community issue: Teen suicide

Root cause: Lack of awareness and prevention

Take action: Establish an awareness and prevention program at your school

Making the solution sustainable:

- Put together a team to produce a “how-to” video that outlines the steps needed to create an awareness and prevention program in other communities or schools. Create websites or brochures to go along with the video.
- Share the video with schools and community organizations and get commitments that they will continue to use the resources.

Making your project bigger (national and/or global link): Share the program with local youth groups, health/human services agencies, community centers, church/synagogue/mosque community centers or school districts.

Impact Planning

Use the Impact Planning Chart to think about the impact you hope your project will have on your community, your target audience, and you. You will need to submit the same chart with your Project Proposal, so use this chart to brainstorm your answers.

Impact On . . .	Goals	Potential Impact
Community	What community issue do you plan to address?	What examples of the project impact might you see in the future?
Target Audience (workshop participants, other youth, community members, and so on)	What skills, knowledge, or attitudes will your target audience gain?	How will you know that the target audience gained skills or knowledge?

Make your plan

Use the following questions to help you determine what you need to do.

- What is the goal that you would like to achieve with your project?
- How do you plan to achieve this project goal?
- How will you address the root cause of your chosen issue?
- How will you show active leadership by leading, coordinating, educating and inspiring others?
- What are the foreseeable obstacles?
- Aside from your team, troop volunteer and project advisor, who else can you recruit to help with your project?
- What supplies will you need?
- How will you finance your project?
- How will you measure your success as you go?
- How will your project create lasting change?

Financing your project

When designing your Girl Scout Gold Award project, be realistic about planning a budget. Financing your project is a huge part of the process. You will gain great leadership skills by conducting supply drives in your neighborhood, doing council-approved money-earning projects, or finding new ways to serve your community that don't require a lot of cash or fancy supplies. You will need to include your estimated budget in your project proposal. Be prepared to share your budget during your presentation to the Girl Scout Gold Award approval committee.

When planning your Gold Award project, remember:

- Girl Scouts cannot raise money for other organizations.
- Time spent on money-earning projects cannot count towards your 80 hour time commitment.
- As a girl member, you cannot personally ask for a donation of items. It is your responsibility to share information about your project and then an adult must ask, on your behalf.
- Gold Award projects cannot make a profit.
- For more information about money-earning, read *Ways to Fund Your Project* on the next page and visit the council website at:
http://www.girlscoutsrv.org/forms__resources/grants_and_finance/

Ways to fund your project

Event fees

If you are hosting events for your project, you can collect event fees to cover professional services, supplies and food. However, Girl Scout Gold Award projects cannot make money and excess project money cannot be deposited into a troop or Juliette account.

Donations

Donations can come in the form of supplies, services or volunteer time.

Troop or Juliette account

You can use money from your troop or Juliette account. The decision to use troop funds for a Girl Scout Gold Award project must be agreed upon by all troop members.

Cookie credits

Cookie credits can be used to finance your Girl Scout Gold Award project. Cookie credits redeemed cannot expire before submitting your final report. After your project has been approved and completed, submit cookie credits and your project receipts with your final report. You will receive a reimbursement check through the mail.

Personal contribution

You are permitted to make personal contributions to carry out your project. This is a great way to invest in your leadership development.

Family contribution

Family members can also make a contribution (up to 25 percent of the project costs). However, we encourage you to work with others to earn the money. That's part of the process. "Going for the Gold" is not meant to be a hardship on a family or individual.

Money-earning activities

Girl Scout Gold Award projects must comply with all council money-earning guidelines, as outlined on River Valleys' website.

Grants

You may be able to apply for a grant to help you fund your project, but you must first receive approval from River Valleys. Please contact FundDevelopment@GirlScoutsRV.org if you are interested in applying for a grant. Your Girl Scout Gold Award advisor, your community advisor or another adult has to do the actual asking and sign on the dotted line.

Present your plan and get feedback

Fill out the project-planning checklist in the Gold Award Packet to organize your thoughts and make sure you have everything you need before you hand in your project proposal. Also, activities for the Standards of Excellence steps 1–3 should be completed by you and approved by your Gold Award advisor/troop volunteer before you submit your project proposal.

Tools

- **Project planning checklist (found in the Girl Scout Gold Award Packet)**
- **Project proposal form (found in the Girl Scout Gold Award Packet)**

Take action

Once your project proposal has been approved, lead your team and carry out your plan. Use the tools you have developed in the previous steps and remember to check your Leadership Journey(s) for tips. If you hit a speed bump along the way, learn from it and find ways to adjust your plan. Contact the council if there are any major changes to your project after approval, if you have any questions or simply need some advice.

Educate and inspire

Tell your story and share your results. You can inspire someone who has never before considered taking action to do something! Use the reflection tool in the Gold Award Packet to identify how this experience has affected you and how your views may have changed. Look through the sharing tips on the next page for ideas of how to tell your story. Finally, complete the Girl Scout Gold Award final report, a comprehensive account of what you did, who you connected with, the lasting impact you made and what this experience meant to you.

Tools

- **Reflection tool (found in the Girl Scout Gold Award Packet)**
- **Girl Scout Gold Award final report (Found in the Girl Scout Gold Award Packet)**

Sharing tips

Here are a few suggestions of how you can demonstrate your project achievements and share what you learned:

- Create a website or blog or join a social networking site (Facebook, MySpace and so on) to post updates and details about your project and its impact on the national and/or global community.
- Log on to some websites where you can share your story:
 - World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts: www.wagggg.org/en/take_action
 - GSUSA Map It: <http://forgirls.girlscouts.org/map-it-girls-changing-the-world>
 - Taking IT Global: www.tigweb.org
 - Global Youth Service Day: <http://gysd.org/share>
- Create a campaign that showcases your cause. Make buttons, posters and flyers to let people know about your cause.
- Present what you learned and what your project will do for the community at a workshop for community members.
- Make a video about the effects of your project. Post it online. Invite friends, community leaders and people from organizations who are tackling the same or a similar issue to take a look at it.
- Write an article for your local newspaper or create a newsletter about your project.

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