

CONTACT US

Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois
353 Randall Road, South Elgin, IL 60177
girlscoutsni.org
844-476-4463



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!

► January 2021

Contents

Part I: The Gold Award Defined

- ▶ [The benefits of becoming a Gold Award Girl Scout](#) | 3
- ▶ [Key elements of the Gold Award](#) | 4
 - ▶ [What does “take action” really mean?](#) | 4
 - ▶ [What’s the difference between community service and a Take Action project?](#) | 4
 - ▶ [What is a root cause?](#) | 5
 - ▶ [How do I include a national and/or global link in my project?](#) | 5
 - ▶ [How do I show leadership in my project?](#) | 6
 - ▶ [What does a sustainable project look like?](#) | 6
 - ▶ [How do I measure my impact?](#) | 7

Part 2: Achieving Your Gold Award

- ▶ [How do I know I’m ready?](#) | 9
- ▶ [How do I know what to do—and when?](#) | 9
- ▶ [How much time does it take?](#) | 9
- ▶ [What is the GoGold web app?](#) | 10
- ▶ [What are the #1 tips to help me succeed?](#) 11
- ▶ [What are the seven steps to the Gold Award?](#) | 12
 - ▶ [Step 1: Choose an issue](#) | 12
 - ▶ [Step 2: Investigate](#) | 12
 - ▶ [Step 3: Get help](#) | 14
 - ▶ [Council staff](#) | 14
 - ▶ [Step 4: Create a plan](#) | 15
 - ▶ [How do I earn money for my project?](#) | 15
 - ▶ [Can I use media to share my project?](#) | 15

- ▶ [What do I need to know about safety?](#) | 16
- ▶ [Step 5: Present your plan](#) | 16
 - ▶ [Proposal review and approval process](#) | 17
- ▶ [Step 6: Take action](#) | 17
- ▶ [Step 7: Educate and inspire](#) | 17
 - ▶ [Final report review and approval process](#) | 17
- ▶ [Congratulations—you’re a Gold Award Girl Scout!](#) | 18
- ▶ [Share your accomplishment with the world!](#) | 18
 - ▶ [When is the Gold Award ceremony?](#) | 20
- ▶ [Our resource roundup for Girl Scouts](#) | 20
 - ▶ [GSNI Council resources](#) | 20

© 2020 Girl Scouts of the USA.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical methods, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, now known or hereinafter invented, without the prior written permission of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permissions requests, write to Girl Scouts of the United States of America at the address below or visit the www.girlscouts.org website to access permission request forms.

First published in 2020 by
Girl Scouts of the United States of America
420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798
www.girlscouts.org

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.**
- **Become a national Girl Scout brand ambassador!**
Councils nationwide nominate Gold Award Girl Scouts each year to become National Gold Award Girl Scouts based on their outstanding projects. Ten incredible girls get the opportunity to represent the Girl Scout Movement, inspiring girls across the country in the media and at national events while amplifying the impact of their projects and receiving scholarship opportunities. Learn more [on our website](#).



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.

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



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.

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 (learn more about [GoGold](#)). 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 worldwide—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, Marianne has volunteered at a local animal rescue group. It regularly operates at its maximum capacity and is unable to take in new stray animals. Marianne 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 the same challenge. She reaches out to national animal welfare organizations to better understand the issue and to access the research that they have available. She also decides to focus on a solution that she can implement at animal rescue groups in her community, then share with others throughout the United States.*

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



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.

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.

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.

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 if your impact doesn't perfectly match your initial goals—it's all part of the learning process. No matter the outcome, you should still collect data and analyze your results. This will help you understand your overall impact, reflect on what you learned, and 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 two Senior or Ambassador Journeys OR have earned a Silver Award and completed one Senior or Ambassador Journey.
- You feel compelled to do something meaningful that will make the world a better place!

How do I know what to do—and when?

Even if you already have a solid idea for your Gold Award Project, completing a Gold Award Training is required prior to submitting your proposal. The training can be done at your convenience and can be found on gsLearn. Visit our council's Gold Award page to request access to gsLearn and get started!

How much time does it take?

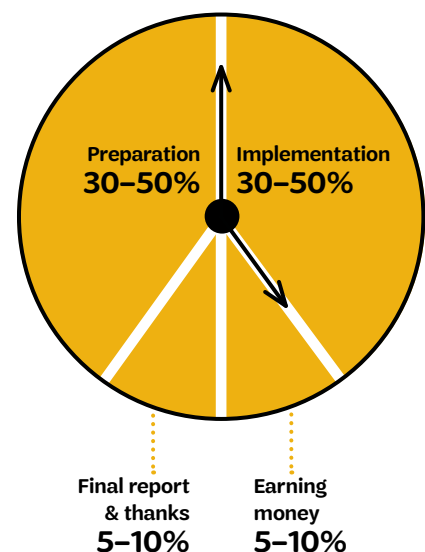
Plan to spend at least 80 hours bringing your project to life—that's the minimum. These hours will give you the flexibility to properly prepare, plan, and execute every phase of your project.

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.*

BUDGET YOUR HOURS



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.

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.

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 prerequisites, like your completed Journeys or Silver Award, 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 catalogued for all the Girl Scouts who are on this amazing journey. Plus, GoGold is the exclusive way your council can nominate a Gold Award Girl Scout for consideration to be selected as a National Gold Award Girl Scout. [Learn more](#) about how Going Gold could give you the opportunity for this national recognition.

What are the #1 tips to help me succeed?

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 support team 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—collect data, conduct surveys, and/or do pre- and post-evaluations	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!](#)

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.

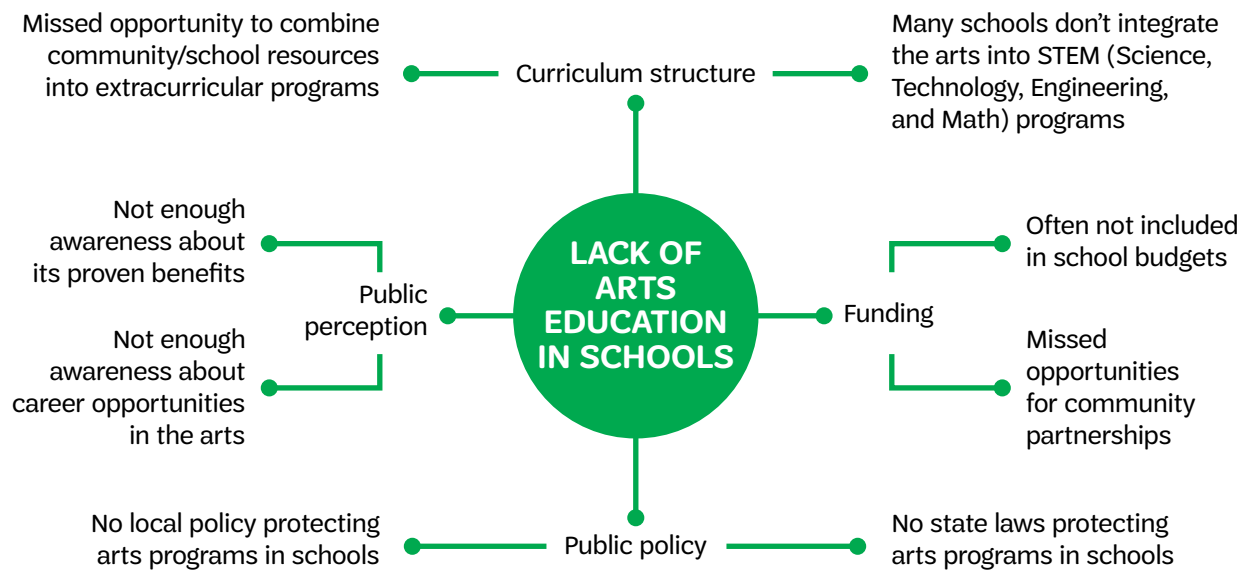
Why?	Who?	Where?	What?	How?
Why are you inspired? Do you care about poverty, women's rights, environmental sustainability, health and relationships, animals, human rights, veterans, sports, or something else?	Who do you want to help? The elderly, children, those less fortunate, nature, people with disabilities, 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.

Go to the library. Find books that offer in-depth analysis of your issue, read your local newspaper, and look for magazine articles that offer different perspectives.

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.



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!

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:

The Gold Award Staff Member coordinates the Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois Gold Award Program and works closely with the Gold Award Committee. Have general Gold Award questions? Need help with GoGold Online? Contact Customer Care at GSNI to get connected with the Gold Award Staff Member.

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.



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.

HOW DO I EARN MONEY FOR MY PROJECT?

You are allowed to do money earning for your project, but you will want to have a developed budget and plan for supporting your project in place.

The first place to start is by participating in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product sales.

Permission to Solicit: Soliciting a business for possible project donations does require a form and prior council approval.

Earning grants: Check out community organizations like your local Rotary Club or Lions Club. It's possible that they'll offer grants that you can apply for to help fund your project. If you receive a grant, the payment should go to you—not to Girl Scouts. You're also responsible for meeting the grant requirements.

Fundraising or Additional Money Earning: This is another option and one that too requires prior council approval.

In-Kind Donations: Money received from an individual or business wanting to support your project. Council specific guidelines apply. Consult your council Gold Award Staff Member about this.

Once your project has been approved, you will be sent these forms and additional guidelines. You can also find council policies about fund raising on the GSNI website under Volunteer/Volunteer Essentials/Troop Finances.

Remember, these forms do require prior approval so please be patient and plan ahead.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Girl Scouts may NOT under any circumstances raise money for or donate money to another group, organization, or individual for their Gold Award project.

CAN I USE MEDIA TO SHARE MY PROJECT?

You can choose to include videos, photos, websites, blogs, and flyers in your Gold Award project. But keep these considerations in mind when you do:

Think safety. Be sure that the location of the people in your photos and videos can't be traced. For example, avoid filming the front of a home with address or street names in sight or filming driveways with car license plates visible.

Get written consent. You'll need to get written consent from anyone (adult or minor) you capture in a video or photo you plan to make public. If you're working with people under 18, you'll need a parent signature on

the consent form too. Your Gold Award Staff Member can provide you with a copy of a consent form.

Represent yourself well. As you know, what you post on a website can be read by anyone. So be guided by safety and how you represent yourself as a Girl Scout. Things to consider: privacy, language use, sponsorship, links, and proper use of copyrighted material (writing, music, brand images, and pictures).

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SAFETY?

As a Girl Scout, you know that safety is important. When you work on the Gold Award, it's a good idea to make a basic safety management plan. In advance, think about:

- What could go wrong
- How to prevent things from going wrong
- What to do if they go wrong anyway

There are many things you will want to prepare for and learn about prior to your a Girl Scout event. Some things include checking Safety Activity Checkpoints, managing girl to adult ratios, the need for Certificates of Insurance, and possibly non-member accident insurance. Work closely with the Gold Award Staff Member to help you be prepared.

Step 5: Present your plan

You'll know you're ready to submit your proposal to your council 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
- Your project will take at least 80 hours to complete
- You have the skills and resources to carry out your project
- You've created a plan to inspire others about your project and its impact

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.

Your council will have a specific review and approval process, so be sure to check in with them for next steps.

PROPOSAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Gold Award proposals are submitted through Go Gold Online. Be sure to select Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois as your council and hit submit! Once your proposal is received, it will be sent to the Gold Award Committee for review and you will be contacted to schedule an interview with the Gold Award Committee. Please submit your proposal at least a month before you wish to begin.

During your interview, you will receive feedback from the Gold Award Committee. You will know if

- Your proposal has been approved
- Your proposal requires more information
- Your proposal needs more work

If your Gold Award proposal is not approved, don't worry! This is a learning process from beginning to end and the Gold Award Staff, Committee and your project advisor are here to help!

You will also receive a copy of your project rubric and any additional feedback 2-3 business days after your interview.

If revisions to your proposal are needed, they can be made by logging back into your Go Gold On Line account and editing your proposal. Once your revisions are complete, your proposal is resubmitted. When the revisions meet the standards of a Girl Scout Gold Award project, you will be approved to move forward. You can continue to update the progress of your project by logging back into your Go Gold Online account.

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.

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. 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.

Like in Step 5, upload any additional files your council requires 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 submit to your council for review and approval.

As when you submit your proposal to your council at Step 5, your council will have a specific review and approval process for Step 7, so be sure to check in with them for next steps.

FINAL REPORT REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Review your final report with your Gold Award Project Advisor before submitting through Go Gold online. The Gold Award Committee will review your final report. You will be notified by email and receive an official letter in the mail.

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!

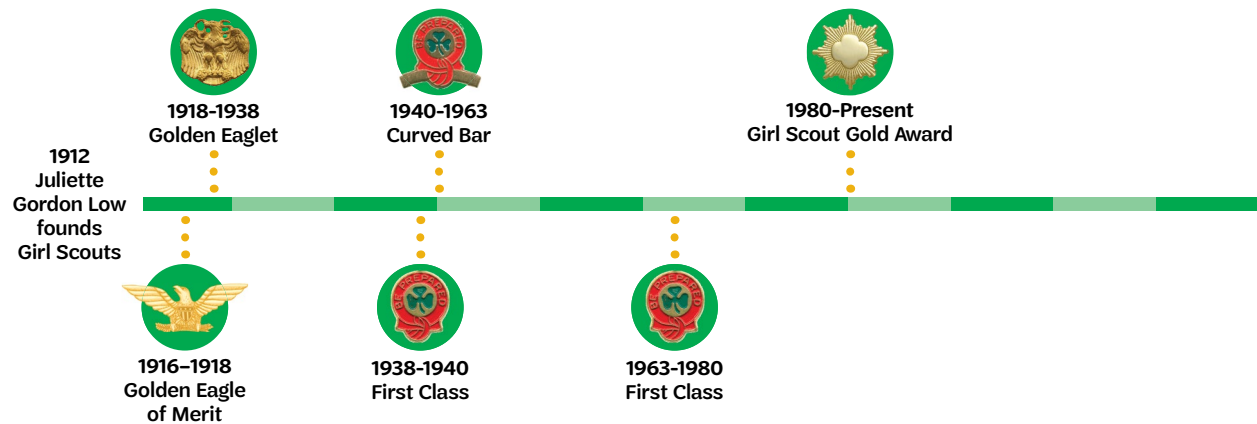
Congratulations—you're a Gold Award Girl Scout!

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.

WHEN IS THE GOLD AWARD CEREMONY?

To participate in the GSNI Gold Award recognition, Gold Award projects must be completed by March 15. Projects are considered “completed” when the final report has been submitted through GoGold online and the Gold Award committee has reviewed and approved the project.

Girls who do not complete their Gold Award by March 15 will be included in the following year’s ceremony.

Local Service Unit Celebrations honor highest award recipients. Please contact your troop leader or GSNI Gold Award Staff Member to connect with your local Service Unit and let them know you are a Gold Award Girl Scout!

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 Parents and Caregivers](#)

[The Gold Award Guide for Troop Leaders](#)

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](#)

[Learn About the National Gold Award Girl Scouts](#)

[Get your Gold Award Credential](#)

GIRL SCOUTS OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS RESOURCES

Please visit our council’s Gold Award webpage for additional resources: girlscoutsni.org/highestawards.

A special thank you to Girl Scouts San Diego for creating the guide that inspired this national template and to the 2020 Highest Award Council Thought Partners—Girl Scouts of Alaska, Girl Scouts of Central Texas, Girl Scouts of Connecticut, Girl Scouts of Nassau County, Girl Scouts Northeast Texas, Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois, Girl Scouts of San Geronio, Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida, Girl Scouts of Maine, and Girl Scouts of Western Ohio—for informing the updated Gold Award Guidelines for our Movement at every step.
