

Take Action Projects

There are three keys to leadership within Girl Scouting. These are explored throughout each Girl Scout Journey, and also during the three highest awards in Girl Scouting the Girl Scout Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards.

Discover: Girls understand themselves and their values and use their knowledge and skills to explore the world.

Connect: Girls care about, inspire, and team with others locally and globally.

Take Action: Girls act to make the world a better place.

Not sure how to get started on a Take Action project? Follow these simple steps in order to plan a meaningful Take Action project with your girls.

Step 1: Community Mapping

A community map is a drawing or a list that shows the community's needs and resources, including contacts who might help girls when working on a Take Action project.

Have girls draw a picture of their community, include resources such as the library, animal shelters, parks department, and more. Next have the girls think about issues or problems in their community. You can have girls ask their parents and watch the local news and have ideas for the next meeting if they need time to research.

These problems may be small or large issues. Some examples may include: old unsafe playground at the local park, many stray cats that don't have a home, nothing for teens to do on the weekend, bullies at school, etc.

Important: One key to a great Take Action project is to determine what the community needs are before creating the Take Action project. There is nothing worse than creating a project, then finding out that it was not needed. Also, these projects should be girl-led, so make sure that your girls care about the issue at hand and that they can complete the project.

Step 2: Take Action vs. Community Service Project

After the girls have determined one or more problems in their community, and some potential resources for helping with the problem, it is time to create the Take Action project. While some community service projects address the immediate needs in the community and are important, they only help for a short period of time. Take Action projects are lasting service projects that make long-term change. To create this long term change, follow these three guidelines.

A Take Action project should:

- a. **Address Root Cause** – Identify the origin of the problem in the community. The girls’ goal is to solve the issue not the symptoms. If you only fix the symptoms – what you see on the surface – the problem will almost certainly happen again. Which will lead you to fix it, again, and again, and again.
- b. **Measurable** — The success of the project can be determined based on the number of people the project helped, the number of people who were involved, any reduction in the community's need and other concrete numbers.
- c. **Sustainable** — Girls should make arrangements to ensure that the project creates lasting change and is not a one-time event. Girls can do this by collaborating with community leaders and/or organizations; building alliances with mentors, or other ways.

Short-term Community Service projects are important parts of the community, and your troop may still participate in and plan these projects. However, in order to make a lasting difference in our community, Girl Scouts can also do Take Action projects that will give girls the chance to make the world a better place!

Issue	Short Term Project <i>one-time effort: has short-term impact</i>	Take Action Project <i>(long-term benefits and sustainable support)</i>
Local food pantry needs help	Collect nonperishable food through a food drive at school	Collect food and also develop a recipe book of nutritious food using simple ingredients — find local printing company to print several copies and give original to the food pantry to make more when needed
Local animal shelter needs supplies and volunteers	Hold food and toy drive in community	Hold drive and create a marketing campaign — posters, radio spots, flyers, etc — encouraging community to donate supplies and time to the shelter. Give all marketing materials to the shelter for use in future drives
An uninsured family's home is destroyed by a fire	Collect clothes, household goods and food for the family	Work with a local Habitat for Humanity and organize a work group to rebuild the family's home

Step 3: Plan and Go For It!

Sit down with girls and determine who will do each step of the project. Remember this is a girl-led project, so step back as much as possible and only help when they need it.

Take time to write down each step and who is in charge, keep the project plan close at hand so you can check back to it to see who needs to do what step. Look back to your list of community resources to see who may be able to help your group during the project.

Get stuck at a certain step? Take a break and come back to it another day to see the project in a new way.

Step 4: Celebrate!

Once your project is complete, take time to celebrate with your girls. Plan a party or ceremony to talk about what the girls have achieved. Think about inviting community resources or family members. Your group may also want to share a video with the GSMIST community, email us to let us know of your accomplishments.

The benefits of Take Action projects go far beyond the reach of the project itself. Not only does the community see sustainable changes, girls will develop strong leadership skills that will help them through their lifetime. As the community sees how girls are changing the world through Girl Scouts, they will want to get involved as volunteers, and may even want to serve as project advisors on other Take Action projects.