girl scouts
of michigan
shore to shore

# Navigating the
# Gold Award Process

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# Girl Scout Gold Award Project Essentials

The Girl Scout Gold Award is a **Take Action project** that must include **five elements**. A Gold Award 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. Regardless of where a project takes place or the issue it tackles, it must…

- Make a **lasting difference** in the local community, region, Girl Scout Council, or beyond
- Put the Girl Scout Promise and Law into action
- Include provisions to ensure **sustainability**
- Identify **national and/or global links** to your selected issue
- **Inspire** others
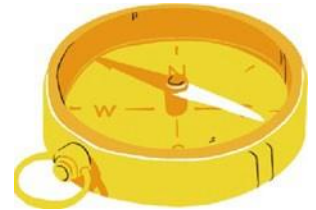
# Gold Award Requirements

- Prospective candidates must meet the prerequisites before starting a Gold Award Project Proposal or their project. To be eligible to earn the Gold Award, the Girl Scout must have either:
  - Earn the **Silver Award** as a Cadette and complete **1 Senior or Ambassador Journey** (plus the Take Action project at the end), *or*
  - Complete **2 Senior or Ambassador Journeys** (plus the Take Action projects at the end)
- The Gold Award is earned by a registered Senior or Ambassador Girl Scout in grades 9-12 (or the equivalent) **individually**
  - Only one Girl Scout may lead an approved Gold Award Project.
  - The Gold Award is earned individually but will require a volunteer team, led by the Girl Scout to support the Gold Award project.
- Highest Award projects must be a **Take Action Project – they are not community service projects**, even if the community service project is large and takes a lot of time and hard work.
- Gold Award Project Proposals must be approved by the GSMISTS Gold Award Support Team *before beginning work.*
  - Up to 8 hours of research conducted for the Gold Award Project prior to approval of the Gold Award Project Proposal is acceptable. Examples of research include interviews/discussions with the organization you wish to work with and online/library research on your issue and root cause.
  - Work completed before receiving approval on the Gold Award Project Proposal may not be counted in the Gold Award Project hours. Examples of work include money earning activities, building any items, creating the education piece, training your team or, or training the people who will be sustaining your Gold Award Project.
- Projects must take a **minimum of 80 hours** to complete.
  - **20%** of total project hours must account for **leadership** – this is time spent recruiting/training volunteers, delegating tasks, and otherwise directing the work of others. **No more than 10%** of project hours may be from **money-earning** for your project.
- The **deadline** for Gold Award Project completion and Gold Award Final Report submission is **September 30th** immediately following your high school graduation.

# Projects Benefitting Girl Scouting

Highest Award projects, including the Gold Award, may benefit Girl Scouting under certain circumstances. In addition to meeting all the GSUSA's Gold Award Standards for the Gold Award, projects benefitting Girl Scouting must also align with GSMISTS strategic goals and property plans. Girls should first investigate an issue they care about (rather than a particular camp or part of Girl Scouting), and then determine if Girl Scouts is the most logical beneficiary of the project. This requires the approval of GSMISTS. To determine if your Gold Award Project idea meets these requirements, contact [customercare@gsmists.org](mailto:customercare@gsmists.org).

Keep in mind that if a project could earn any of the other awards in Girl Scouting, it will not meet the standards for a Gold Award. For example, as a Gold Award Project, girls cannot run badge days or camporees, take over a volunteer- run camp, or start a troop in an area that needs it. These are wonderful things to do, but they are considered eligible for Service to Girl Scouting or Volunteer in Training awards.

# Individually Registered Girl Scouts

**Individually registered Girl Scouts** can earn the Girl Scout Gold Award! There are just a few items to remember.

A registered adult Girl Scout volunteer must be listed as the Girl Scout's troop leader and sign off on the completion of prerequisites.

If an individually registered Girl Scout wants to conduct **additional money-earning** for her project, she must participate in GSMISTS Product Program (Treats & Reads and Cookies). Contact customercare@gsmists.org or 616-784-3341 to inquire about steps to take.

# Girl Scouts Requesting Accommodations

The Gold Award can be earned by any Girl Scout who puts her mind to it – **it is completed to the best of a girl's ability**. It is not necessary to have a separate set of standards for Girl Scouts who need accommodations, because the Gold Award process allows flexibility and the recruitment of advisors who can work with the girl based on her individual needs. We believe in the power of all girls and strive to make accommodations for Girl Scouts to achieve their goals on a case-by-case basis.

**To request accommodations, use the Special Factors section of GoGold Online.**

If you have any formal arrangements with your school such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP), our Gold Award Support Team may use that as a basis for any accommodations the Gold Award process. If you have a method of communication that you prefer (for example, if you prefer email because you are deaf or hard-of-hearing), we can ensure your Gold Award Liaison and any GSMISTS staff members who may need to connect with you are aware of that. The best way to contact us regarding this issue is by emailing customercare@gsmists.org.

# Girl Scouts with Limited Technology Access

If a Girl Scout pursuing her Gold Award has limited access to necessary tools or resources such as home internet or a computer contact us by emailing customercare@gsmists.org or by calling 616-784-3341 during regular business hours. If you are unable to do either of these, please enlist the help of your Troop Leader, Service Unit volunteer, or other trusted adult to help you make the connection to GSMISTS staff.

We can collaborate with you to **develop a plan** and/or help you find ways to gain access to the resources you need to complete your Gold Award Project. What this plan looks like will depend on your particular situation. We will make sure to inform the Gold Award Support Team during the review process of your needs or any obstacles you are facing so that they are aware of the situation and can collaborate with you as necessary. Make sure to contact us in advance to avoid waiting until the last minute to seek support.

# Steps to Earning the Gold Award

**Complete the Gold Award Prerequisites and Gold Award Training**
If you earned the Silver Award as a Cadette, you must complete one Senior or Ambassador Journey (including the Take Action project at the end). If you did not earn the Silver Award, you must complete two Senior or Ambassador Journeys (including the Take Action projects).

GSMISTS Gold Award Training is accessed through gsLearn.
- Modules 1 and 2 – General introduction to help Girl Scouts decide if they want to "Go for Gold." After completing these two modules, Girl Scouts should stop and decide whether they want to work on their Girl Scout Gold Award. Of course, this decision can always change.
- Modules 3, 4, and 5 – Girl Scouts complete these three modules after completion of the Gold Award prerequisites.
- Module 6 – This module is optional and provided support and guidance on the GoGold platform.
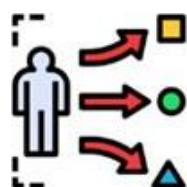
**Choose an Issue**
Use your values and skills to choose a community issue that you care about. Look into the issues that exist in your local or global community and identify one that you actually care about! Your Gold Award Project must address an issue in which you care about and are passionate about!

**Investigate It Thoroughly**
Use your sleuthing skills to learn everything you can about the issue you've identified. Talk to people involved with the issue and conduct academic research. You must examine the issue from all sides and look at all the input. What one person or a few people say is not necessarily the whole story. Document all your research so you can include it in your Gold Award Project Proposal. Up to 8 hours of research conducted before receiving approval on your Gold Award Project Proposal may count towards your total Gold Award Project hours.

**Get Help and Build Your Team**
Form a team to support your efforts and help you with your Gold Award Project. You will need a Project Advisor- an adult expert on the issue your Gold Award Project addresses who is not related to you and not your troop leader. The rest of your team may include other expert consultants and volunteers to help you conduct your work, such as friends, family, and community members.

**Create a Plan**
Identify the root cause of your issue, then create a plan to tackle it. You can develop your Gold Award proposal in GoGold Online by answering the questions it will ask about your project.
Typing out your answers in Word first to be sure everything is grammatically correct and answered thoroughly. GSUSA is now allowing Gold Award projects to benefit Girl Scouting! This decision should not happen before this step; you

must first know the issue you want to address before deciding if it is a good fit for Girl Scouting or an outside organization.

### Present Your Plan and Gather Feedback
Submit your Gold Award Project Proposal to GSMISTS via GoGold Online for review, suggestions, and eventually approval. Have your troop leader and other trusted adults review it first! The Gold Award Support Team will read what you have written about your proposed Gold Award Project and determine what follow-up questions and feedback they have for you. They will collaborate with you to determine if your proposed Gild Award Project meets all the GSUSA's Gold Award standards or how to get to that point. Be prepared to modify your Gold Award Project Proposal.

Once your proposed Gold Award Project meets GSUSA's Gold Award standards, the Gold Award Support Team will invite you to present your proposed Girl Scout Project Proposal during a meeting. Once the Gold Award Support Team approves your Gold Award Project Proposal, you will be assigned a Gold Award Liaison. You may start your Gold Award Project ONLY AFTER receiving approval of your Gold Award Project Proposal.

### Take Action
Lead your team to carry-out your approved Gold Award Project Proposal. It is possible that you will run into roadblocks or need support – and that is okay! Always reach out to your Gold Award Liaison and keep them updated about what is going on with your project and what you may need.

### Educate and inspire
Tell your story and share your results. You must complete your Gold Award Final Report in GoGold Online and submit it to the GSMISTS for approval by September 30 of the year of your high school graduation.

**IMPORTANT: Full details on all steps and core concepts are found in GSMISTS' *Your Guide to Going Gold* and in GSUSA's online platform, GoGold https://gogold.girlscouts.org/en/sign-in.html**

# Gold Award Example Track

Not sure how to get started? Check out the example track below to get a sense for what earning the Gold Award looks like from beginning to end, and to ensure that you have enough time to complete your Gold Award.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 | Final Phase! |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Explore GSMISTS' Gold Award Training Modules**<br>Complete Module 1 and 2 of the Gold Award Online training | **Develop your project plan**<br>Log in to GoGold Online and complete steps 1-4. | **REMINDER**<br>**DO NOT** begin your Girl Scout Gold Award project until you receive an official approval to start work from the GSMISTS Gold Award Support Team. | **Submit your Final Report**<br>AFTER your project is complete, log in to GoGold Online and complete step 7. Once you are satisfied with your responses, hit "submit"! |
| **Complete Prerequisites**<br> If you earned your Silver Award, you need one Senior or Ambassador Journey **otherwise** TWO Senior or Ambassador Journeys | **Discuss your plan**<br>Review your ideas with your Troop Leader and Project Advisor | **Take Action!**<br>Carry out your approved Girl Scout Gold Award project plan. The length of time it takes you to complete your project will depend on the time you | **REMINDER**<br>The final deadline to complete your project and submit your final report is September 30th immediately following your high school graduation. |
| **Complete Additional Gold Award Training Modules**<br>Complete Modules 3 through 5 of the Gold Award Online training | **Review *Your Guide to Going Gold* and the training modules**<br><br>**Present your plan**<br>Once everything is in good order, log in to GoGold Online and complete step 5, then hit "submit"! | **Keep Track of your progress as you go**<br>This includes your timeline and budget. Log in to GoGold Online to access step 6. | **CELELBRATE!**<br>Once you have gained final approval, you will be invited to attend The GSMISTS Girl Scout Recognition Ceremony to be honored as a Gold Award Girl Scout |
| **Create a GoGold Online account**<br>Visit **gogold.girlscouts.org** to create a profile with the Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore | **Make necessary revisions**<br>The Gold Award Support Team will look over your proposal.  They will either schedule you for an interview or will provide feedback on how to improve your proposal for eventual approval. | **Update your Gold Award Support Team Liaison at least once per month**<br>Even if you have not done any work during the month! | |

Gold Award Project Proposals are typically reviewed monthly as they are received. Girls in the 12th grade are strongly encouraged to submit their complete Gold Award Project Proposal no later than January 1, of the year they graduate, but we recommend that you submit it much earlier. The Gold Award Project Proposal and **review processes are not instantaneous**, and completing Gold Award Projects often take longer than a Girl Scout initially expects. Plan for follow-up questions and proposal refinement. Gold Award Final Reports are typically reviewed by the Gold Award Support Team as they receive them. This review and approval process is not instantaneous either. Plan to answer questions and respond to feedback.

# Timeline Considerations

Managing your time, working in all of your other commitments—school, sports, band, religious activities, jobs, and friends—is an enormous challenge.

Think ahead about the time of year that you really do want to work on your Gold Award Project.
  ➢ Does it need to be during the growing season for a garden project?
  ➢ Does it need to be done outdoors in good weather?
  ➢ Do you want to work during spring break?
  ➢ Are you going to work with children during the school year?
  ➢ When will your team members be available?

**ONE approach is to <u>PLAN BACKWARDS</u>!**

Set when you want to be finished ➔➔You submit your final report➔➔

You share your Gold Award Project results➔➔You ensure sustainability➔➔You do main Gold

Award Project work➔➔ You get Gold Award Project Proposal approved➔➔You make

adjustments to your plan➔➔You submit your Gold Award Project Proposal➔➔

You do research, design, and write your Gold Award Project Proposal➔➔Your start date

So how long does all that take? Probably the very fastest you can do all the steps is three months and that is when school is out. It is more likely that you will spread out your work over six to nine months. Plan for interruptions like band/sport season, family vacations, Girl Scout activities, final exams, and more.

*If you are already a high school senior* and attempting your Gold Award, this is the latest timeline you can use for your Gold Award Project. As of October 1, of the year you graduate high school, you are considered an adult Girl Scout member.

| March 1- April 14 | Research, design, complete Gold Award Project Proposal |
|---|---|
| April 14 | Submit Gold Award Project Proposal through GoGold Online to the Girl Scout Support Team |
| May 1 | **FINAL** date to receive approval on God Award Project Proposal |
| May 1 – September 1 | Complete Gold Award Project work |
| September 10 | Submit Gold Award Final Report |
| September 30 | **Absolute deadline to submit an *approvable* Gold Award Final Report** |

# Community Service vs. Take Action Projects

Community Service projects help solve an immediate need (a condition requiring supply or relief) but do not impact the root cause of an issue. These often center on making and donating needed items or beautifying spaces. These projects are important, but they do not GSUSA's Gold Award Standards.

Take Action Projects help solve an issue (a community problem that must be addressed on a larger scale) by discovering the root cause (the reason the issue exists in the first place) and implementing a solution that reduces or eliminates that root cause. Gold Award Projects must be Take Action Projects.

| Community Service | Take Action Project |
|---|---|
| Addresses an **immediate need** in the community | Addresses the **root cause** of an **issue** in the community |
| A project done **for** the community | A project done **with** the community |
| A **one-time** or **short-term** impact project that helps someone right now. | A **long-term** project that makes a **lasting impact** and is fully **sustainable** beyond your involvement |
| Joining an existing effort to solve a problem | Creating a unique initiative to address an issue |
| Done as a part of an existing team (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 |

| Community Service vs. Take Action Project Examples |
|---|



**Issue:** A popular local hiking trail is littered with trash

**Root Cause(s)**: Lack of awareness of trash impact; no trash cans on the trails themselves

**Community Service Project** (not a Gold Award): Hosting a trash pickup day on the trail

**Take Action Project** (potentially a Gold Award): Installing trash cans at regular intervals on the trail, and coordinating with a junior ranger program to empty them. Creating a trash-cycle education program for the visitor center so hikers are informed about the impact of their trash

**How to measure your impact**: Set up a comment system with the visitor center to track what people think about the trail condition. Compare the time the park ranger spends picking up trash now, vs. before the trash cans were installed.

**How to make it sustainable**: Coordinate with a junior rangers program to continue emptying the cans. Get the visitor center's commitment to highlight your trash-cycle poster and education



**Issue:** Unhoused people are sleeping outside during the winter months

**Root Cause(s)**: Limited shelter during cold winter months due to high demand

**Community Service Project** (not a Gold Award): Holding a warm coat & mitten drive

**Take Action Project** (potentially a Gold Award): Coordinating multiple community centers to hold weekly pop-up shelters on an ongoing basis

**How to measure your impact**: Assess how many more unhoused folks have access to shelter (using insight from homeless shelter community center staff)

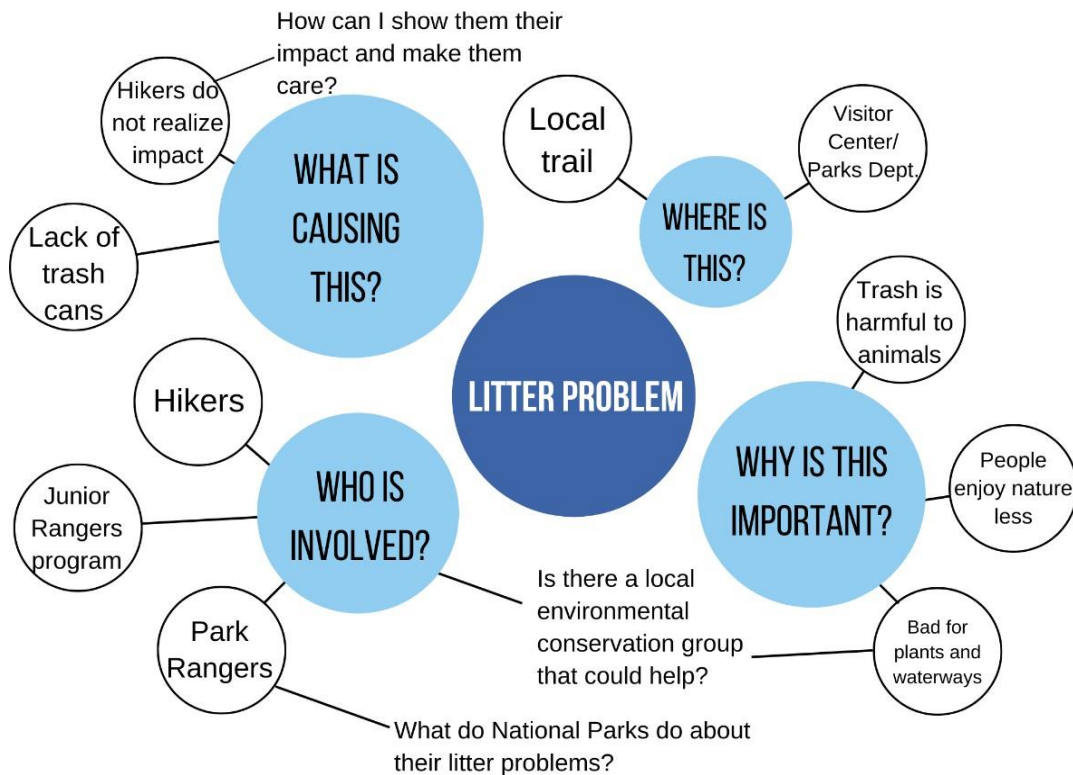**How to make it sustainable**: Petition shelters to host this program every year

# How to Choose a Gold Award Project

The issue you choose to address with your Gold Award Project should be one you are **personally passionate** about -- not one that someone else told you to do, or you think you "should" do.

Make a list of **ten issues** you care about – think about your skills, interests, and the needs of your community. From that list, narrow down your options to the two or three that are most interesting to you. Then **create mind maps for those three most interesting topics.** Start with your basic issue or topic in the center, and build your map out gradually by asking yourself relevant questions, including:

- **Why** is this issue important?
- **What** is causing the issue in the first place? It is okay to make assumptions in the mind mapping phase as long as you follow-up with research and investigation later (which we will cover on the next page).
- **Where** is this an issue?
- **Who** is involved? Who is impacted by the problem? Who are the subject-matter experts? What groups or organizations are already doing work on the topic?

This process will help you connect and organize your ideas, think about possible root causes, and identify which issue you are the most excited about as a possible Gold Award Project. Your mind map can look however you want it to and include any thoughts or ideas you have -- this is just one example.

# Take Action Project Decision Bracket

**What are your talents and skills?**
**What did you do for fun?**

**Combine the final pair to create your Take Action project!**

**What bothers you?**
**What issues do you want to solve?**
**Who do you want to help?**

**Step 1**
Fill in these boxes.

**Step 2**
Fill in these boxes.

**Step 3**
For each bracket, choose one.

**Step 4**
Continue until you have a final pair, then combine them to create your project!

- making schedules
- cooking
- cooking
- playing volleyball
- making movies
- giving presentations
- playing the guitar
- creating apps
- hanging out with friends

- cooking
- making movies
- playing the guitar
- creating apps

- cooking
- texting and driving
- **texting and driving**
- **creating apps**
- dangerous intersection

- texting and driving
- kids who need friends
- no after-school STEM club
- dangerous intersection

- bullying on social media
- texting and driving
- kids who need friends
- abandoned pets
- no after-school STEM club
- too much homework
- dangerous intersection
- my brother's teasing

In this example, your Take Action Project might be to create an app that locks your phone before you drive, then sends a unique code to someone who is not in the car. You cannot use your phone until the person with the code unlocks it.

# BLANK Take Action Project Decision Bracket

What are your talents and skills?
What did you do for fun?

Combine the final pair to create
your Take Action project!

What bothers you?
What issues do you want to solve?
Who do you want to help?
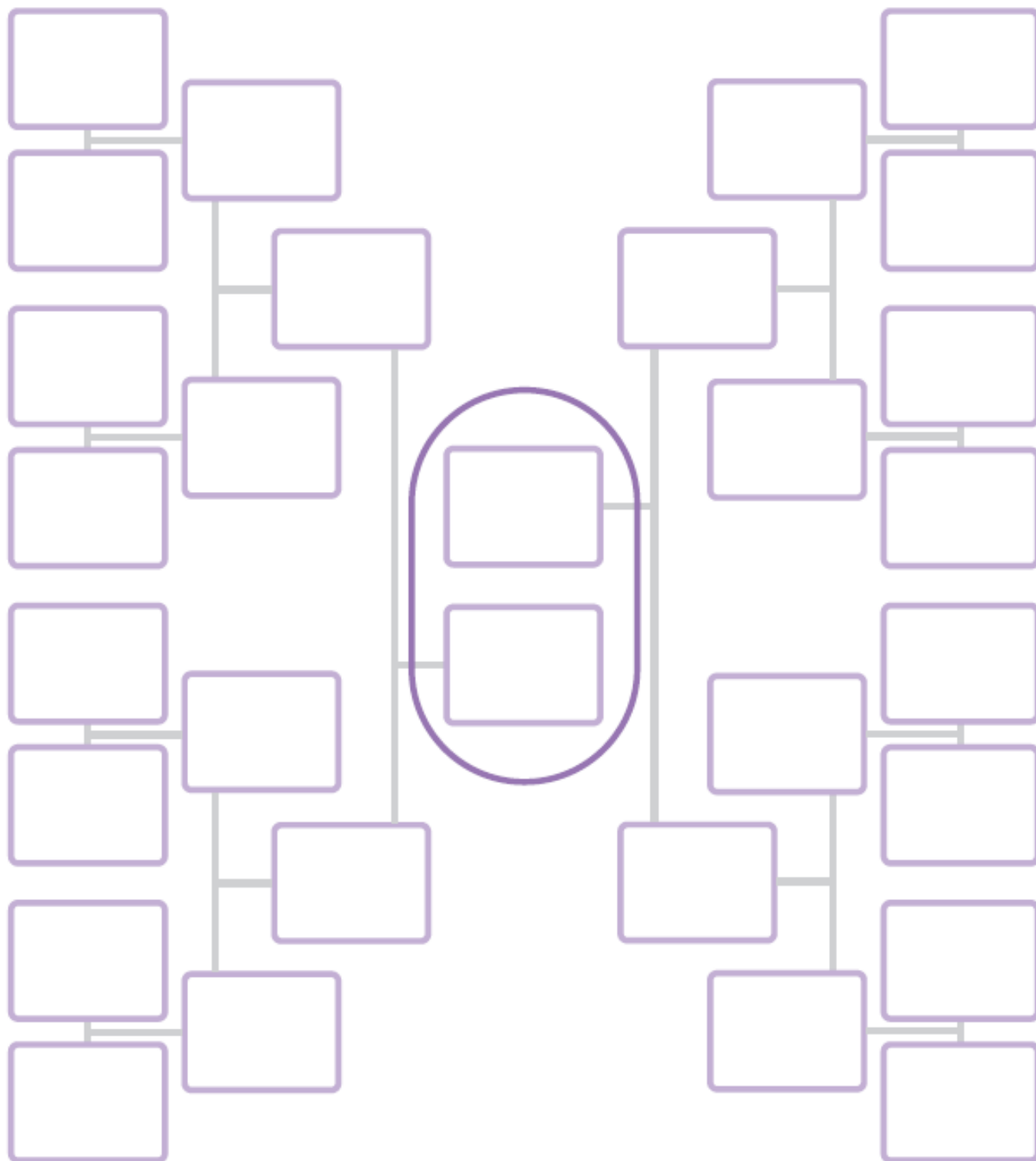
# BLANK Mind Map

**Step 1:**
Write your community issue.
(Place the answer in the inner circle.)

**Step 2:**
Ask: "What activates the issue?"
Then, explore further.
(Place answers in circles just outside the community issue.)

**Step 3:**
To find the root cause, ask: "Why does this happen?"
(Place answers in outer circles.)

Add as many of the Step 3 circles as you like. These are your root causes. Select one or two root causes and you have the foundation of a strong Gold Award Project!

Step 3

Step 3

Step 3

Step 2

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 2

Step 3
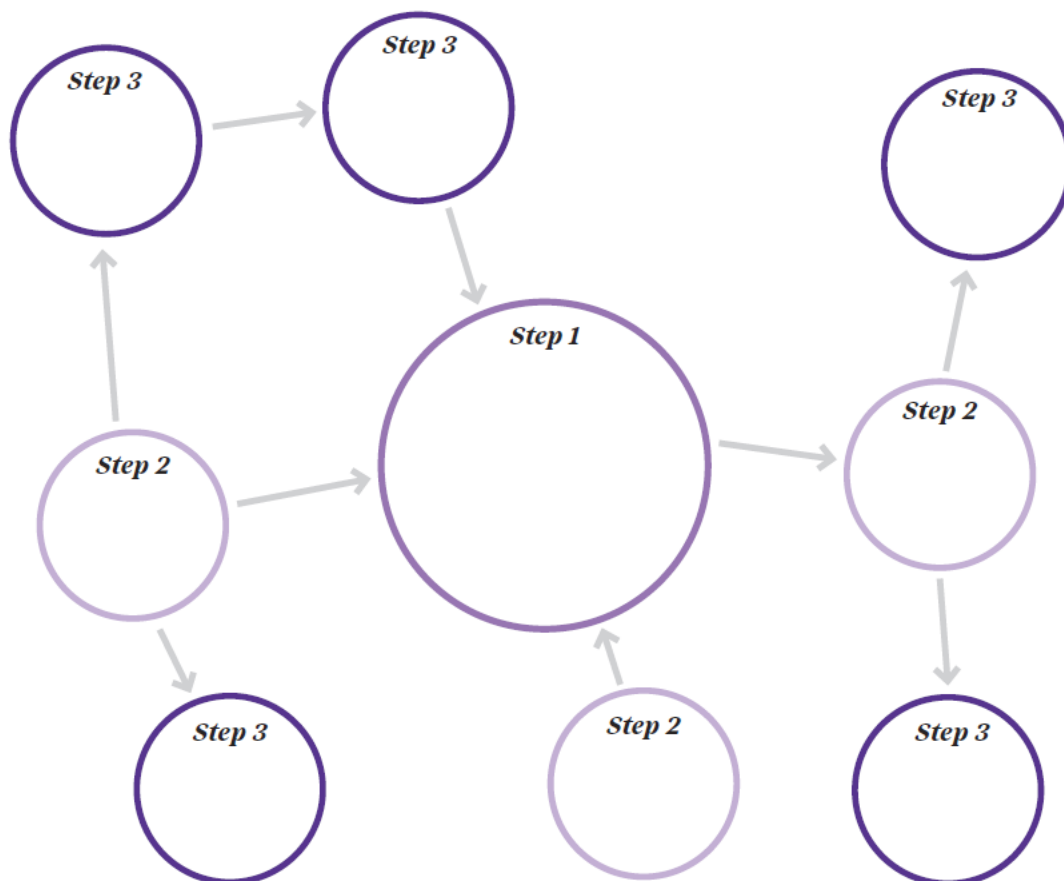
# Projects That Do Not Meet GSUSA's Gold Award Standards

➢ Projects that **fundraise** or **generate profit** for any organization, group, or individual, including Girl Scouts.
➢ Projects that **recruit** for any organization, including Girl Scouts.
➢ Projects that **endorse** a consumer product or political candidate.
➢ **Little Free Libraries and Blessing Boxes** or other projects that **ONLY** focus on donation drives and collection of items. There must be sustainability beyond the library/box build and the project should focus on education for the community.
➢ **Fix/Build/Beautify It projects.** Beautification and renovation projects are considered community service projects since Girl Scouts are a short-term workforce rather than having a sustainable long-term impact.
  o **Planting** flowers outside a community center, painting the walls of a meeting space, cleaning up an already established hiking trail, or similar projects.
  o **Building-only** projects like benches, picnic tables, bridges, and other similar community service projects.
➢ **Make-and-donate projects** such as making blankets, calm down kits, or hats for babies and donating them to hospitals, schools, or other community centers.
➢ **Stand-alone websites are discouraged.** Identifying someone to maintain such a website over time is difficult. Creating a page to be added to an organization's existing website is a better way to sustain your project.

     **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Your Gold Award Project must make a difference and have a lasting impact!

## Conducting Research

In order to develop a successful Gold Award Project, you must conduct research. It is not enough to say that your topic is an issue because you assume it is, or because one or two other people said so. You must investigate your issue **thoroughly.**

You need to conduct research as you develop your Gold Award Project Proposal. Up to **8 hours of research** completed prior to gaining approval to start work may be counted in your timeline. However, *you may not start work on your Gold Award Project beyond researching until your Gold Award Project Proposal has been reviewed and approved* by the Gold Award Support Team.

Why do you need to conduct research for your Gold Award Project? Here are a few reasons:

• To learn more about the issue you have chosen and identify its root cause so you fully understand what is going on, what is causing it, and can develop a solution that makes sense
• To identify what work is already being done to address the issue if any
• To hear from experts and people involved with the issue about what they think needs to happen

Research information from **books** and **reliable online sources**. You also need to talk to **subject-matter experts** in the field. These could be staff members at the organization you wish to partner with, people who teach about the topic, or others with professional or expert-level experience. You will need to recruit a subject-matter expert to be your Project Advisor, so these interviews may help. After all the research you have done, you will want to cite them in your Gold Award Project Proposal. The Gold Award Support Team will be interested in reading where you have found the inspiration for your Gold Award Project Proposal.

# Recruiting a Project Advisor

**Who can be a Project Advisor?**
A Project Advisor is an adult subject-matter expert on the issue your Gold Award project addresses, its root cause(s), and/or the solution you wish to implement. Parents, caregivers, or troop leaders of Girl Scouts pursuing their Gold Award cannot be the primary Project Advisor.

**How can I find a Project Advisor?**
You must investigate and ask! You will usually recruit them during the "research" phase. If you are partnering with an organization, like a non-profit, your Project Advisor might be a staff member there. If your project does not directly involve another organization, you can still find experts by investigating people or organizations that participate in the cause you are pursuing.

**What is the role of a Project Advisor?**
A Project Advisor offers guidance and expertise as needed during the planning and execution of the Gold Award Project. Note that it's important that the Gold Award Project and its core ideas be the Girl Scout's own.

**How can Project Advisors support Girl Scouts Working Towards Their Gold Award?**
There are many things Project Advisors can do to help. This includes:
- Letting you interview them to help explain the issue you are addressing.
- Referring you to colleagues or acquaintances for interviews or advice.
- Referring you to relevant books, web resources, and/or organizations.
- Helping you brainstorm the metrics most useful in ensuring your project has a measurable impact.

**Please note:** You may have more than one Project Advisor and may in fact want or need multiple consultants to advise you depending on your topic. However, at least one Project Advisor is required and must be recruited prior to submitting a Gold Award Project Proposal.

# Roles of Gold Award Volunteers

Although a Gold Award Project is individually led by a single Girl Scout, it cannot be achieved alone. You will need the help and support of volunteers to elevate your project higher than you could by yourself and create a space for you to demonstrate leadership -- a key requirement of the project.

**Parent/Guardian/Caregiver:** Provide positive encouragement to keep their Girl Scout going, transportation, Gold Award Project Proposal proofreading, and otherwise help their Girl Scouts when asked. They are not the ones to speak or ask questions for their Girl Scout, nor should they be the ones taking over or driving the Gold Award Project. Remember-the Gold Award is girl-led! They support communication between their Girl Scout and other adults if needed, but otherwise, let the Girl Scout lead. They should not be the ones to reach out to GSMISTS or their Girl Scout's Gold Award Liaison.

**Troop Leader (or other registered adult Girl Scout volunteer):** Troop leaders support their Girl Scout and ensures that what they are doing follows the Girl Scout rules and regulations as laid out in the *Volunteer Essentials* and *Safety Activity Checkpoints.* They help advise on the Gold Award Project during the planning stages, verify the completion of prerequisites, and offer proofreading assistance.

**Project Advisor:** Project Advisors are adult subject-matter experts in the issue the Gold Award deals with, and/or a staff member of the organization the project will benefit. They offer guidance and expertise as needed and help open doors Girl Scouts may not have been able to open on their own. A Gold Award Project may have multiple Project Advisors or a broader consulting team, but at least one is required. Girls must recruit their own Project Advisors. This generally takes place as you are developing your plan and conducting research and must happen before submitting your Gold Ward Project Proposal. Parents, guardians, immediate relatives, and troop leaders may not serve as Project Advisors. Project Advisors are not paid -- you need to find someone who can volunteer with you on this endeavor.

**Volunteer Team:** Volunteers are the people you will recruit, train, delegate tasks to, and direct the work of as the help you with your Gold Award Project. This is how you demonstrate leadership. The precise number of people you need will depend on the size and scope of your Gold Award Project, but every project requires a volunteer team. Think about what tasks need to be accomplished. Who can help you get things done? Teams may include family, friends, troop members, peers, neighbors, members of the organization you are working with…anyone who can help. Your team should extend outside your immediate family.

**Gold Award Support Team Coordinator:** After your complete Gold Award Project Proposal is submitted through GoGold Online and reviewed by the Gold Award Support Team, the Gold Award Support Team Coordinator will communicate any feedback and questions about your proposed Gold Award Project to ensure that your project meets GSUSA's Gold Award Standards. The Gold Award Support Team Coordinator will also set up times for Gold Award Project Proposal and Gold Award Final Report interviews.

**Gold Award Support Team Liaison:** Your personal Gold Award cheerleader, assigned to you by the Gold Award Support Team, after your Gold Award Project Proposal is approved. Email your Liaison monthly regarding your progress. Ask this person questions when you have issues you need help with.

# Gold Award Project Hours

To earn your Gold Award, you must complete a **minimum of 80 hours** of your own work toward your Gold Award Project. You must plan a Gold Ward Project that will take you at least that amount of time to complete – IF the Gold Award Project you want to do will not realistically take 80 hours, it needs to be expanded or it does not meet GSUSA's Gold Award Standards. So, what do those 80 hours look like?

**Tasks You <span style="color:green">MAY</span> Count Toward Your Gold Award**

- Up to **8 hours of research** (or up to 10% of your total hours in a project greater than 80 hours). Research should be conducted prior to gaining approval on your Gold Award Project Proposal. All other work must wait until approval is received.
- Time spent doing additional **money-earning activities** or otherwise acquiring materials for your project. This should account for a maximum of 10% of your total hours.
- Time spent **leading your team**: recruiting/training volunteers, delegating tasks, otherwise directing the work of others. At least 20% of your total Gold Award Project hours should qualify as leadership.
- Time you spend **enacting your plan yourself**, whether that is building a structure, leading a workshop, facilitating an event, etc.

**Tasks You <span style="color:red">MAY NOT</span> Count Toward Your Gold Award**

- Time spent completing **Gold Award prerequisites** (including Journeys, the Gold Award training, and your Silver Award project- even if it is related to your Gold Award topic).
- More than 4 hours **writing and submitting** your Gold Award Project Proposal or supplemental forms.
- More than 4 hours **writing and submitting** your Gold Award Final Report or supplemental forms.
- Time spent participating in **GSMISTS Product Program activities**, even if you are participating to earn money for your Gold Award Project.
- Time spent **traveling** to and from different locations you may need to visit for your Gold Award Project (including but not limited to driving and flying).
- Time your team or **volunteers** spend doing work on your behalf.

It is also particularly important to note that the completion of your Gold Award Project in not measured solely by this hour requirement. If you complete 80 hours of work, but you have not enacted your entire proposal or completed everything you and the Gold Award Support Team have agreed you needed to do, then you are not done yet. 80 hours of work is not necessarily the finish line.
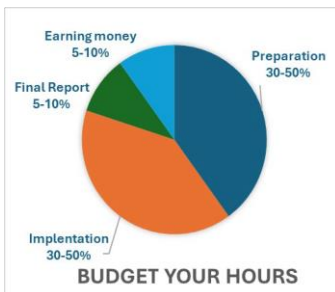


GoGold Online requires you to create an estimated timeline while you are developing your Gold Award Project Proposal. The timeline will help you think through the major elements of your project, the necessary sequence of events, whether you have enough hours planned as well as key milestone dates.

The **timeline** provides the Gold Award Support Team **a look at when you plan on accomplishing tasks** so they can assess the plan for important tasks that may be missing from your timeline and tasks that may not have been allotted sufficient time, in order to can help you avoid pitfalls. A *separate* **Project Plan** provides the Gold Award Support Team a **complete description of your project** and all the steps you will take to execute your Gold Award Project.

The timeline needs to show the balance between "**working tasks**" vs. "**leadership tasks.**" Working tasks are those related to creating and building the content of the Gold Award Project. Leadership tasks are associated with coordinating and directing the work of the team. This includes delegating, planning meetings, training volunteers, resolving conflicts, and setting priorities. Time spent leading your team should account for a minimum of 20% of the total Gold Award Project hours.

# GoGold Online Proposal Submission Process

**1. Create an account on GoGold Online and complete your profile.**
Be sure you register as a member of the Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore Council. You should register with your own personal email address rather than a parent's, your school email or a shared address.
Please note: if this is an obstacle because you do not have any access to the internet, contact the Gold Award Support Team Coordinator by emailing customercare@gsmists.org or calling 616-784-3341 during regular business hours.

**2. Answer all of the prompts and questions as clearly as possible.**
Take your time going through GoGold Online's steps 1 through 5. This is the first time the Gold Award Support Team will see your Gold Award Project Proposal, so show them you know what you are talking about and explain why your proposed Gold Award Project has value. GoGold allows 2000 words for key questions, so this means multiple full sentences. Make sure to cite your research.

**3. Complete and upload our Council's supplemental forms.**
This means thoroughly completing all fields and collecting all required signatures. Take special note of GSMISTS **Supplemental Budget, and Project Plan** requirement. Your budget must be balanced (income and expenses match), timeline must be carefully planned out, totaling a minimum of 80 hours, and your Project Plan must clearly explain and expand on what you will be doing for your Gold Award Project. There is no need to restate your issue or the root cause, but do give us all the details and steps of how you propose to execute your Gold Award Project.

**4. Request verification form your Troop Leader and Project Advisor through GoGold online.**
You can do this in Step 5 – Present your Plan. Both parties must verify your Gold Award Project Proposal before goes to the Gold Award Support Team. Remember: your parent/guardian/immediate relative or troop leader cannot sign off as your Project Advisor.

**5. Make sure your Gold Award Project Proposal is complete and hit submit!**
You will receive an email confirming your Gold Award Project Proposal was received. If your Gold Award Project Proposal is incomplete or you have not taken a Gold Award Training, this will delay your review. If you do not receive a confirmation email from GMSISTS within one week of submission, email customercare@gmsists.org.

**6. The Gold Award Support Team will review your Gold Award Project Proposal via email communication.**
The Gold Award Support Team Coordinator will reach out to provide feedback, ask follow-up questions, or schedule an interview.

**7. Complete your Gold Award Project Proposal interview with the Gold Award Support Team.**
You may not start work on your Gold Award Project until you have received approval from the Gold Award Support Team If your proposal was provided feedback, read it carefully and follow the recommendations. If you have any questions, reach out.

**8. Update your Gold Award Liaison at least once per month.**
Even if you have not done any work in a given month, they want to know if you are still pursuing your Gold Award. It is especially important to connect if you are hitting a roadblock or setback as they want to help and can adjust plans if needed.

# Gold Award Project Proposal Rubric

| Girl Scout's Name: | | Reviewer's Name: | |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | **Does Not Meet Standards** | **Needs Improvement** | **Meets Standards** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Prerequisites** | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: Prerequisite chart* | | |
| A | **Completion of two S/A Journeys OR Silver Award and one S/A Journey** | ☐ Is not a registered Senior or Ambassador Girl Scout; not in grades 9–12 <br> ☐ Has not completed two Senior/Ambassador Journeys or the Cadette Silver Award and one Senior/Ambassador Journey | | ☐ Is a registered Girl Scout in grades 9–12 <br> ☐ Has completed two Senior/Ambassador Journeys or the Cadette Silver Award and one Senior/Ambassador Journey |
| B | **Gold Award Training** | ☐ Has not completed Gold Award training, if applicable for council | | ☐ Has completed Gold Award training, if applicable for council |
| | | **Step 1: Choose an issue** | | |
| | | *Related questions in proposal: My Gold Award aims to address this issue* | | |
| C | **Project identifies a credible community need** (Pg. 12-13 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ Identified issue is based on Girl Scout's interests only and not on credible community need or <br> ☐ Identified issue is already being fulfilled by the community the Girl Scout intends to serve | | ☐ Identified issue is based on credible community need |
| | | *Related question in proposal: The root cause of my issue is* | | |
| D | **Project identifies a root cause of that community need and plan addresses that root cause** (Pgs. 5 & 13 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ Did not identify root cause <br> ☐ Project addresses an immediate need with a short-term/one-off solution | ☐ Identified root cause <br> ☐ Project plan does not address it | ☐ Identified root cause <br> ☐ Project plan shows well-constructed approach to address it |
| | | *Additional Feedback* | | |
| | | | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: The target audience(s) for my Gold Award project is/are* | | |
| E | **Target audience is clearly identified and engaged in project** (Pg. 12-13 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ Target audience is not part of the community affected by the issue <br> ☐ Project plan is designed FOR the target audience versus WITH | ☐ Target audience is part of the community affected by the issue <br> ☐ Project plan marginally benefits the target audience | ☐ Target audience is clearly identified members of the community affected by the issue <br> ☐ Project plan engages appropriate community members in the solution and demonstrates benefit to the target audience |

| | | Step 2: Investigate | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Related question in proposal: The reasons I selected my issue are* | | |
| F | **Research sources are cited and thoroughly investigated** (Pg. 12-13 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ No validation or research conducted to help shape project | ☐ Research is implied, but no sources provided | ☐ Some research has been conducted and 1–2 sources are referenced |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| G | **Project identifies national or global link to issue** (Pg. 5 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ No connection to national and/or global issue | ☐ Some research or evidence suggests limited connection to national or global issue | ☐ Includes broad research and evidence connecting project specifically to a larger national and/or global issue; solution contributes to addressing that issue |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| | | **Step 3: Get help** | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: List the names of individuals and organizations you plan to work with on your Gold Award project* | | |
| H | **Team members are identified** (Pg. 14 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ Self and family only | ☐ Self, family, and Girl Scouts only OR less than 3 team members | ☐ 3–5 team members, beyond Girl Scout community and family, with skills and knowledge related to the issue, including members of the community impacted by issue |
| | | *Related question in proposal: Girl Scout Gold Award Project Advisor information* | | |
| I | **Project Advisor is identified and is an expert** (Pg. 14 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ None selected | ☐ Advisor is family member or troop leader/volunteer OR does not have knowledge of selected issue | ☐ Advisor has expertise in one or more areas of the selected issue |
| | | **Step 4: Create a plan** | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: I will address the root cause by* | | |
| J | **Clear project description** | ☐ Project is not at all described; there is no explanation of what will be done | ☐ Project is vaguely described; it is unclear what will be done | ☐ Project is clearly described and shows a well-constructed approach on how the root cause of the issue will be addressed |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Related questions in proposal: The skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes my target audience will gain are; I will know that my audience has gained the desired skills/knowledge because; Measurement of my project's success chart* | | |
| K | **Project will have a measurable impact** (Pgs. 7-8 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ Impact does not relate to issue OR is not defined | ☐ Impact is a vague impression OR not realistically measurable | ☐ Impact is clearly defined and measurable; there is a clear measurement tool defined |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: My Gold Award project goals are* | | |
| L | **Project goals are clearly defined and realistic** (Pgs. 7-8 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ No goals identified | ☐ Goals lack detail and are not clearly connected to planned project impact | ☐ At least one goal is clearly defined and connected to project impact |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: My Gold Award will be sustained by* | | |
| M | **Project plan will ensure sustainability** (Pgs. 6-7 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ No plan for project to be continued OR the solution can't be maintained following the project (it's a service project) | ☐ Unclear idea of how the project will continue OR *hoping* someone else will sustain | ☐ Clear, thoughtful plan that leads to sustainability beyond the Girl Scout's involvement <br> ☐ Project Proposal submission included a separate detailed project plan. |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: I will put my plan in to action by* | | |
| N | **Timeline is realistic and appropriate** (Pg. 15 of *GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold*) | ☐ Confusing or unrealistic plan that is missing key steps and is less than 80 hours | ☐ Incomplete project plan that highlights only a few steps and is less than 80 hours | ☐ Comprehensive and realistic project plan that highlights all major steps in project and is about or over 80 hours |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| O | **Active leadership role planned and defined** (Pg. 6 of GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold) | ☐ No strategy to lead a team or engage others to help with the project OR project appears driven by an adult | ☐ Strategy to engage teammates is limited, includes only assigning minor roles/peripheral tasks | ☐ Strategy to engage teammates is comprehensive, outlines specific roles and responsibilities |

| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: Estimate your project expenses and how you plan to meet those costs* | | |
| **P** | **Budget is realistic** (Pg. 15 of GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold) | ☐ Provides incomplete information about project costs or how those costs will be met<br>☐ Plans to raise money/fundraise for another organization | ☐ Provides vague description of project costs; it is unclear how those costs will be met and/or the supplies listed appear inappropriate for the scope of the project | ☐ Provides detailed description of project costs and clear explanation of how costs will be met |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| **Q** | **Income and money-earning activity explanations** (Pg. 15 of GSMISTS' Guide to Going Gold) | ☐ No explanation OR disregards money-earning policy | ☐ Yes, but unclear if following money-earning policy | ☐ Yes, follows all money-earning policies<br>☐ Has submitted the GSMITS' Gold Award Project Proposal and Money Earning Plan Documents. |
| | | *Additional Comments* | | |
| | | | | |
| | | *Related question in proposal: The strengths, talents and skills I currently have and will put into action are; The skills I plan to develop as I work towards earning my Gold Award are* | | |
| **R** | **Leadership development** | ☐ Does not include information about leadership or personal strengths; does not identify a goal for developing a new skill | ☐ Provides incomplete information about leadership and personal strengths; partially sets goal to develop new leadership skill | ☐ Describes new skills to be developed |
| | | *Related question in proposal: I will let others know about my Gold Award by promoting via* | | |
| **S** | **Tell the World: Plan to actively share project** | ☐ Incomplete information | | ☐ Identifies the methods to be used for sharing the Gold Award project |

| Step 5: Present plan and get feedback |
|---|
| *Plan presented to Gold Award Committee for feedback after proposal submitted in GoGold.* |
| *Please refer to page 16 of GSMISTS' Guide to going Gold for complete details regarding GSMISTS' review and approval process.* |

**Additional Feedback:** Click here to enter additional feedback.

**Project Designation:**

☐ Approved: Meets or exceeds standards in all categories

☐ Needs Improvement: Needs improvement in majority of categories; may have a few in meets/exceeds standards, or a few that do not meet standards -OR- majority of categories meet/exceed standards, but several categories do not meet standards

☐ Does Not Meet Standards: Majority of categories do not meet standards; may have a few categories that meet/exceed standards

# Potential Outcomes of the Gold Award Project Proposal Review

The rubric on the previous pages shows you what the Gold Award Support Team is looking for when they review a Gold Award Project Proposal. This rubric presents GSUSA's Gold Award Standards. Gold Award Projects often look quite different from one another in terms of topic and scope, but all Gold Award Project Proposals **must meet or exceed the required standards** for each criterion before the Gold Award Support Team can approve the Gold Award Project Proposal and work can begin on your Gold Award Project. There are four outcomes of the Gold Award Project Proposal review process:

### Approved as Submitted

The Gold Award Project Proposal is approved by the Gold Award Support Team, and you can start work on your Gold Award Project. It meets or exceeds GSUSA's Gold Award Standards on all criteria, and you have provided all necessary information to demonstrate that your Gold Award Project will be a success. You will receive an email and a formal letter approving your Gold Award Project Proposal.

### Conditionally Approved

The Gold Award Project Proposal is conditionally approved by the Gold Award Support Team. It meets or exceeds GSUSA's Gold Award Standards in most criteria but needs improvement or clarification in a few key areas. Once modifications have been made, the Gold Award Support Team will review and approve your revised Gold Award Project Proposal and you can start work on your Gold Award Project. You will receive an email and a formal letter approving your Gold Award Project. The letter may include specific requirements you must meet regarding your Gold Award Project.

### Revisions Required

The Gold Award Project Proposal has the potential to meet GSUSA's Gold Award Standards. It meets GSUSA's Gold Award Standards in some criteria but needs improvement or clarification in several key areas. You will be requested to meet with members of the Gold Award Support Team to help clarify those areas. Suggestions will be provided to assist in moving forward with your Gold Award Project Proposal. The Gold Award Project Proposal will need to be revised and resubmitted to the Gold Award Support Team.

### Denied

The Gold Award Project Proposal does not meet GSUSA's Gold Award Standards, and it cannot be expanded or adapted to meet the standards. This may be the outcome of your review if you are trying to implement a "canned" (pre-developed) project, a community service project, or have not identified a true issue within the community through research. This does not mean that your idea is not good – just that it does not meet GSUSA's Gold Award Standards. A different Gold Award Project may be pursued. A new Gold Award Project Proposal must be submitted for review.

It is true that there are a lot of requirements/standards, and the review process may seem a little scary or intimidating at first. But remember – challenging yourself to try new things helps you build **courage**, **confidence**, and **character**. Plus, the Gold Award Support Team genuinely wants to help you succeed!

# Common Gold Award Project Proposal Feedback

**Issue and Root Cause:** Be very specific about defining the issue you want to address, and its root cause(s). Cite your research to demonstrate that this is a true community problem. (You may count up to 8 hours of research in your timeline).

**Project Plan:** Explain specifically what you want to do and why you want to do it. It should be clear how your Project Plan will directly address and reduce or eliminate the root cause(s) of your issue. Cite your research. Remember that this is a separate document you must attach to the GoGold-generated document.

**Target Audience:** Your audience must agree your Gold Award Project is needed and be committed to working with you before you submit your Gold Award Project Proposal.

**Leadership:** You need to identify a project-appropriate volunteer team including people outside of your immediate family, and your Gold Award Project must present the opportunity for you to lead them.

**Measurability:** Identify your goals and the desired outcomes of your Gold Award Project. How will you know you have achieved your goals? What will be the observable change? What can you count?

**Sustainability:** It is usually not enough to create a video or website; find a way to actively continue your impact.

**Timeline:** Break down your tasks into specific and realistic blocks of time. Leadership must be at least 20% of your Gold Award Project hours.

**Budget:** The budget is not based on actual cost research or is unrealistic. Income and expenses must match.  Remember, you must submit *GSMISTS' Gold Award Proposal Budget* form.

# Enacting Your Gold Award Project Plan

Once you have gained official approval to start work on your Gold Award Project from the Gold Award Support Team, it is time to enact your Project Plan, which is part of your Gold Award Project Proposal. Your Gold Award Project Proposal will be marked as "approved" in GoGold Online, which will allow you to proceed to Step 6. This is one place you can keep track of your work.

**Remember:** you must keep track of your work as you go along, and you may use your own log (as long as you distinguish working and leadership hours). Transfer the information as you go to GoGold Online so the Gold Award Support Team will be able to see it. 80 hours is a lot, but you may find that the time starts to add up more quickly than you expect if you are keeping an active log of your work.

Make sure that you update your Gold Award Liaison at least **once per month** regarding your progress, even if you have not done any work on your project that month. They will not judge you; they just want to know if you are still pursuing your Gold Award. It is especially important to let your Gold Award Liaison know if you have run into any **obstacles or setbacks** – they may be able to help. Additionally, you may not change or revise your approved Gold Award Project Plan on your own. If something happens that is outside of your control but will impact your ability to work on your Gold Award Project or meet your approved goals, your Gold Award Liaison needs to know. They may be able to adjust the agreements you made regarding your project depending on your circumstances and what else may be possible for you to do.

Recall the **Gold Award Example Track** from page 6. When you start your Gold Award Project and when you complete your Gold Award Project will depend on a number of different variables. There is no set amount of time it will take you to complete your project – it could be 6-months, 12-months, or even multiple years depending on the time you spend, your specific goals, and the size and scope of your project. Completing your Gold Award Project means meeting or exceeding GSUSA's Gold Award Standards following through on what the Gold Award Support Team approved.

Keep your Gold Award **Project deadline** in mind. You need to complete your Gold Award Project and submit your *approvable* Gold Award Final Report to GSMISTS no later than **September 30th** immediately following your high school graduation.

# Submitting Your Gold Award Final Report

When you have completed your Gold Award project, it is time to **submit your Gold Award Final Report** through GoGold Online. If you would like to be recognized at the GSMISTS Girl Scout Recognition Ceremony for the current Girl Scout year (held annually in May/June), your Gold Award Final Report must be submitted by March 1 to account for any issues that may arise during the final review. Do not put off completing your Gold Award Final Report! We do not want you to find yourself in a bad situation – for example if it is 11:59pm right before the deadline and your internet goes out, or you submit it on September 30 the year of your high school graduation and it cannot be approved as submitted. **Plan ahead to the very end!**

You will submit your Gold Award Final Report through GoGold Online. Your Gold Award Project Proposal has been marked as "approved," allowing you to move into steps 6 and 7. Be sure to include GSMISTS final supplemental forms with your Gold Award Final Report. Refer to page 31 for a checklist of items to submit. If you find that you cannot access or edit your GoGold Online account, contact customercare@gsmists.org or 616-784-3341.

Your complete Gold Award Final Report will be reviewed by the Gold Award Support Team – plan to respond to questions and feedback in a timely manner. Final approval does take time as well, so be patient.

# Pitfalls to Avoid when Going for Gold

There are Gold Award Projects that succeed, Gold Award Projects that fail, and Gold Award Projects that hang in limbo because there is some characteristic that keeps them from the finish line. When evaluating ideas, consider these scenarios and try to incorporate solutions into your project design that will avoid or remedy them.

**Try not to rush the process.** A successful Gold Award Project takes time! Time to research thoroughly, plan fully, and complete your Gold Award Project Proposal. The more time you take at this point, the better subsequent steps will go. Once you submit a Gold Award Project Proposal there may be additional time required to revise your idea. Then, you may need to take on money-earning activities and adjust to unexpected events before you actually start executing your Gold Award Project. Allow plenty of time!

**Similarly, do not procrastinate.** Again, a successful Gold Award Project takes time! Waiting until your senior year in high school to start your Gold Award project is not the wise course of action. Many activities will demand your attention in your final year making it difficult to give your Gold Award Project the attention it needs.

**Resist the urge to "shop" for projects.** The first step to a great Gold Award is identifying what it is that YOU care about the most. Not what other people tell you is a good idea. Not what another Girl Scout in your troop did. Choose something that matters to YOU. Your Gold Award will take a lot of effort. If it is not something you care about it will become a tedious chore. If it is something that ignites your passion, it still takes effort, but it will be empowering.

**Access is in the organization's hands.** Regardless of how thoughtfully you plan, your Gold Award Project may run into delays if it requires frequent access to the organization's site, especially if their business model does not typically include this type of outside participation. Also, some organizations (*especially* schools!) have an approval hierarchy such that even if you get one person to approve your Gold Award Project or access, there are others who must also approve (i.e.: teachers or even a principal in a school approving a Gold Award Project that must ultimately be approved by a school system's administrative team or school board).

**Consider your budget and money earning options.** Almost every Gold Award Project requires some money-earning activity or requests for donations of materials and supplies. Your Gold Award Project is about the work you are doing to benefit the organization, *not* about raising money, so do not expect to spend more than 10% of your time participating in money-earning activities. Develop your supply list early in the process and talk to your Project Advisor about sources for materials or in-kind donations. What are the best money-earning ideas? Please refer to the most current GSMISTS' *Money Earning and Fund Raising Guidelines* for full details.

# Money and Your Gold Award

Most Gold Award Projects have financial or material needs, and therefore involve money in one way or another. It is important to understand what you may and may not do to fund your Gold Award Project.

Things you may do to fund your project:

- **Use money earned from participating in GSMISTS Product Programs.**
  You may use money earned from participation in GSMISTS Product Programs (Treats & Reads and Cookies) towards your Gold Award Project. If you are part of a troop, the troop must agree to use proceeds on your Gold Award Project, and it is a good idea to write the agreement down so it is not forgotten.
- **Ask for in-kind donations.**
  You may ask businesses or other groups for gifts of supplies, equipment, meeting spaces, or other services (NOT money). If you receive in-kind donations, you need to fill out the Donation Agreement- In-Kind form and submit it GSMISTS Director of Fund Development.
- **Hold additional money-earning activities.**
  These are activities that can be planned and carried out by Girl Scouts to earn money for their Gold Award Projects. Examples may include garage sales, bake sales, or car washes. To be eligible to host these events, the troop must have participated in the most recent Treats & Reads and Cookie Program.
- **Conduct fundraising.**
  At the Gold Award level ONLY, Girl Scouts may directly ask businesses, organizations, or individuals for money for their Gold Award Projects as long as they have GSMISTS approval prior to making the ask. Otherwise, fundraising is the sole responsibility of adults. Neither Girl Scouts nor adults may use crowdfunding sites. If Girl Scouts working on their Gold Award Projects wish to ask for money directly, email the *Gold Award Fund Raising & Money Earning Approval* Form to customercare@gsmists.org.
- **Use personal money.**
  You may use your own personal money, from a job or allowance, to fund your Gold Award Project. However, the Gold Award is not meant to be a financial hardship on any family or individual, and we encourage girls to pursue other or additional avenues to fund their Gold Award Projects.
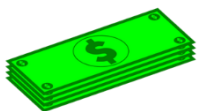
There are also some things that you are not permitted to do when earning money to fund your Gold Award Project or with the money you earn. Please be sure to review this list carefully.

Things you may not do to fund your Gold Award Project or with your money:

- **You may not ask businesses or friends/neighbors for money by yourself.** Without GSMISTS approval, solicitation of money from organization is only done by adults.
- **You may not sell retail items or sell via the internet to earn money.**
- You may not hold raffles, bingos, poker nights, or other games of chance to raise money. These are considered gambling which Girl Scouts does not support.
- **You may not host a project where GSUSA or GSMISTS might be perceived as endorsing a product, political viewpoint, or cause.** This includes retail product sales, demonstration parties, being paid to pass out flyers for a candidate, or giving out freebies from a business.
- **You may not engage in crowdfunding opportunities, such as GoFundMe.**
- **You may not use your project as a fundraiser for any organization, including Girl Scouts.** Donating money to an organization, group or individual is not allowed, even if you have money that is left over from your Gold Award project. Leftover money must be used to further your project materially or returned to its source.

# Hot Tips for a Successful Gold Award Experience

**Start early!** The number one lament we hear during final interviews is, "I wish I had started earlier." Take the advice from those who have been where you are.

**Choose a Gold Award Project YOU are passionate about.** Many people will have ideas for your Gold Award Project. Listen politely but follow your heart. The Gold Award takes a lot of your time and energy. You will struggle to finish something about which you are not excited.

**Prepare carefully.** The Gold Award Support Team has developed tips and guidelines to help you succeed. Please read these carefully so that you reach success more quickly. Check out the example packet as it will help you understand what we are looking for in a well-developed Gold Award Project.

**As you develop your Gold Award Project, remember the five key 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.

**Develop a clear and detailed Project Plan.** Step 4, Page17 of GoGold Online is *only* a timeline, *not* a project plan. GSMISTS requires that you create and submit a separate Project Plan to make your project clear to the Gold Awrd Support Team and help it come alive. There is no need to rehash your issue and root cause. This document includes the step-by-step actions (complete with who is doing what and when and why) needed to complete your Gold Award Project. It is a careful plan of work. A well-done Project Plan could be executed by someone else. Do not leave the Gold Award Support Team with questions! When you receive the go-ahead from the GSMISTS Gold Award Support team, ideally, all you need to do is work your Project Plan.

**Develop a solid budget and money-earning plan.** Step 4, Page 18 of GoGold Online asks for a bare minimum of financial information. GSMISTS requires that you establish a more detailed budget and provide your money-earning plan. Use the form provided in Step 4, Page 2, GSMISTS' *Gold Award Proposal Budget.*

**If you get stuck, ask for help!** Early in the process contact customercare@gsmists.org for assistance. Remember that your Project Advisor is a subject expert. After approval of your Gold Award Project Proposal, you will be assigned a Gold Award Liaison. This person is your personal cheerleader and is available to assist you.

# Writing Tips

➢ **Answer each question completely:** This is a common but avoidable reason for Gold Award Project Proposals to need revision. Often, Girl Scouts have a fabulous Gold Award Project planned in their heads, but only part of the ideas make it into their Gold Award Project Proposal. Remember, the Gold Award Support Team cannot evaluate what they cannot see or read. All of the questions in GoGold Online indicate how many words are allowed on the upper right above the response box. If you see a number like 2000, it is an enormous hint that some bullet points or a couple of sentences will not provide adequate information.

➢ **Write out abbreviations/acronyms for organizations:** Just because you know what an abbreviation or acronym stands for, it does not mean that others will. You can use the shortened form for the organization or group after you have spelled it out once. Example: Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore (GSMISTS)

➢ **Include pictures, drawings, or diagrams:** If ideas in your Gold Award Project are hard to explain or may be more accurately represented via visual aids, make sure to include any photos, drawings, diagrams, or videos that may assist the Gold Award Support Team in understanding your proposed Gold Award Project. You can upload these documents in Step 5 Page 5 of GoGold Online before you submit your Gold Award Project Proposal.

➢ **Proofread and edit paperwork**: Have someone proofread your Gold Award Project Proposal, Project Plan, and any supplemental forms you are submitting. You are aiming for the highest award a Girl Scout Senior or Ambassador can earn. Your Gold Award Project Proposal should be a polished document with complete sentences that is free of spelling and grammatical errors.

# Checklist for a Complete Gold Award Project Proposal Submission

o Gold Award Project Proposal documents generated by GoGold Online which both your troop leader and your project advisor have electronically signed. Be certain that you have addressed all the key components of a Gold Award Project;
- Proposed Gold Award Project addresses a root cause of your chosen issue
- Proposed Gold Award Project has a national and/or global link
- You identify where you will demonstrate leadership
- You have a plan to make your project sustainable
- You have identified ways to measure your project impact

o A detailed Project Plan
o The GSMISTS' Gold Award Proposal Budget Form
o Depending on the financial circumstances you may also need:
- GSMISTS' Gold Award Money Earning and Fund Raising Approval Form
- GSMISTS' In-Kind Donation Agreement

# Checklist for a Complete Gold Award Final Report Submission

o Gold Award Final Report document generated by GoGold Online which your Project Advisor has electronically signed. Be certain that you show how your efforts meet all the key components of a Gold Award Project;
- Clearly explain how your project addresses a root cause of your chosen issue
- Explain your Gold Award Project's national and/or global link
- Share how you showed leadership
- Explain how your Gold Award Project is being sustained. This might require written verification from an individual or group who will carry on your Gold Award Project.
- Share your Gold Award Project's impact measurements

☐ GSMISTS' Gold Award Final Finance Report
☐ Any document, video, or slide presentation you have created as part of your Gold Award Project.
☐ Photographs as appropriate.
☐ To the extent that other individuals or organizations will continue your Gold Award Project. You must include written confirmation regarding their sustaining support.

# Important Deadlines

A. Girls who submit their Girl Scout Project Proposal in GoGold Online by the first Friday of each month will be invited for their Gold Award Project Proposal interview *provided* their Gold Award Project Proposal is complete and meets GSUSA's Gold Award Standards.

B. Proposals are reviewed continually by the Gold Award Support Team. Feedback is generally sent to the candidate within three weeks.

C. Your *final* opportunity to receive your Gold Award Project Proposal approval is **May 1st of your graduating year**. Remember to allow time for Gold Scout Project Proposal approval review!

D. If you would like to be recognized at the GSMISTS Girl Scout Recognition Ceremony for the current Girl Scout year (held annually in May/June), your Gold Award Final Report must be submitted by March 1 to account for any issues that may arise during the final review. Those submitting after the March 1 deadline will be recognized at the following year's celebration.

E. Girl Scouts who have graduated high school must submit their complete and approvable Gold Award Final Reports by **September 30**. No exceptions can be made.

# Girl Scout Gold Award Training

The Gold Award demands a lot! There are trainings and resources available on our website, www.gsmists.org to help you further navigate the Gold Award process and the specifics of certain components.

➢ **Gold Award Training:** This training is mandatory and covers the Gold Award from start to finish and is a great resource of information for both girls and adults.
➢ **Gold Award Training Modules:** As of October 2024, GSMISTS Gold Award training is offered through gsLearn. There are six on-demand modules, five of which are required. The first two modules are introductory and can be completed before you make any decision regarding "Going for Gold." We suggest that you take modules 3, 4, and 5 *after* you complete your prerequisites. Module 6 is optional if you need a GoGold Online tutorial.

# Safety Reminders

It is very important to be aware of all safety requirements and complete all necessary paperwork that may pertain to your Gold Award Project so that all Girl Scouts are safe, adults are protected from liability, and you can be found in case of an emergency. ALWAYS check *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for all activities. Your Troop Advisor can give you access to this document.

IMPORTANT: Per GSUSA, Girl Scout youth members never drive other members to, from, or during activities. How parents decide to transport Girl Scouts between their homes and Girl Scout activities is each parent's individual decision and responsibility.

# So What, Now What?

Now that you have all the information you need, it is time to go out there and earn your Girl Scout Gold Award! Remember to abide by the Girl Scout Promise and Law throughout your Gold Award Project and beyond. Make sure to use your resources wisely. Use this packet, the Girl Scout Gold Award training, and your support network to



Go for Gold.

Never be afraid to ask for help. If you cannot find answers to your questions in the resources listed above, our Gold Award Support Team is happy to assist you. Email customercare@gsmists.org or call 616-784-3341 during regular business hours.

Once you earn your Gold Award, you can celebrate your achievements! Celebrate with your troop, service unit, family, and beyond. Tell the world your story!