

Money Management

A financial management guide for
Girl Scouts of Colorado troops, groups, and service units

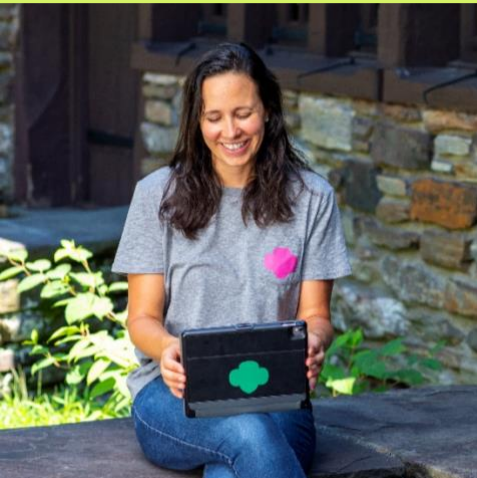
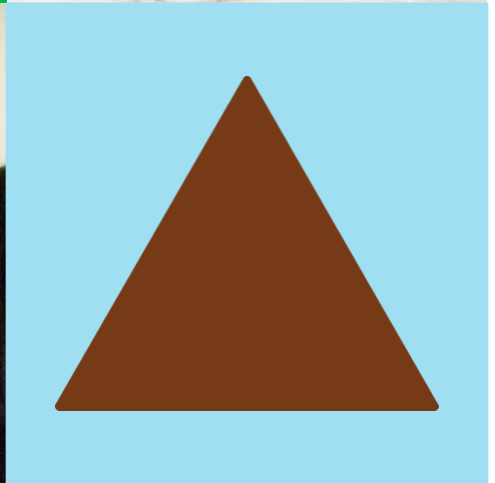


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Welcome!

Welcome to the Girl Scouts of Colorado Money Management Guide! An essential part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is helping Girl Scouts choose activities and set goals and coaching them through earning and managing money to achieve those goals. Whether you are a Girl Scout researching how your troop can plan a budget, a new troop leader trying to set up a troop bank account, or an experienced leader scoping out info on money-earning activities, this guide is here to help you with Girl Scout money matters.

Learning real life skills

By managing their group finances, planning and participating in Product Programs, and completing money-earning projects, Girl Scouts build real-world skills that benefit their troops, council, communities, and most importantly, themselves throughout their lives.

The five skills that Girl Scouts gain through participation in the Product Programs are:



Goal Setting

Girls learn how to set goals and create a plan to reach them.



Decision Making

Girls learn how to make decisions on their own and as a team.



Money Management

Girls learn to create a budget and handle money.



People Skills

Girls find their voice and build confidence through customer interactions.



Business Ethics

Girls learn to act ethically, both in business and in life.

Adult volunteers can also gain these business skills as they support their troop finances. As you review the information in this guide, keep the 5 business skills in mind and how they show up under each topic!

A note on the language in this guide

Throughout this guide you will see references to different groups within Girl Scouts. Here is a cheat sheet explaining them:

- **“Girl Scouts”** refers to youth members of Girl Scouts of the USA. These are members who are in kindergarten through 12th grade. While adults who are registered members of Girl Scouts of the USA are also called Girl Scouts, for the purposes of this guide Girl Scouts refers to youth members only. The word “members” may also be used to refer to the youth members of a troop.
- **“Caregivers”** refers to those adults who are directly connected to and responsible for Girl Scout youth members. This term encompasses parents, guardians, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, older siblings, aunts, uncles, or any other adult who is directly responsible for the care of a Girl Scout.
- **“Adult volunteers”** refers to any adult member of Girl Scouts of the USA who volunteers with a troop, group, service unit, or committee of Girl Scouts of Colorado. Titles of specific roles may also be used in this guide, such as troop leaders, bank signers, troop cookie manager, or troop support volunteer.

Application to different Girl Scout groups

Troops are just one of the different groups that exist in Girl Scouts. Other groups include service units, volunteer-run camps, committees, and special interest groups. While the language in this guide refers most frequently to troops, the contents of this guide apply to all of these groups. There are a few key sections outlining information specific to these groups, but typically, you can substitute the name of your group for the word “troop” and will find the information still applies. Reach out to your primary staff contact with any questions about managing your group’s finances.



Ready Resource: Basic financial resources for adults

Interested in learning more about financial management basics outside of the Girl Scout program? The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) has a helpful [glossary](#) of financial terms and a resource called “[How Money Smart Are You?](#)” that teaches everyday financial topics.

Connecting the Promise & Law to financial management

The Promise and Law serve as the basis for the Girl Scout program. All Girl Scout members, including youth, caregivers, adult volunteers, and staff, are expected to uphold the Promise and Law through their words and actions.

It takes money and resources to make Girl Scout activities possible. Every person who handles Girl Scout funds has an obligation to ensure those funds are safeguarded, used wisely and ethically, and in support of the Girl Scouts who earned them.

Every line of the Girl Scout Law can be applied to how Girl Scout groups manage their financial resources. A version of the Law written with group financial management in mind might read:

I will do my best to
handle group money honestly and fairly,
help my friends achieve our shared goals,
show consideration and care for the circumstances
of others,
be courageous in addressing misuse of funds,
follow through on commitments I make to my
group,
and to
respect others in times of conflict,
abide by the laws, regulations, and expectations laid
out by governing bodies,
budget and spend wisely,
make the world a better place through philanthropy,
and
embody the Girl Scout spirit when someone in my
group needs extra care or support.



The Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Troop, group bank accounts

Troop bank account requirements

- GSCO abides by the policies and standards of Girl Scouts of the USA and complies with applicable IRS requirements.
- All bank accounts require a minimum of two unrelated adult volunteers to hold the role of Bank Account Signer (BAS). BAS must be currently registered members of the Girl Scout troop, have successfully completed the required background check and sign a Bank Account Signer Agreement (BASA) accepting the [Bank Signer Role and Key Responsibilities](#) annually.
- Please note that Bank Account Signers should be actively involved with their connected troop. It is not acceptable for a Bank Account Signer to be connected to the troop in name only. Signers should be actively involved with and aware of the activities and expenses being paid for with troop funds.
- All money collected, or earned, in the name of Girl Scouts must be deposited in the established troop bank account and used only to provide the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) to current youth members in the troop.
- Troop bank accounts must hold funds for only one troop. Multiple troops/groups must not use a single combined bank account. This includes service units and volunteer-led day camps.
- All signers are responsible for safeguarding and maintaining sufficient funds to cover payments drawn on the account. As with any bank account, signers are legally responsible for all account transactions. If fraud is suspected, report fraud charges to your bank immediately and then file a report with Girl Scouts of Colorado via email to troopfinance@gscolorado.org.
- Volunteers who misuse or misappropriate funds may be released from all Girl Scout positions. Bank Account Signers who witness or are aware of financial mismanagement or misappropriation and fail to report it may also be removed from their volunteer roles.
- Each signer on the account who will be making troop purchases may request a debit card. Do not use someone else's debit card or give your card to someone to use. The council prohibits troops and service units from applying for credit cards.

Bank Account Signer requirements

Each Bank Account Signer (BAS) must...

- Be a registered adult volunteer and have a current membership with GSUSA.
- Have a current approved background check on file with GSCO.
- Sign and submit a Bank Account Signer Agreement (BASA)
- Maintain current completion of the [512 Finance Volunteer Learning Path](#) in gsLearn
- Agree to abide by GSUSA and council guidelines regarding troop bank accounts and managing troop funds.

Each account requires a minimum of two unrelated bank signers.

See the [Bank Signer Roles & Responsibilities](#) overview for more information.

Opening a new troop bank account

Steps to open a new account

1. Identify a minimum of two signers for the account.
2. A troop volunteer submits the [Bank Account Authorization and Signer Agreement form](#) online. At the beginning of this form, the troop volunteer should indicate that they are requesting a Bank Account Authorization letter to open a new account.
3. The GSCO Customer Care team reviews the submitted [Bank Account Authorization and Signer Agreement form](#) and verifies that the prospective Bank Signers are registered, background checked, not related to one another, and have each submitted the Bank Account Signer Agreement through the same form.
4. Once the Bank Account Signers are verified, GSCO will issue the troop a Bank Authorization Letter specific to the troop or group and a Certificate of Good Standing for Girl Scouts of Colorado.
5. The intended signers for the new troop bank account should arrange a time to go to their bank of choice to open their account. *Avoid Blue Federal Credit Union, Premier Credit Union, Key Bank, TCF Bank, and Wells Fargo.
6. Once at the bank, the signers should ask to open a business account. A few things to be aware of before going into your bank location include:
 - While GSCO is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, individual troops are not considered nonprofits by the IRS. When opening a business account, troops will be asked to provide a federal employer identification number (FEIN). GSCO provides the organization's FEIN for opening authorized troop bank accounts. Troops should not use GSCO's FEIN for any other purpose.
 - Providing GSCO's FEIN and the Bank Authorization Letter authorizes the troop to open a troop account under the name Girl Scouts of Colorado. The troop's bank account should be named "Girl Scouts of Colorado Troop #####"
 - Plan to set up individualized online access for each bank signer before you leave the bank. Each signer should have their own access to statements. If your troop receives paper bank statements, you should plan to have them sent to the physical address of an adult volunteer connected to the troop who is not a signer as this offers an added layer of accountability and transparency with the troop's finances. Some banks may charge additional fees if you do not opt out of receiving paper statements. In that situation you can check to see if you can have both signers receive notifications that monthly statements are available via email to prompt them to check for updates.
 - It is recommended that the bank signers request debit cards for their account while opening a new account. See the [Troop bank account guidelines](#) section of this guide for additional information on troop debit cards.
7. Complete an [ACH](#) form through the GSCO website. You will need either a voided check or a letter from your bank with the troop number (or service unit name, number) and the full routing and account numbers included to submit the ACH. See the [Troop bank account guidelines](#) section of this guide for additional information on ACHs.

Why open a business account?

Using a business account instead of a personal account protects troop volunteers from potential tax implications and having to report troop funds as a part of their taxable income.

In the event you need to change the signers on your bank account, it is much easier to make these changes to a business account. If you open a personal account, you may need to completely shut down the account and open a new one if the signers need to change.

Choosing a bank

GSCO troops can open a troop bank account through any bank they prefer or that is accessible to their area of the state so long as the bank is a federally insured financial institution. When opening a new account, troops can reach out to their local staff contact or to their local service unit to learn if there is a bank many groups utilize locally.

Troops should inquire about bank fees when deciding which bank they would like to use. This includes fees that may be charged for monthly account maintenance, debit card use, and cash deposit limits.

Online only banks

With some banks now operating exclusively online without storefronts, troops may be interested in exploring these as an option. While these online banks may offer the ability to deposit checks and manage funds without visiting a banking location, there are some complications to consider including how cash transactions would be managed. In order for an online bank to be a viable solution for a troop, they would need to be able to make deposits to an ATM as needed. This is especially true when troops participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program, which often involves cash transactions, making change, and turning in funds to a bank signer for deposit. Some online only banks may have partnerships with other banking institutions to allow for shared use of ATMs or cover fees associated with the use of other institution's ATMs. These benefits would be necessary when considering if an online only bank is a good option for your troop, as troop funds should not be deposited into any account other than the troop account (see the [General Money Management Expectations](#) section of this guide for more information).

Troop bank account guidelines

Debit cards

It is best practice for troops to secure at least one debit card linked to their bank account to be used for deposits and purchases. Ideally any bank signer regularly making purchases on behalf of the troop would have a debit card issued to them. This is because using a debit card for deposits and purchases creates a clear and trackable record of how and where troops' funds are being spent and who was processing the transaction.

Debit cards should be issued under the name of the bank signer. It is preferred to also have the troop number listed on the card if possible. Debit card holders should not allow other people to use their card to make purchases.

Card holders should ensure they can differentiate between their troop debit card and any other cards they have for personal accounts. This is to ensure that a card holder does not inadvertently use their troop debit card to make personal purchases, which is explicitly prohibited. If a personal transaction is accidentally made using a troop debit card, it is expected that the card holder will reimburse the troop in full as soon as the mistake is realized and immediately alert the other bank signers of the situation.

Debit card holders should make sure their card is secure when not being used and that they report any lost or stolen cards to their bank and the rest of the troop immediately.

Some banks may charge additional fees to have debit cards. Watch out for these fees when opening a bank account and see if the bank may be willing to waive them for your group.

Troop checks

While troops are not required to have checks, they may be convenient for conducting troop business, including reimbursing volunteers.

Troop checks must contain the troop account name and troop number, the bank's routing number and bank account number. It is important that troop checks are kept in a secure location and that all checks are always accounted for. Blank checks should never be pre-signed.

Fraud and theft

Unfortunately, sometimes fraud and theft happen even within Girl Scout accounts. Follow the practices outlined in these guidelines to help prevent the unauthorized use of troop funds.

If fraudulent purchases using the troop account is suspected, contact your bank's fraud department, and send Girl Scouts of Colorado the fraud claim number and actions to troopfinance@gscolorado.org.

Troop funds belong to the Girl Scouts and should remain as such. If a volunteer or caregiver within the troop suspects that troop funds are being mismanaged, first discuss the matter with the troop leader, focusing on the facts and documentation. If there is a possibility that a troop leader has mismanaged funds, contact Girl Scouts of Colorado at troopfinance@gscolorado.org.

The key to successful recovery of funds and resolution of financial problems is documentation and timeliness. If the records are poor and the bank statements have not been reviewed consistently, the likelihood of recovery of the funds diminishes. Please make every effort to be proactive and establish good financial procedures and controls in alignment with this guide.

Savings accounts

Troops should have only one bank account. This account should be a checking account. The use of savings accounts by troops is highly discouraged as it can add complications to tracking the use of troop funds.

Some financial institutions (often credit unions) require a savings account to be added when opening a new checking account. In this circumstance, a savings account is allowed, but the troop must report the account to the council. No funds should be held in the account other than that which may be required to meet any minimum balances established by the bank.

Account overdraft

Troops should only spend money they have available in their account and should avoid overdrawing their account. A best practice is to ensure the troop bank account always maintains a minimum balance. The recommended minimum balance is \$10-20 but this may vary across banks. Some banks may require a higher account balance not only to avoid over drafting, but to waive account fees.

If the council is notified of an overdraft due to insufficient funds in a troop bank account, the troop will be immediately contacted, and an audit can be triggered.

In the event of an overdraft, all funds must be deposited to clear the overdraft on the day they are notified by their bank. The troop is responsible for any fees or charges for overdrawing the troop account.

Maintaining accurate account information

Make sure the information tied to your bank account stays updated. This includes ensuring the contact information (emails, phone numbers) and address information for each signer is up to date. Bank signers may forget to update their mailing address on a troop bank account if they move locally. It is also encouraged that bank signers use a personal email address for any logins they have for troop resources – registering under a work email can cause issues if their employer changes.

Automated Clearing House (ACH)

An ACH allows a third party to make electronic withdrawals or deposits to a troop's bank account. Troop bank accounts must have an ACH to participate in Girl Scouts and the Fall Product and Cookie Programs. An ACH is used to withdraw payment for product and/or depositing troop proceeds. ACH deposits can also be made for other payments that go from council to troops and service units. These include Cookie Credit reimbursements made on behalf of troops, troop dues grants, and incentives for things like early bird or on-time renewal rewards or other programs run throughout the year.

Troops are required to submit an [ACH](#) form to GSCO to participate in the Product Programs. The ACH form must be completed by an authorized bank account signer. The signer will be asked to upload an electronic copy of a voided check or a bank letter with the troop number (or service unit name, number) and complete routing and account numbers listed.

Changing account signers or banks

There may be a time when a troop needs to add or remove a signer from their bank account or need to change banks. Prior to visiting their bank to make changes to the signers or account, the troop should complete the following steps before making changes to the bank account:

Steps to change account signers

1. A troop volunteer submits the [Bank Account Authorization and Signer Agreement form](#) online and indicates that they are requesting authorization to “add or remove signers”.
2. The GSCO Customer Care team reviews the submitted [Bank Account Authorization and Signer Agreement form](#) and verifies that the prospective Bank Signers are registered, background checked, not related to one another, and have each submitted the Bank Account Signer Agreement through the same form.
3. Once the Bank Account Signers are verified, GSCO will issue the troop a Bank Authorization Letter specific to the troop or group and a Certificate of Good Standing for Girl Scouts of Colorado.
4. The intended signers for the troop bank account should arrange a time to go to their bank along with the current signers to be added to the existing account. The troop representatives should take the Bank Authorization letter and Certificate of Good Standing with them to their bank.
5. Once the account has been updated, the troop should submit an updated [ACH](#) to GSCO. You will need either a voided check or a letter from your bank with the troop number (or service unit name, number) and full routing and account numbers included to submit the ACH.

Removing a signer

Whenever there is a change of signers on an account, ensure that all checks and financial records are given to new signers. Any debit cards connected to the former signer should be immediately deactivated and any addresses connected to the troop bank account should be updated as soon as possible. Ensure all new signers can log in to see troop account information online through your bank.

Handling funds during troop changes

Disbanding troops

A disbanding troop is one that has decided not to continue as a troop. If a troop decides to disband, it is required that all troop funds be used prior to the troop’s last meeting and the troop bank account is shut down. The troop’s final meeting should be held, and troop funds used while the members of the troop have active memberships – prior to the turn of the membership year on Sept. 30. This means that if a troop decides not to continue for another year, they must hold their final meeting and spend their troop funds prior to Sept. 30 of that same year.

Disbanding troops should follow the guidelines below to close out their troop financial management.

Troop disbands, no Girl Scouts continue

- Disbanding troops need to submit the [Troop Update form](#) to provide official notification of disbandment to GSCO. A final bank statement with a \$0 balance or a letter from the bank indicating the account has been closed is required as a part of the disbandment process and can be uploaded to the [Troop Update form](#). The [Troop Update form](#) should be submitted within 30 days of the bank account being closed.
- When a troop is in the process of disbanding, the Girl Scouts in the troop should be involved in the decision of how to use remaining funds while they are still active. The troop may decide to donate any unused funds to GSCO, a reputable non-profit, their local service unit, or use it for Girl Scout activities prior to the troop’s disbandment. Once a Girl Scout’s membership is no longer active (after the turn of the membership year on Sept. 30), they should no longer be participating in troop activities without an active Girl Scout membership.
- Ensure all checks and other debits have cleared the account prior to going to your bank to close your account.

- Troop funds are not the property of any individual Girl Scout, caregiver, or adult volunteer. Funds may not be distributed by cash/check to members, used to purchase gift cards, or to purchase gifts unrelated to the troop's Girl Scout experience for any members or volunteers.
- If a troop has disbanded with funds remaining, any remaining funds become the property of GSCO. A bank signer should close the bank account and have the balance issued as a cashier's check to Girl Scouts of Colorado or use the [Disbanding Troop Donation form](#) to transfer the funds to GSCO.

Cashier's checks can be mailed to GSCO's Denver office at the address listed below. If mailing a check to GSCO, please include a note briefly explaining your disbandment status. These funds will be used to support financial assistance and programs for other Girl Scouts.

Girl Scouts of Colorado
 1485 S. Colorado Blvd.
 Suite 210
 Denver, CO 80222

Troop splits and disbanding troops with some Girl Scouts continuing in other troops, groups

- If a troop divides or a troop disbands and some Girl Scouts choose to continue with another troop, all monies are divided equally between all registered Girl Scouts in the troop who choose to continue to help support their new experience. (For example, if there are 10 Girl Scouts in a troop, and the troop splits, the money in the account is divided by 10 with equal portions distributed among the new troops to support Girl Scout program experiences.)
- If Girl Scouts from a disbanding group decide to join another group, the disbanding troop can send all remaining funds to the new troop. The amount is transferred directly from the disbanding group bank account to the account of the group the Girl Scouts are joining. If Girl Scouts from the original disbanding troop continue in multiple troops, the funds should be split proportionally based on the number of Girl Scouts joining each troop.
- Remember that troop funds may not be given to an individual Girl Scout. If a Girl Scout chooses to continue in the program as an individually registered member (also known as Juliettes), troop funds may be donated to Girl Scouts of Colorado. At a later date, should that girl need funding support to reach her programmatic goals, she may seek a Girl Scouts of Colorado grant support to reach that goal.
- If a Girl Scout leaves a troop and does not continue in the program within our council, troop funds are not distributed. Funds do not follow members across Girl Scout councils. If a member moves outside of Colorado and continues with Girl Scouts in a different council, no funds will be transferred to her new troop.

Abandoned troops: When the disbandment process is not complete

A troop that has no registered members and has not completed the disbandment process by Dec. 1 is considered to be abandoned. Former troop bank signers will be made ineligible for future volunteer roles until the disbandment process is completed for the troop and proof that the bank account has been closed is provided. Girl Scouts of Colorado reserves the right to pursue funds left in troop bank accounts for troops that are considered abandoned.

Merging troops

When two or more troops merge, the funds in their troop accounts are to be merged. Only one account is allowed for the merged troop and all other associated troop accounts should be shut down. Follow the steps outlined in the Changing Account Signers subsection under the [Troop bank account guidelines](#) section of this resource to alert GSCO to the change in your bank account.

Girl Scouts transferring troops

If a Girl Scout leaves a troop and joins another troop within Girl Scouts of Colorado, troop funds are not distributed. Funds do not follow members between troops. Remember that all funds collected, raised, earned, or otherwise received in the name of and for the benefit of Girl Scouting belong to the troop and must be used for the purposes of Girl Scouting. Funds are administered through the troop and do not belong to individuals.

Bank signer role and key responsibilities

Position summary

Bank signers are authorized signers and account representatives listed on the troop bank account. Bank signers act as stewards of the money held in the bank account and direct oversight to the use of troop funds. This role ensures funds are being used in support of Girl Scout activities in alignment with Girl Scouts of Colorado financial policies and in support of the planned activities and goals of the Girl Scouts registered to the troop.

Support and training

As a bank signer, you will receive support from other troop volunteers and your local staff support team including either a volunteer support specialist (VSS) or membership specialist (MS). Bank signers have access to the *Financial Management Guide* as a resource in carrying out their duties. Financial Management training is also available for Bank Signers through gsLearn in the [Finance Volunteer Learning Path](#).

Core responsibilities

- All bank account signers should complete the [Finance Volunteer Learning Path](#) through gsLearn.
- Become an authorized signer on the troop's bank account.
- Sign an annual bank signer agreement with Girl Scouts of Colorado through the [Bank Account Authorization and Signer Agreement form](#).
- Maintain impeccable records of income and expenses with receipts.
 - Review and reconcile bank statements on a monthly basis. It is recommended that troops hold on to receipts for troop-related purchases for at least three years.
 - Maintain financial transparency with troop or group funds. Records must be open to Girl Scouts, caregivers, local service unit volunteers, and council staff.
- Maintain the highest level of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Girl Scout Law – namely being honest and fair, being responsible for what I say and do, using resources wisely, and being a sister to every Girl Scout – when managing group finances.
 - Ensure that personal and troop, group expenses are never mixed. Personal and troop purchases should never be made in the same transaction.
 - Ensure troop funds are never used for personal reasons or purchases. No one should ever “borrow” troop, group money for any reason.
 - Report concerns or suspicion of financial mismanagement of group funds to Girl Scouts of Colorado at troopfinance@gscolorado.org.
- Ensure there are at least two unrelated volunteers as bank signers who have completed a background check and have a current membership registration.
Note: GSCO currently defines “related” as marriage, partnership, family, roommate. If you have additional questions, please reach out to your local staff support team.
- Maintain an active involvement and connection with the troop. Bank signers should be engaged with the troop and aware of group activities to provide the necessary support. It is not appropriate for a bank signer to be involved with their troop in name only as it essentially allows just one bank signer full control of the account.
- Involve the Girl Scouts in your troop in managing group finances.
 - Ensure that troop, group funds are spent based on the consensus and decision of the group and within the scope of Girl Scouts of Colorado's financial management policies.
- Safeguard troop funds.
 - Ensure funds are deposited promptly to avoid loss or theft.
 - Keep bank records, debit cards, and financial information in a secure location.

- Provide administrative support and leadership in completing annual troop financial management practices.
 - Complete an updated [Bank Account Authorization and Signer Agreement form](#) whenever banking information changes.
 - Complete a new [ACH form](#) whenever banking information changes.
 - Support troop leadership team members in completing the [Annual Troop or Service Unit Report](#) before the June deadline of each year.
- Close the account and submit official notification of disbandment by completing the [Troop Update form](#) when the group disbands.

Financial audits and accountability to Girl Scouts of Colorado

GSCO takes misuse of troop, group funds seriously and follows up on reported concerns and inquiries by conducting financial audits and investigations when required. Misuse of troop funds is cause for removal of volunteer roles or the implementation of volunteer restrictions. Volunteer roles may be temporarily suspended pending the outcome of an investigation or audit. In the event of misuse of troop funds, the members of a local troop may choose to press charges.

Reasons for GSCO to open a financial audit or investigation into potential misuse of troop funds include but are not limited to:

- The use of troop funds for personal benefit or purchases regardless of the reason
- Issues with council debits following participation in the Product Programs
- Inquiries or expressed concerns about group finances from members or adults connected to the troop, group
- Discrepancies in annual troop, group financial reporting

In the event a financial audit is required, Bank Account Signers will be asked to submit the following to Girl Scouts of Colorado:

- A minimum of the past 12 months of bank statements (or as many bank statements as exist for troops started less than 12 months prior)
- Troop financial records for at least the past 12 months (or since the troop launched for troops started less than 12 months prior), including receipts or other documentation of income and expenses tied to the troop bank account
- Other documents or records of communication as applicable

Failure to produce the requested documentation could result in bank signers either being released from their volunteer roles or having a financial restriction placed on their volunteer activities.

Planning a troop, group budget

Troop money management skills include budgeting and goal setting. A budget is a plan for discovering how much money you are going to need and where the money will come from. Budgets should always be balanced, which means your income is equal to your expenses. In teaching how to budget, remember progression in the learning experience.

All troop funds, including Product Program sales, should be included in the total year's projected income. Although troops will not receive the funds until after the appropriate program, it will help in planning troop activities for the spring as well as for the next program year.

The following five simple steps will help you guide the Girl Scouts in creating a budget for separate activities and then add the total expenses for all activities to determine the funds needed for the month or year.

Steps to create a budget

1. Brainstorm
2. Set goals
3. Determine cost
4. Plan a budget
5. Write it out

Step 1 – Brainstorm

Sit down with your Girl Scouts and help them brainstorm ideas for a wish list of activities they would like to do during the year. Most activities fall into the categories of trips, events, badges, community service, and Take Action projects. The younger the Girl Scouts, the more they will need adults to help. Once the Girl Scouts have brainstormed with guidance, they can lead their own brainstorming session.

Before brainstorming with the Girl Scouts, review these guidelines:

1. Everyone takes part.
2. Create a list by writing down every idea – repetition is OK and spelling doesn't matter.
3. Don't think about money, cost, time, or space at this point.
4. Don't judge the ideas – no groaning, laughing, cheering, or put-downs.
5. Don't discuss the how or the merits of an idea – save this for later.

Step 2 – Set goals

Have the Girl Scouts read the list, making sure they understand what is meant by everything on the list. Adult volunteers can use this opportunity to deepen their understanding of what interests the Girl Scouts about the ideas they generated to help inform other program opportunities. Then discuss the pros and cons of each item and eliminate those they don't want to pursue. Girl Scouts then vote on their choices, using a democratic decision-making process. Guide the Girl Scouts in narrowing down the list.

Once the list is narrowed down, separate the list into three groups: **Now**, **Soon**, and **Later**. Choose from the **Now** list to set your troop goals and save the other ideas for a later time. Then help the Girl Scouts discuss and choose which activities they would like to put on their troop calendar for the next few months or whole year.

Step 3 – Determine cost

Research the cost of the activity. The younger the Girl Scouts, the more adult help they will need. Older Girl Scouts can do much of the research on their own. Expenses include admission, site fee, food, transportation, and supplies. This information is presented to the troop to discuss and make further decisions.

Step 4 – Plan a budget

A budget includes the estimated cost per person and anticipated income. It might include just one activity or the entire year. Brownies through Ambassadors benefit from learning how to budget. Even Girl Scout Daisies can make simple decisions about how to spend their troop funds. As the Girl Scouts grow, they take on more responsibility for budgeting and working within a budget. Once activities have been decided, they will be able to determine how the troop will secure funds for the activities.

After the Girl Scouts have figured out the total estimated cost of an activity, they need to compare it to the troop treasury and projected troop income. Begin to budget for an activity by asking the Girl Scouts the following questions:

- Do we have enough money for the activity?
- Do we want to spend this much of our treasury on this one activity?
- What are some ways we could cut the cost of this event?
- What are some ways we could earn money to cover the cost of this activity?

This is the time for the Girl Scouts to revise the budget, so it becomes a workable plan. They'll learn to make compromises and think creatively as they fine-tune their budget. Sometimes choices must be made based on funds available. Maybe a less expensive activity would enable all members of the troop to attend. A troop working together to earn money helps every Girl Scout participate more fully.

Step 5 – Write it out

Once the troop has decided on its financial plan, describe it in writing. If the plan involves a troop money-earning activity, submit the [Activity & Event Approval form](#) for council approval.

Have fun!

That's the process: brainstorm, set goals, determine cost, plan a budget and write it out!

Remember: It's great for Girl Scouts to have opportunities, like the cookie program, to earn funds that help them fulfill their goals as part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). As a volunteer, try to help your Girl Scouts balance the money-earning they do, with opportunities to enjoy other activities that have less emphasis on earning and spending money.



Financial management by program level

Looking for more information on what financial management abilities may look like at different ages? Check out the [Troop finances section on Volunteer Essentials](#) on the GSCO website. The subsection titled "Financial management and product program abilities by grade level" has a break down for you!

Sources of income for Girl Scout troops

Helping their troop earn and manage money is an integral part of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). Girl Scout troops are responsible for planning and financing their own activities, with leader guidance. This puts the Girl Scouts in charge, giving them the opportunity to cooperatively set goals, manage a budget, spend responsibly, maintain records, learn social skills, and develop good marketing, entrepreneurial, math, and financial skills.

Girl Scout troops are funded by a combination of earned and contributed money:



Earning money

Two ways troops earn money

Troops flex their financial muscles in two distinct ways to earn money to fund their Girl Scout experiences:

1. **Council-sponsored Product Programs:** The Girl Scout Cookie Program and other sales of Girl Scout-authorized products (such as calendars, magazines, or nuts and candy), organized by the council.
2. **Troop money-earning projects:** Activities organized by the troop (not by the council) that are planned and carried out by Girl Scouts in partnership with adult volunteers and that earn money for the group.

Product Programs

Girl Scout Product Programs represent the majority of funds earned by Girl Scout troops to support their activities. You can find information on council-sponsored Product Programs, including the Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program in the specific resource guides produced annually for those programs and on the [cookies page](#) on the GSCO website.

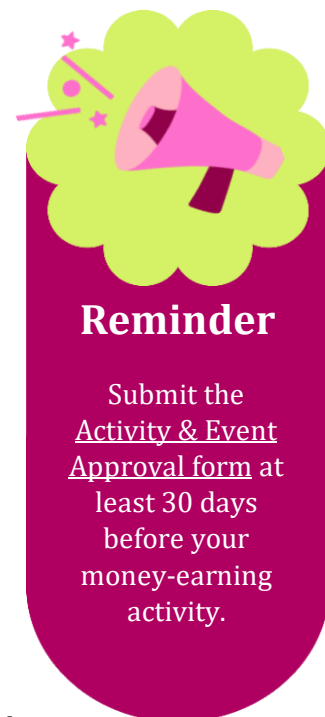
Money-earning activities

GSCO members are required to follow all money-earning requirements set forth by GSCO, [Girl Scouts of the USA \(GSUSA\)](#), and any applicable local, state, or federal laws governing members of a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Money-earning activity guidelines

General guidelines

- Girls must be involved in planning and implementing the project.
- Troop money-earning activities need to be suitable to the ages and abilities of the girls and consistent with the goals and principles of the Girl Scout program.
- 100 percent of proceeds from any money-earning activity must go to the troop and may not be split with any other organization or entity.
- Funds earned are not to be retained or used by individuals as their property.
- Only girl members can participate in money-earning activities, with appropriate adult supervision. Adults cannot earn money for or on behalf of Girl Scouts.
- Permission must be obtained from a Girl Scout's caregiver before she participates in troop money-earning activities.
- Participation by Girl Scouts in money-earning activities must be voluntary.
- Safety is the top priority of any activity. It is critical to ensure the safety of each participating Girl Scout. Compliance with [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) is required and Girl/Adult safety ratio guidelines must always be followed.
- Girl Scouts should be able to understand and clearly explain why funds are being earned.
- Money-earning projects must take place within GSCO jurisdiction (within the state of Colorado).
- Money earning activities can only be held outside of council-sponsored Product Program dates. This includes both the Girl Scout Cookie Program and the Fall Product Program each year. Dates of the sales can be found on the GSCO website on the [Volunteer Cookie Resources page](#) and the [Fall Product Program page](#).
- If there is an expectation that a troop will receive money in exchange for doing something for a person or organization, the activity is considered a money-earning project and not service.



- The money-earning activity must be limited to a defined time period and have a specific use for the funds, such as a community service project, activity or trip where additional funds are needed.
- Money-earning projects should not exceed what the troop needs to support its activities. The amount to be raised is determined by the previously prepared troop budget.

Games of chance

Lotteries, raffles, and other games of chance such as bingo, bunco, etc., are not allowed per IRS guidelines. Silent and live auctions are also not allowed.

Solicitation, donations, and fundraising

- Girl Scout policy does not allow direct solicitation of cash. If your troop is approached by an individual or organization who would like to make a monetary donation to you, please refer to the information included under the [Receiving troop, group donations](#) chapter of this guide.
- Troops, service units, and individual Girl Scouts pursuing awards or program activity opportunities are prohibited from using crowd-funding websites, such as gofundme.com, kickstarter.com, indigogo.com, upstart.com and others that encourage income or contributions.
- Girl Scouts may not raise or solicit money for other organizations or participate in walkathons, telethons, or similar activities that raise funds for other organizations. However, girls may donate a portion of their troop treasury to organizations or projects they consider worthwhile. For example, a Girl Scout troop cannot solicit pledges to take part in a walkathon for a nonprofit, but they can support the event by volunteering to prepare goody bags for participants, helping with registration, or passing out water at the event. Additionally, while the troop can donate a portion of their troop proceeds from Product Program sales or troop money-earning projects to a cause or organization of their choosing, they can't advertise that their money-earning activities are on behalf of another organization.
- Girl Scouts are allowed to ask for and accept in-kind donations (donated physical items, goods, or services).



Safety Activity Checkpoints

Troops should refer to [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) any time they are planning an activity for current safety, insurance, and council approval requirements, as well as planning resources.

Commercial products or businesses

- Product endorsement includes selling an item that appears to endorse a company, such as Mary Kay, Tupperware, Pampered Chef, Candle Lite, etc., and are not appropriate money-earning activities.
- Girl Scouts are not allowed to invite people to a business to buy the business's product and receive a portion of the sales. However, they can set up a booth during the Girl Scout Cookie Program at a business to sell something other than what the business sells. Specifically, Girl Scouts should not sell discount cards or host restaurant nights; partnering with restaurants to hold fundraiser events from which a portion of the profits are donated back to the troop are not allowed.

Choosing a money-earning project

Example money-earning activities

- Hold a themed car wash
- Make and sell arts and craft items
- Garage sales
- Gift wrapping
- Putting on a play/dance
- Parents' Night Out for Girl Scout members only
- Face painting at a community event
- Talent show
- Raking leaves
- Bake sales
- Make handmade cards for special occasions
- Walk pets
- Used book sales
- Yard sales
- Video or photography for an event

Keep in mind that money-earning projects are part of activity and trip planning, but not the primary goal of Girl Scouting.

Money-earning projects should incorporate the following:

- The Three Keys: Discover, Connect and Take Action
- Girls experiencing Girl-Led, Learning by Doing and Cooperative Learning
- Girls exercising and enhancing their knowledge of the 5 Business Skills

Events as money-earning projects

Troops may hold a Girl Scout event or program for other local Girl Scouts as a money-earning project. The troop may choose to increase the registration fees over and above the actual cost, if the increase is relatively small and does not make the event unaffordable. A recommended profit margin is 20-30%.

All events that are a money-earning project for a troop or group must be reviewed and approved by GSCO staff. Before planning a money-earning project and at least 30 days before implementing it, the troop must submit an [Activity & Event Approval form](#). Refer to [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for additional safety considerations.

Examples of an event troops could host as a money-earning project include badge workshops or Girl Scout celebrations such as World Thinking Day or a Juliette Gordon Low birthday party.

Hosting a Girl Scout training as a money-earning project

Troops interested in hosting training for other Girl Scouts as a money-earning project can set their own price point. An example would be if a troop is interested in hosting an outdoor skills training day for local Girl Scouts. The troop should consider their expenses and their goals when deciding what a fair registration fee would be for their event. Submit all money earning activities to the [Activity and Event Approval form](#) at least 30 days before an event.

Providing childcare as a money-earning project

By offering babysitting or childcare services as a troop money-earning activity, the time spent caring for the other children becomes a Girl Scout event and all safety standards outlined in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) must be followed.

No Girl Scout is allowed to be directly responsible for another youth member without approved GSCO adult volunteers present and adult-to-child safety ratios must be observed. This applies to all children present and not just the Girl Scout members. The age of the youngest child sets the standard for safety ratios for the entire event. This means that if the youngest child is in kindergarten or 1st grade (the grades for Girl Scout Daisies) then the event must have two adult volunteers for every six children and an additional adult volunteer for every four children.

It is recommended that if a troop wants to offer childcare services that they do so for Girl Scout members only or in connection to events that would have the children's caregivers remaining nearby for liability reasons. This would be an option if a troop wanted to provide childcare during a service unit meeting or in connection to another volunteer event. Permission slips and health forms would need to be provided for each child being cared for. Drop off events, activities where caregivers drop off their child and then leave the location, and must return later to collect their child, are strongly discouraged.

Please note that GSCO does not promote general childcare events to other members as it is not a Girl Scout program opportunity.

Food safety during money-earning projects

Troops, groups may be interested in hosting an event involving the distribution or sale of food. Examples of events involving the sale of food include bake sales, pancake breakfasts, and spaghetti dinners. Troops, groups should be aware of the [Colorado Cottage Foods Act](#) and should be advised of any additional local regulations by checking with their local health department.

Guidelines for selling merchandise

- Merchandise being sold by troops may not be commercially produced items that are purchased by the troop and resold for a profit. One way to avoid this is to ensure there is involvement by the girls in the creation or recreation of the products being sold. For example, troops could not purchase bulk candy and resell as candy but could use the candy to make a different product to sell.
 - Garage sales are allowed as a money-earning project as the members of the troop are involved in collecting items and can do some additional clean up or repair to items to get them ready to sell.
- Troops must follow state and local laws regulating sales by minors, food handling, etc.
- All items are to be sold within the council's jurisdiction.
- May not involve fund-raising for any outside organization or company.
- May not involve solicitations, sales, advertising, or promotions for any outside organization or company.
- May not involve endorsements for any outside organization, company, or other entity.
- All Girl Scout marks, designs and materials are intellectual property of Girl Scouts of the USA. Only approved official licensees may use Girl Scout Brand assets. This means that Girl Scout troops are not allowed to create or sell merchandise that includes any Girl Scout mark without receiving written approval and a signed licensee agreement from GSUSA.

Spending funds earned from money-earning projects

- All money raised or earned in the name of or to benefit of Girl Scouting must be authorized by GSCO and used for the purposes of Girl Scouting.

- All proceeds earned by Girl Scouts through the Product Program activities must support Girl Scout program experiences, such as camp, travel, and program events, but not scholarships or financial credits toward outside organizations.
- All money earned is for troop Girl Scout activities and is not retained by or allocated to the individual Girl Scouts who participate in the money-earning activity.

Private inurement, private benefit

To ensure council compliance with IRS regulations and to protect the council's 501(c) (3) tax exempt status with the IRS, GSCO does not allow troops or other pathways to create reserve funds or earmark funds for individual girls.

Per the IRS, "a section 501(c)(3) organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests. No part of the net earnings of a section 501(c)(3) organization may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual."

Using raised funds to further the Girl Scout program is in accordance with GSCO's exempt purpose. However, creating and maintaining reserve funds or tracking money earned by a girl within a troop or service unit account is not compatible with this regulation and is therefore not allowed.

Managing troop finances

Troop funds distribution

Troop funds, or money earned by girls in a troop, belong to the troop as a whole, regardless of how much each girl may have earned for the troop during council-managed Cookie and Fall Product programs or other supplemental money-earning activities. The money raised by girls in a troop setting is the property of the troop, and as such, troop funds are for the benefit of all girls in the troop. It is important to note that the funds belong to the troop, not to any individual girl or adult. With the help of their leaders, girls will decide how to spend their troop monies. Per IRS guidelines for charitable organizations and GSUSA recommendations, troops are prohibited from keeping separate individual girl accounts or line items. All funds expended should benefit all girls in the troop equally.

Troop funds are used to support troop activities. Girl Scouts in a troop work toward shared goals, including activities they want to do as a troop. As such, troop activities should be open to every Girl Scout in the troop. If a troop has a subgroup of members who are wanting to plan for a larger scale activity together, such as a trip that represents a substantial financial investment by the group, they can set up a separate line item within their troop financial tracking for this activity. This needs to be agreed upon by the troop as a whole, in advance. This subgroup can earn money to contribute toward this shared goal. But they shouldn't track individual money earned through Product Programs or additional money earning activities in calculating any remaining funds that need to be contributed by individual members.

Girls who sell more packages of cookies or items in the Fall Product Program or earn more money through additional money earning activities are not entitled to utilize more of the troop funds than other girls. Girls can choose to select Cookie Credits as their personal rewards in the Fall Product and Cookie Programs and these credits can be put toward their individual Girl Scout activities. Refer to the [Cookie Credits](#) section of this guide for additional information on how Cookie Credits can be spent.

If there is a Girl Scout in the troop who chooses not to participate in Product Programs or in additional money-earning activities, that is an opportunity to connect with the family about how the troop is funded and how each person can contribute to helping the troop achieve its goals. Every Girl Scout should contribute to their troop goals in a way that is meaningful to them as agreed upon by the troop. This effort can be made through participation in Product Programs, requesting financial assistance to offset cost in the event of financial need, or other methods of earning money.

Planning for adult participation

The Girl Scout program is only possible because of the commitment, support, and time of adult volunteers facilitating the program and accompanying their Girl Scouts on activities and adventures. When planning and budgeting for troop outings, activities, camping, or travel, the troop should account for the cost of taking the required number of adult chaperones needed to maintain minimum safety ratios as outlined in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#).

If the cost of an additional adult participating in a trip or activity beyond those needed to maintain the minimum required safety ratios represents a substantial increase in the cost of the activity to the troop, that adult should cover the cost of their own participation. For example, going on a camping trip locally may not involve a substantial increase in cost to the troop, but longer domestic trips and international travel involves the addition of airline tickets and lodging for the extra adults. National Girl Scout standards call for troop funds to cover only the minimum number of adults required to maintain safety ratios during travel as these adults are required for the trip to take place at all. See the [Girl Scout Guide to Domestic Travel](#) for additional information -- pages 3 and 9 specifically speak to the number of adults traveling with a troop.

There may be special circumstances that require an additional adult chaperone, and the troop could decide to cover the cost of that adult participating using troop funds. An example of a special circumstance would be if an additional volunteer is required to provide individualized support to a Girl Scout with a disability so they can participate.

This means that not every adult connected to a troop will be able to go on every trip their group takes. As the troop decides which adults will accompany the Girl Scouts on their travels, it is recommended that you consider past travel experience, familiarity with the other travelers (do the Girl Scouts know and are they comfortable with the adult chaperone), have they completed travel training, and past participation in troop activities. It is recommended that adult chaperones go through a travel progression similar to what Girl Scouts do as they work toward larger scale travel opportunities by going on local overnight and domestic travel opportunities to prepare for longer, more distant trips. This ensures the adult chaperones are fully prepared to support their Girl Scouts.

General money management expectations

- All persons handling troop money or bank accounts must be currently registered as a Girl Scout member and have completed a background check on file with the council. No one with an active financial restriction placed on their volunteer role should be handling troop funds or inventory from Product Programs. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to communicate to the other volunteers in their troop that they have a financial restriction. If an individual with a financial restriction is caught handling troop money, bank accounts, or product inventory, it means for immediate removal of all volunteer roles and future program participation by Girl Scouts of Colorado.
- All money received from caregivers, fall product or cookie customers should be deposited into the troop bank account as soon as possible. Troop funds should never be held in a personal checking account or deposited into any account other than the troop bank account for any reason. For security reasons, we do not recommend keeping possession of cash in a vehicle. It is recommended that all funds be deposited within 48 hours but at the very least within a week.
- Each account signer should make sure that funds are available in the account to cover the amount of the transaction before writing a check or making a purchase with the troop debit card. It is critical that all authorized signers are in communication with the other signers before spending funds to prevent overdrafts on the account. Be aware that online account balances may not reflect the actual current balance due to pending transactions. See the [Troop Bank Account Guidelines section on account overdraft](#) in this guide for additional information.
- It is strongly recommended that all expenses are paid using a troop debit card. Using a debit card for troop transactions creates a clear and trackable record of how and where troops are being spent and who processed the transaction. See the [Troop bank account guidelines section on debit cards](#) in this guide for additional information. See the [Handling cash](#) section of this guide for additional information on tracking cash transactions.
- All money earned by any girl member of the troop through Product Programs or other approved money-earning activities belongs to the troop and not to an individual girl. Troops should not use line items to track how much money each Girl Scout has available to them.
 - If a girl chooses not to participate or is unable to participate in a troop activity where troop monies are being used, the money is not refunded to that individual Girl Scout– it belongs to the troop treasury. This means that if a Girl Scout misses out on an activity that was paid for with troop funds, they should not expect to have the per person cost of that activity allotted towards funds only they are able to use.
 - In situations where a Girl Scout or their family makes payment to the troop to cover the cost of an activity, the troop should clearly communicate in advance if this is a refundable payment. Unless an expense has been communicated as non-refundable to families in advance of payment to the troop, Girl Scouts can be refunded the amount they contributed. Families may not expect to be refunded if the troop was not refunded by a vendor for an activity.

- The Girl Scouts in the troop should be involved in any decisions regarding how to use troop funds. Girl Scouts cannot decide to use troop funds that are in violation of GSCO or GSUSA policies or local, state, or federal laws.
- Most of the troop funds should be spent in the year the funds are earned, except the funds needed for supplies and activities in the fall of the upcoming year. Minimal funds should be rolled over from year-to-year unless the troop has a long-term plan for spending the funds. This is to ensure the Girl Scouts who earn the money are benefitting from their work.

Handling cash

Cash withdrawals should be made only when absolutely necessary such as making change at cookie booths or tips for taxis or hotel service during troop travel. When handling cash as a part of their troop activities, it is important to track who handled the funds and their use. Cash withdrawals would be recorded in a troop's bank statements, but as there is not a reliable way to automatically report on cash transaction once withdrawn from the account it increases the risk for theft or misuse of troop funds. Due to this increased risk, troops are encouraged to limit cash withdrawals.

When cash is being used for troop business, those funds should be secured – troops should not keep cash boxes out in the open (such as on booth tables during cookie sales) and should deposit unused cash as soon as possible. It is expected that troops will deposit any cash or checks regularly (at least weekly) during the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

Accountability and reporting on cash withdrawals and transactions

If it is necessary to withdraw cash from the troop bank account, the bank signers should account for the use of the funds by providing receipts for any transactions and then depositing any unused funds back into the troop bank account as soon as possible. Bank signers should receive pre-approval from the troop to make a cash withdrawal and have a plan for reporting on any transactions to the troop. Receipts are critical for tracking cash transactions and should be provided to the troop in accounting for funds used. If a receipt is not provided for a cash transaction, it is important that the person handling the cash makes note of lack of receipt and accounts for the funds with the other bank signers.

It is essential that when cash changes hands that members of the troop provide receipts tracking the transition. This ensures there is a record of who handled troop funds, eliminates any possible question of cash management, and protects everyone involved from losing track of the funds. Troops are encouraged to maintain electronic copies of receipts.

Please note that if a cash withdrawal is made and no documentation on how the funds were used is provided to the troop, it is means for immediate suspension of volunteer roles as a result of mismanagement of troop funds pending an investigation.

Receipts

Troops should retain documentation of their expenses for three years.

Anytime money is exchanged, the troop should either receive or provide a receipt. This applies to purchases made using troop funds and to payments made within the troop including reimbursements, payment for activities or troop dues, and when money is turned in for the cookie program. Carbon copy receipt books are an easy and inexpensive way to provide receipts. When providing a receipt, it is important that both parties sign it to confirm its validity.

Troops are also encouraged to maintain electronic copies of receipts. This can be as simple as taking a picture of paper receipts and sending them to a shared online troop folder or to a troop email address.

Reimbursing volunteers for troop expenses

It is best practice for most troop expenses to be paid directly from the troop bank account, but there may be times when a volunteer pays for a troop expense from their personal bank account and requests to be paid back from the troop bank account. Troops should have a plan for handling reimbursements before they are asked to process one – consider the following topics when developing your troop’s reimbursement process.

Planning for and approving reimbursements

Reimbursements should be planned for and approved by the group in advance. When planning for troop activities and [developing a troop budget](#), girls and volunteers should try to identify all of their potential expenses and how those costs will be paid. Planning ahead and considering when a reimbursement may be needed ensures fewer unapproved purchases are submitted for repayment.

Sometimes volunteers are willing to cover certain small-scale expenses out-of-pocket, but that should never be assumed. Identifying these expenses in advance and deciding how the troop will handle them helps avoid hard feelings. Some of these commonly forgotten expenses include the cost of printed materials and gas for personal vehicles during troop travel. Are volunteers willing to cover the cost of gas during local troop travel (such as going on a local field trip) but will ask to be reimbursed if the troop is going on a longer trip? Is a volunteer willing to cover the cost of printing out a few pages of materials but will ask to have larger print jobs reimbursed? Is it more cost effective for the troop to purchase ink cartridges that a volunteer can use in their home printer to print out troop materials or will the troop have their materials printed professionally (such as through an office supply store)? Identifying the answers to these questions in advance is key to ensure the troop is not surprised with an unexpected bill.

Additionally, troops should only process reimbursements for expenses directly tied to the troop’s Girl Scout experiences.

Reimbursement requests

Troops should establish a process for submitting reimbursement requests so they can be completed consistently and in a timely manner. Requests for reimbursement should include at a minimum a description of the expense, the amount requested for reimbursement, and copies of any receipts. Receipts are required for reimbursement requests so the troop can maintain financial accountability and transparency.

GSCO has created a sample troop reimbursement request form which troops can choose to utilize. This sample form is included in the [appendices of this guide](#).

Additionally, troops should establish a process for receiving reimbursement requests. This can be as simple as deciding that reimbursement requests should be submitted via email or physical copies should be turned in during troop meetings. Troops are free to figure out what works best for their group.

Processing payment

Reimbursements should be approved, authorized, and payment processed by a signer other than the payee. No volunteer should ever write a reimbursement check or process an electronic transfer of funds to themselves.

Troops should attempt to process payment for approved reimbursements as quickly as possible. This ensures that volunteers are not left to deal with personal financial hardship due to unreimbursed troop expenses.

When deciding on a payment method the troop will use to process reimbursements, GSCO recommends that troops utilize either checks or electronically transfer funds to create an easily trackable record of where troop funds were directed. Troops should not pay reimbursements with cash as this is not directly trackable from the troop account.

Collecting checks

A troop can choose to accept checks as a form of payment from caregivers. All checks should be made out to “Girl Scouts of Colorado – Troop #####” and not to a specific individual.

Risks of collecting checks

If a troop accepts checks as a form of payment, there is a risk that the troop may have a check returned due to insufficient funds (NSF). GSCO does not reimburse troops for NSF returned checks. Troops accept checks at their own risk. GSCO highly recommends that troops do not accept checks as payment from anyone outside their troop, such as customers purchasing cookies during the Girl Scout Cookie Program.

Tips for collecting NSF checks:

If a troop does choose to accept a check and it is returned due to NSF, GSCO offers these three tips to attempt to recover payment:

- *Step 1:* Immediately notify the payer to request re-payment as quickly as possible. It is sometimes best to request a cash payment or cashier’s check. A receipt should be issued documenting the receipt of the cash or cashier’s check and signed by both parties.
- *Step 2:* If you are redepositing their check, first contact their bank to see if funds are available to cover the amount.
- *Step 3:* If funds are not available, send a letter to the payer requesting payment. You may charge a fee to the payee to cover bank service charges. The fee should be the same amount charged on the troop bank statement.

Accepting credit card payments

Peer-to-peer payment applications (Venmo, Cash App, Zelle, Facebook Payments, etc.)

Peer-to-peer payment applications can be used to facilitate the transfer of money from caregivers to troop accounts. The use of these apps is only permitted for receiving funds into the troop account and for processing reimbursements to volunteers. Girl Scouts of Colorado will not reimburse troops for fees incurred through peer-to-peer payment applications.

Peer-to-peer payment apps processing more than \$600 in total collections could create additional tax reporting implications. For this reason, troops are encouraged to limit their use of peer-to-peer payment apps when transferring funds.

Use of peer-to-peer payment applications for sales purposes

Use of these applications as a form of payment (such as at a cookie booth) is a violation of many of their terms of use. If you choose to use one of these applications, you must make yourself familiar with and abide by the terms of use for that application.

Paying for Product Program sales

At the end of the Product Program sales, GSCO will initiate an electronic transfer from the troop’s bank account to pay the council for Product Program transactions (i.e. cookies and fall product). It is important that adequate funds are available. The specific dates when GSCO will draft the troop accounts are included in Product Program calendars, manuals, training materials and other communications. The troop will receive reminders during the program. Troops are required to have an updated [ACH](#) on file each year prior to participation in the Product Programs.

Reports and financial record keeping

It is important to keep good records of money received and money spent. Parents, co-leaders, and Girl Scout personnel have a right to see financial records at any time.

- All expenses and deposits should be recorded in a checkbook, electronic spreadsheet, or personal banking software.
- Record all transactions promptly.
- Keep all receipts for expenses and income. Keep a receipt book on hand to ensure receipts are consistently provided.
- Bank statements should be reconciled monthly by the troop treasurer by reviewing the statement and understanding each deposit or expense transaction. Any unfamiliar transactions should be researched and resolved quickly.
- Financial checks and balances should be in place to help prevent misuse of troop funds.
- There should be a clear separation of personal and troop funds. No personal expenses should be paid from the troop account and no troop money should be deposited in personal bank accounts. Misuse of troop funds in this way is means for immediate removal of volunteer roles by GSCO. Report any concerns of financial mismanagement to troopfinance@gscolorado.org.
- All cash payments should be documented with receipts and reported back in the troop financial record.
- Under no circumstances should a check be written to and signed by the same person.
- Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to Girl Scouts and their caregivers throughout the year and upon request to council staff to maintain transparency. Keeping the lines of communication open will help avoid any conflict, suspicion, or concerns.

Product Program record keeping

In addition to bank statements, troops should maintain a file of all Product Program receipts and records supporting all financial transactions for three years after the end of the membership year which occurs on Sept. 30. A copy of any Money Problem Reports submitted should be saved. Two program summary reports are especially important to save each year: the eBudde Sales Report for cookie program data and the M2 Troop Summary Report for Fall Product Program data.

eBudde Sales Report

The eBudde Sales Report reflects all transactions for the troop in the system. It includes the initial order, any additional orders, deposits, troop proceeds, total money to be collected for cookie orders and the balance due to GSCO. Only troop cookie managers can pull this report from eBudde for their troop. If your troop cookie manager needs assistance finding this report, they can refer to the eBudde Help Center tab or connect with your local service unit cookie manager.

M2 Troop Summary Report

The M2 Troop Summary Report reflects all transactions for the troop in the system. It includes all orders, troop proceeds, the total money to be collected for fall product orders and the balance due to GSCO. Only troop fall product managers can pull this report from the M2 system for their troop. If your troop fall product manager needs assistance finding this report, they can connect with your local service unit fall product manager.

Annual Troop Report

GSCO requires annual reporting of the troop's finances, by completing and submitting the [Annual Troop Report](#) (ATR), no later than June 30 each year.

Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and caregivers throughout the year to maintain transparency.

The ATR documents all troop financial transactions including income and expenses that occurred during the period between the date of the last ATR submitted and the current date. Troops established during the reporting year will

report financial transactions beginning with the month that the troop was organized. Reports will be reviewed by the council to ensure policies are being appropriately followed and funds used to benefit girls.

Receiving troop, group donations

Sometimes Girl Scout troops or groups will have someone who wants to donate money or resources in support of their activities.

It is important to understand that from a legal perspective, troops and service units are considered a subdivision of the council, and councils are the only distinct legal entity and the only entity with a tax exemption. Therefore, Girl Scout troops/service units have no independent existence for tax purposes. This means that while Girl Scouts of Colorado is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization and exempt from federal taxes, Girl Scout troops and individual Girl Scouts are not included within GSCO's tax exemption status and are not included in GSCO's Colorado sales tax exemption status.

This means that while troops, groups can accept gifts of money or items, those donations are not tax exempt and a tax receipt will not be provided to the donor.

Monetary donations

Per GSUSA Blue Book, **direct solicitation of cash is not allowed**. Troop funds can be earned through product sales (Fall Product and Cookie Program) or through approved money-earning projects. While not allowed to ask for cash donations, a troop can accept a monetary donation if offered. If a troop is offered a donation and the donor is not looking for a tax receipt, the troop can accept the direct donation.

Questions can be directed to giving@gscolorado.org.

In-kind donations

In-kind donations are a gift of physical items, goods, or services. Girl Scout troops and groups may ask for and accept in-kind donations in support of their activities, service projects, or Highest Awards activities. For example, a troop building a community garden may seek or receive donations of lumber, stone, nails, gardening equipment, plants, soil, or a sign for their garden.

Tax acknowledgement letters

Please note that troops and service units are not permitted to send tax acknowledgement letters on behalf of Girl Scouts of Colorado. For a donor to receive a tax acknowledgement letter, Girl Scouts of Colorado must receive the gift directly.

Frequently asked questions: Troop, group sponsorship and donations

Q: Is my troop able to receive funding through the King Soopers Community Rewards gift card program?

A: GSCO does not pass funds donated through the King Soopers Community Rewards program to individual troops. Troops should not set up a separate Community Rewards organization as this requires a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN). GSCO troops are only authorized to use the organizational FEIN to open authorized troop, group bank accounts and should not use the FEIN provided on their bank authorization letter to set up this type of account. If GSCO becomes aware of troops with accounts like this tied to the council's FEIN, the council will take steps to have the accounts closed.

Girl Scout families are encouraged to link their King Sooper's digital accounts and Shopper's Cards to Girl Scouts of Colorado as an easy way to support the delivery of council-wide Girl Scout programs across the state. You can find instructions on linking your digital account to GSCO on the [King Sooper's website](#).

Q: Can my troop or service unit apply for a grant from another organization?

A: Troops or service units interested in applying for a grant need to seek pre-approval from the GSCO fund development team prior to applying for the grant by emailing giving@gscolorado.org. Sometimes GSCO may be able to partner with a troop or service unit in applying for a grant, but this is dependent on multiple factors including suitability for the grant, scope and size of the grant, and existing organizational relationships between GSCO and potential funders.

Q: My employer will donate based on the number of hours I volunteer in a year. Can those funds be passed on to my troop through a Troop Sponsorship Pass Through?

A: No, most workplace giving programs are intended to benefit 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. As Girl Scout troops and individual girls are not included within GSCO's tax exemption status, any funds received through workplace giving programs will be processed as general contributions to Girl Scouts of Colorado to support the delivery of Girl Scout programs across the state and will not be forwarded to the troop or service unit.

Financial assistance

GSCO strives to make certain that no one is denied a Girl Scout experience due to financial need. GSCO encourages youth and volunteers to contribute when able and to be active participants in their Girl Scout experience. Troops are encouraged to be as self-sufficient as possible in activity planning and budgeting to ensure all Girl Scouts can participate.

Financial assistance exists to support belonging, participation, and opportunity. When support is granted but cannot be used due to program placement or scheduling challenges, it does not affect future requests. Please note that funding for camps and outdoor programming is limited and not all requests can be guaranteed, but GSCO approves assistance whenever possible. Financial assistance is made possible in part through the generosity of our community. If you or someone you know would like to support this effort, [donations can be made through the GSCO website](#).

Assistance for membership dues

Annual membership dues are transmitted to Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. Assistance for annual membership dues may be requested at the time of registration either by the registering member or the caregiver submitting the registration. No additional paperwork is required for families requesting financial assistance while registering for their annual membership.

GSUSA encourages Girl Scouts to designate a portion of their troop treasury to pay the annual membership dues of its members. This is a sound and efficient practice that enables Girl Scouts to meet membership dues and lessens the potential burden to individual members. The timing of the Girl Scout Cookie Program makes funds available for early re-registration in the spring.

GSUSA membership dues are \$45 for one year and cover the Girl Scout membership year running from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30. Extended year memberships, covering two membership years, are available to new members beginning in April of each year for \$35. The extended year membership covers the remainder of the current membership year at the time of registration and automatically renews the member for the following year. This provides up to 18 months of membership for new members and is a good option for those joining in the spring.

Assistance for Troop Dues, Uniforms, and Program Books

Financial assistance is available to help cover troop dues, uniforms, and program books. These requests are submitted through the [Financial Assistance Application](#) on the GSCO website and may be completed by either a caregiver or a troop volunteer on behalf of a Girl Scout.

Troop dues help support the cost of activities and experiences at the troop level. GSCO limits troop dues to no more than \$50 per year, and troop dues assistance will not exceed this amount per Girl Scout per membership year. Each Girl Scout may receive one troop dues grant annually. Once approved, funds are distributed directly to the troop's bank account via ACH, and the troop must have a current ACH on file. Adults are not eligible for troop dues assistance.

Uniform assistance is available for Girl Scouts each membership year. Girl Scout Daisies may request a vest or tunic, while all other levels may request a vest or sash. Uniform assistance also includes membership pins, numerals, insignia tabs, ID strips, and American flag patches. Adults are not eligible for uniform grants.

Assistance for books and program materials is available for both girls and adult volunteers. While troops are encouraged to budget for shared program materials and badge booklets whenever possible, funds for handbooks and materials may be requested through financial assistance as needed.

Assistance in this category may cover up to the full cost, depending on the request.

Event and Training Assistance

Program events and training assistance waives participant cost to attend council-sponsored programs, approved service unit events, and council-sponsored training opportunities. Troops are encouraged to plan for events within their troop budgets.

Both Girl Scouts and adult volunteers can use financial aid for program events and trainings by requesting financial aid at the time of registration to have the cost to attend covered. No separate application is required.

Outdoor Program Event Assistance

Financial assistance is also available for non-summer-camp Outdoor Programs such as [Outdoor Adventure Club events](#), [troop or family camps](#), and other eligible outdoor council programs. Requests may be completed by a caregiver or by a troop volunteer on behalf of a Girl Scout.

Applications for Outdoor Program assistance are submitted through the [Outdoor Program Grant Form](#) on the GSCO website.

Summer Camp Camperships

Camperships provide support for Girl Scouts attending GSCO summer camps through CampInTouch, including at Tomahawk Ranch, Sky High Ranch, and GSCO staff-led day camps. Each Girl Scout may receive one campership per year for a single camp session.

Campership awards typically range from 10–90% of the total cost of a camp session. A 10% deposit is required at the time of registration in order for the campership to be issued. If the remaining balance still presents a financial hardship after a campership has been awarded, GSCO will review the request and may offer a refund of the deposit.

Camperships are not available for troop campouts or volunteer-led day camps, including those hosted by service units. If financial assistance is needed for these experiences, families are encouraged to contact the camp director to ask about local scholarships or support being offered by the hosting group.

Applications for camperships are completed through the [Camp Grant Form](#) on the GSCO website. This form opens to new submissions when camp sessions go live each year in January.

Application Support

Financial assistance for membership dues and simple event and training registrations is applied immediately upon request when registering. Assistance requests for troop dues, books, uniforms, and camp/outdoor events are processed within 3 business days. Families or volunteers who would like help completing an application may contact GSCO Customer Care at 877-404-5708, where a Customer Care Specialist can assist over the phone.

Cookie Credits

Cookie Credits are rewards earned as part of the Girl Scout Cookie Program and Fall Product Program. They are issued on a card, similar to a gift card, and are mailed directly to the girl or held at council for camp, if that option is requested during the reward selection process of the program.

What can Cookie Credits be used for?

Girl Scouts can use the [Cookie Credit Reimbursement form](#) to get reimbursed for the following expenses:

- GSUSA membership fees for youth members
- GSCO sponsored or hosted events, activities, or travel opportunities
- GSCO troop or service unit trips, events, or activities with a per girl fee
- Highest Awards project materials and/or other project related expenses
- Any GSCO day camp hosting their own registration outside of CampInTouch

Girl Scouts can directly apply their Cookie Credits (and do **not** need to complete the [Cookie Credit Reimbursement form](#)) toward GSCO shop purchases made at the Colorado Boulevard retail shop, the DreamLab boutique, GSCO-hosted mobile shops, or over the phone, when Girl Scouts can use their Cookie Credits like a gift card. Please note: Cookies Credits cannot be applied directly to Girl Scout shop purchases completed online.

Girl Scouts attending any GSCO summer camp that hosts registration in CampInTouch (overnight, day, and troop camp) can apply their Cookie Credits toward their camp balance by submitting the [Camp Cookie Credit form](#). By completing this form, a Girl Scout's camp balance is reduced rather than paying the full amount and then processing a refund.

Cookie Credit Reimbursement Form

Requests for reimbursements for a girl membership fee, GSCO event fees, travel, Highest Award project expenses, or GSCO day camp or summer camp are submitted through the [Cookie Credit Reimbursement form](#). Reimbursement requests should be submitted within 90 days and/or within the same membership year. Email financial.followup@gscolorado.org with Cookie Credit questions.

Additional Cookie Credit information

- Cookie Credits may not be used to pay for or renew adult memberships, pay fees to outside vendors, or purchase items not available through the GSCO Retail Shop.
- Cookie Credits cannot be used to pay fees or travel expenses for children (individuals 18 and under) without a Girl Scout membership through GSCO or for adults regardless of their membership status.
- Cookie Credits do not have a cash value.
- Cookie Credits expire 10 years from date of issue.
- Cookie Credits cannot be replaced if lost. It is recommended that families take a picture of the card so the redemption number can be accessed if the physical card is lost.
- Girl Scouts should be allowed to decide how they will use their Cookie Credits. A Girl Scout can choose to donate their Cookie Credits to their troop to be used in support of all members, but a troop cannot require a Girl Scout to turn their Cookie Credits over to the troop.

Frequently used links, forms, & contacts

Frequently used forms

[Bank Account Authorization and Signer Agreement form](#)

[ACH form](#)

[Activity & Event Approval form](#)

[Disbanding Troop Donation](#)

[Cookie Credit Reimbursement](#)

[Camp Grants](#)

[Outdoor Program Grant](#)

[Financial Assistance Application](#)

[Annual Troop Group Report](#)

[Troop Update](#)

Frequently used links

[Girl Scouts of Colorado website](#)

[Volunteer Essentials](#)

[Volunteer Essentials: Troop finances section](#)

[Safety Activity Checkpoints](#)

[Fall Product Program volunteer resources](#)

[Cookie volunteer resources](#)

[Girl Scouts of the USA Blue Book of Basic Documents](#)

Contact information

Financial follow up: financial.followup@gscolorado.org

Troop finance support: troopfinance@gscolorado.org

Fund development team: giving@gscolorado.org

Supplemental resources

Entrepreneurship Progression Chart

Sample Troop Reimbursement Form

Entrepreneurship Progression Chart



Entrepreneurship Progression

Progression allows girls to gain new skills, build their confidence, and develop an entrepreneurial mindset over time. As they engage in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and beyond, girls learn five valuable skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives. As you work with girls, acknowledge their skill development and encourage them to challenge themselves further. Eventually, they'll be ready to translate their skills into true entrepreneurship or bring an entrepreneurial mindset to whatever path they choose.

Five skills learned from the cookie program:

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

Money Manager

Learn money basics.

Talk with your fellow troop members about different forms of money—coins, paper bills, checks, and credit—and practice counting it.

Learn how much Girl Scout Cookies cost in your area.

Decision Maker

Make plans for the coming Girl Scout year and set a budget.

Talk about wants versus needs.

Talk about how the troop can earn money through cookie program participation.

Look into your troop's proceeds from previous years to help you budget.

Goal Setter

Set sales goals as a troop and individually.

Talk with troop members about how you can work together to reach your troop's goal.

Discuss different ways to sell cookies and set a goal for which ones you'll try.

Brainstorm how you could use your cookie earnings to help others in your community.

Consumer Expert

Think "cookie customers."

Talk with troop members about why people may or may not choose to buy Girl Scout Cookies, and brainstorm ways to engage them.

Come up with ideas for the perfect customer pitch.

Practice explaining how your cookie earnings will be spent.

Brainstorm ways to thank your customers.

Cookie Techie

Use technology to grow the business.

Set a specific goal for your digital sales.

Make a video for your friends and family network promoting online cookie sales using your sales pitch; encourage the gifting of cookies to boost sales.

Use your support network of friends and family to safely promote your digital storefront.

Networker

Build your social support system.

Connect with local business leaders for ideas about how to grow your Girl Scout Cookie business.

Talk to friends and family about how they can help you expand your network.

Ask your customers to safely refer you to new customers.

Follow up with past customers and tell them how you plan to use this year's cookie earnings, to inspire them to increase their purchase.

Innovator

Take it beyond Girl Scout Cookies.

On your own or with your troop, think about a product or service you'd like to improve and brainstorm ways to make it happen.

Come up with several ideas, then narrow to the best!

Be prepared to go back to the drawing board—maybe more than once!

Get feedback from potential consumers and improve your idea based on what they say.

Research social entrepreneurs in your community and beyond.

Entrepreneur

Take your business idea to the next level.

Create and document a mission statement and business plan for your product/service idea.

Identify your customer base, competition, and potential obstacles.

Practice sharing your business idea with your troop.

Research how businesses are financed and think about how you could finance yours.

Feel confident about your business idea's potential? Take action!

How to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset:

- Be curious.
- Embrace challenge.
- Take initiative.
- Collaborate with others.
- Take creative risks.
- See failing as learning.
- Adapt to change.

Troop reimbursement request form

Submitted by: _____ Troop #: _____

Date submitted: _____

Itemized expenses

Receipts should be attached for all expenses.

Date	Description	Troop, group purpose	Cost
Total reimbursement requested			

Submitter's Signature

Date

Date received: _____

Receipts status: Receipts attached Receipts missing

Approval status: Reimbursement approved Reimbursement denied

Notes: _____

Approver's Name

Approver's Signature

Date

Payment status: Payment processed Date processed: _____

Payment method: _____