



Your Guide to the Girl Scout Silver Award

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Getting Started

We are so excited that you are ready to begin working on your Girl Scout Silver Award! The Silver Award is the highest award a Girl Scout Cadette can earn. A national award with national standards, it represents the time, leadership, creativity, and effort girls contribute to making their community better. The Girl Scout Silver Award is your leadership adventure where you will develop more confidence, meet new people, and have the kind of fun that happens when you make a difference in the world. Going for the Girl Scout Silver Award gives you the chance to show that you are a leader who is organized, determined, and dedicated.

Your Girl Scout Silver Award project should benefit your community, which can include your school, city, town, church, sport groups, or a more global community. You can earn the highest award for Cadette Girl Scouts as an individual or as part of a small group of 3-4 girls. This is your chance to shine and show your community how you are a go-getter, risk-taker, innovator, and leader.

The Girl Scout Silver Award Take Action Project begins with defining a community issue you wish to improve. Once the issue is defined, you need to look at why the issue is happening. There can be many reasons why the issue is happening—these are referred to as root causes. You can then choose one root cause to develop into your Silver Award project.

It may be difficult to complete all the requirements for the Girl Scout Silver Award in one year. Don't wait until your last year as a Girl Scout Cadette to make the decision to earn the Silver Award. Recognitions are only symbols of your work—it's the quality of the work and what you have learned while doing it that is important.

Silver Award Prerequisites:

- Be a registered Girl Scout.
- Be in the 6th, 7th, or 8th grade.
- Complete one Journey with an associated Take Action project.
- Attend a Silver Award Training.

Girl Scout Silver Award Steps

- 1. Complete a Cadette Journey.**
- 2. Identify issues you care about.**
 - To solve a problem, you must first identify it. Start by asking yourself what matters most to you.
 - Do you find yourself reading articles about endangered species?
 - Do you worry about where homeless children sleep at night?
 - Do you wish that younger students had a cheerful place to stay after school while waiting for their parents to pick them up?
- 3. Build your Girl Scout Cadette team or decide to go solo.**
 - Groups can be four or less girls.
 - Group projects need to contribute a minimum of 50 leadership hours per girl toward the project. There may be some overlap, but you each need to log your independent work.
- 4. Explore your community.**
 - Become a detective and create an observation list of problems in your community.
 - Silver Award projects must reach beyond the Girl Scouting community and be outward-facing.
- 5. Pick your Silver Award Take Action project.**
 - Define your issue.
 - Ask why this issue is happening to find the root cause you wish to work on to improve the world around you.
- 6. Develop your project.**
 - What steps do you need to take to reach your goal?
 - What special talents can each of you use to help make the project a success?
 - What did you learn when you earned your Girl Scout Cadette Journey awards that will help make sure this project runs smoothly?
 - Do you know enough to get started, or do you need more background information? Where can you get that information?
 - Which groups or organizations can you work with? Who can you ask for help?
 - How can you get people involved?
 - What supplies will you need?
 - How much time do you need to finish your project? Is that timeline realistic?
- 7. Make a plan and put it into motion.**
 - What is your solution?
 - Who is your audience?
 - Who can you partner with in the community to help with your project?
 - Where will it take place?
 - When? (Create a timeline.)
- 8. Reflect, share your story, and celebrate!**
 - First, make sure you thank everyone who helped.
 - Put your story together and share it.

Buzz Words

Take Action Projects address a community need and identify its root cause. It has long-term, measurable benefits, sustainable support, and a national or global link. A Girl Scout Silver Award project is also a Take Action project.

Root Cause: What is the basic problem causing the issue that you are addressing? Say your project is to get kids at school to make healthier food choices. The root cause may be that they don't know how to make healthier choices, so you address it by leading workshops to educate them.

Measurable: Will you interview participants/volunteers? How many people did your project help? Was there a reduction in need or an increase in the number of people helped?

Sustainable: How will your project stay alive even when you're done? Will the education you've provided live on in people's memories and habits? Will someone else be able to pick up where you've left off?

Project Advisor: While your troop leader can guide you through the pre-requisites, you will need to seek a project advisor once you have determined your project. This should not be your troop leader or family member, but rather, someone who is an expert or specialist in your project field. Your parent/ guardian must approve the project advisor.

National and/or Global Links: Your issue may be saving the local park's ash trees. Now consider how forests across the country are being devastated when firewood is being transported. What are you doing for the local park that could work for other forests across the country. Linked!

Leadership:
Your Girl Scout Silver Award Take Action project is a leadership award that makes a difference in your community by addressing the root cause of an issue while working with the community for a sustainable and measurable solution.

- Leadership takes a service project and turns it into a quality Silver Award project.
- Leadership occurs when a community becomes aware of the issue that exists in their community from working with you.
- Leadership occurs when you train others to volunteer on your project and they learn why this project is valuable to their community.
- Leadership occurs when you educate others in your community with a program that explains your project and why it's valuable.
- Leadership happens when you reach out to others to make your project sustainable in the future when you move on.

Community

Communities are groups of people who have something in common. You belong to many communities. Your school is a community, for example. So is your math class or your debate team. Even kids who ride the same bus every day are a community. Other communities include your neighborhood, your places of worship, your town, and so on. Take a moment and list the communities you belong to:

| My Communities | Issues that need addressed |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Now it's time to talk about connecting with people to get in-depth information about community issues. Start by talking to people you know, such as neighbors or teachers, and then ask them to introduce you to other people in your community, such as business owners, school officials, religious leaders, council members, police officers, or staff members at a community center.

| Community Contact | Organization | Contact Info | How they can help |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
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Take Action

Do you know the difference between a community service project and a Take Action project? Your Girl Scout Silver Award project should be a Take Action project that addresses the root cause of a community issue while working WITH the community for a sustainable and measurable solution.

| Community Service | Take Action |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses an immediate need. • Something with or for a community partner. • Short term solution. • Makes the community better for some people, right now. • Contribution is usually measurable. • Means doing a kind thing right now. • Community service projects are like putting a band-aid on a situation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses a need, immediate or otherwise, by working with (not for) the community to address the root cause of a problem. • Creates a lasting impact in the community that is measurable. • Includes a provision to ensure sustainability long after your involvement in the project has ended. • Uses resourceful problem solvers. • Advocates for the community, both locally and globally. • Educates and inspires others to act. • Empowers others to make a difference in the world. |

Here are some examples of how you take a community service project and turn it into a Take Action project:

| Issue | Short-Term Project (One-time effort that has short-term impact) | Take-Action Project (Long-term benefit and sustainable support) |
|---|--|--|
| Local Food pantry needs help. | Collect non-perishable food through a food drive at school. | Collect food and also develop a recipe book of nutritious meals using simple ingredients. Provide a copy to a local food pantry for distribution. |
| Local animal shelter needs supplies and volunteers. | Hold a food and toy drive in the community. | Hold a drive and create a marketing campaign—posters, radio, flyers, ect. Encourage the community to donate supplies and time to the shelter. Give marketing material to the shelter for use in future drives. |
| An uninsured family’s house is destroyed by a fire. | Collect clothes, household goods, and food for the family. | Work with your local first responders to develop a fire safety program for the community. |

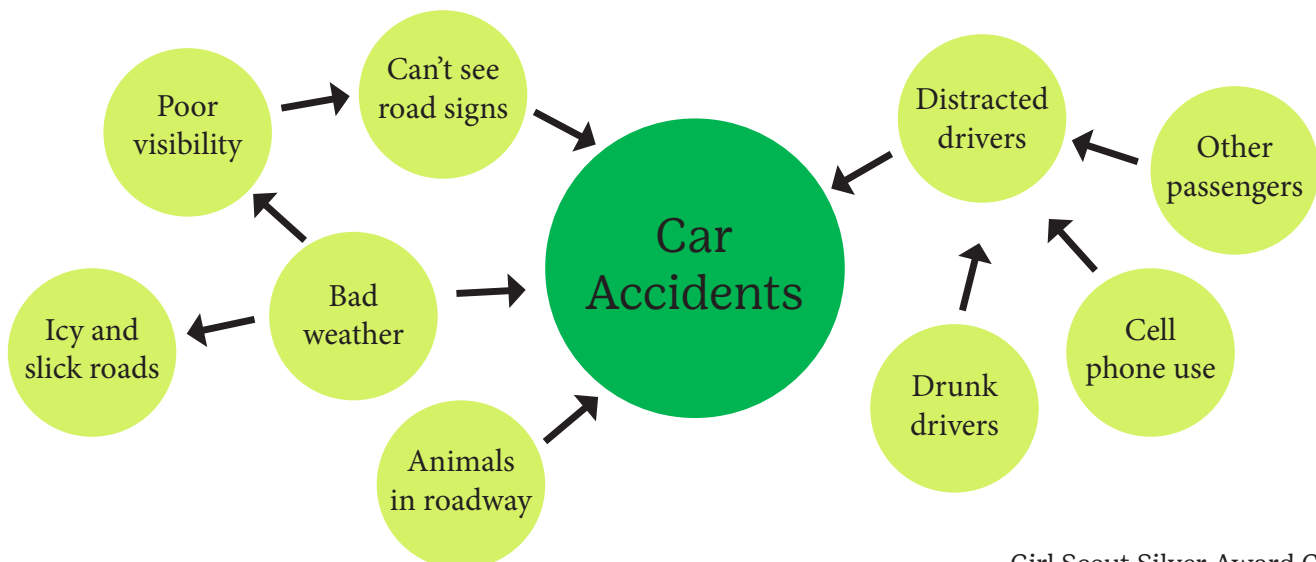
Root Cause

A Silver Award project should address a root cause of an issue and not necessarily the issue itself. As Girl Scouts, we want to make a positive change in our community, and we want long lasting effects. By looking at the root cause of a problem, we figure out why the issue is happening in the first place and create a solution to stop it from happening again.

| Community Issue | Root Cause |
|---|---|
| Too much waste in the school cafeteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no compost or recycling program. • Students use paper bags lunches vs. reusable bags for lunch. • Students don't eat what is served. |
| Families in need of food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of resources (food, shelter, etc.). • There are job losses and a need for resume/ interview skills. |
| Community in need of arts and music programming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public is not aware of the important benefits of art and music. • Art and music projects are cut from school in an effort to save money. |

Now think about one of the issues you listed in your community that needs addressed. You can create a mind-mapping diagram like the one below to help you create a plan for your Silver Award Take Action project. This activity will help you come up with different ways to approach a problem, as well as different ways you might go about addressing it. Follow these instructions:

- Write the community issue in the middle of the paper or anywhere that works for you.
- Think about what some of the causes of the issue could be. In this example, one of the main causes of car accidents is bad weather. Notice how many different causes connect from bad weather.
- Now, try to connect the different causes you came up with to each other and to the main issue. How do the causes connect to each other?



Measurability, Sustainability, and Timeline

Measurability:

The success of a project can be determined based on the number of people the project helped, the number of people who are involved, the reduction in the community's need, and other concrete numbers. When developing your project plan, you will need to come up with a plan to measure the effectiveness of your project. In some projects, the measurability will be simple to see, but other projects may need a little more digging. Will you interview participants? Will you survey your community?

Sustainability:

Sustainability means that the project creates a lasting change and is not a one-time event. This can be done by collaborating with community leaders and/or organizations and building alliances with mentors. Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania looks at sustainability in the following ways:

When picking a project, ask yourself how the project will stay alive after your involvement ends.

Change someone's mindset.

Teach someone a new skill.

Create a physical project.

Timeline:

The Girl Scout Silver Award project is a recommended project of 50 hours per girl. You should each complete your own hour log and document your individual hours. Some overlapping hours for brainstorming, planning, and organization may occur and should not exceed approximately 10 hours per girl. While Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania will look at the quality of your project over quantity of hours, every attempt to complete 50 individual hours should be made. Time spent on the Cadette Journey and involvement in troop additional fundraising does not count toward project hours.

Girl Scout Silver Award Final Reports are due and need to be received by council by September 30 of your 9th grade year. Final reports should be mailed to the Edinboro office at 5681 Rt. 6N Edinboro, PA, 16412 Attn: Silver Award, or can be sent electronically to: customer care@gswpa.org

Project Initiation
8-10 hours

Active Execution
30-35 hours

Project Closeout
8-10 hours

At least 10-15 hours within the 50 total hours must contain a leadership aspect of the project per girl.

Red Flags

Below you'll find a list of projects that just don't make the cut as Silver Award Take Action projects.

Why so many rules, you ask?

Because a Girl Scout Silver Award Take Action project is about creating the greatest impact possible. And avoiding these simple traps will help you do just that!

What NOT to do:

NO

Canned Projects

Why? Because a canned project is pre-designed and demands only that you implement someone else's project (i.e.—a blood drive or annual clean-up). A Silver Award Take Action project requires you to act in a leadership position from the get-go, designing a sustainable advocacy project on an issue that you have carefully researched.

NO

Collection Projects

Why? Because collecting items for an organization does not elicit the creativity or leadership required by the Silver Award, nor does it look at the root of the issue.

NO

Fundraising Projects

Why? Because Girls Scouts, whether girls or adults, are not allowed to raise money for another organization.

NO

Girl Scout Inward-Focused Projects

Why? Because the Girl Scout Silver Award is about reaching out to the community beyond the world of Girl Scouts.

Help from Your Team

Troop/Group Volunteers

A Girl Scout volunteer or your troop leader. For Indies, this may be a parent. To show that you've been working together, this person's signature is required on the final report.

Project Advisor

An advisor who is neither your troop leader nor your parents, who is preferably outside of your Girl Scouting community. This person should have specialized knowledge that relates to your Silver Award Take Action project. (Signature is required on official paperwork.)

Girl Led

The Silver Award process is girl-led. That means that YOU are responsible for writing your proposal, turning in your paperwork, and contacting council with questions.*

***Please note:**

Specific questions related to your project, from approval to implementation, must be asked by you. If an adult has general questions about the process, they may contact the staff liaison.

Girl Leadership and Awards Coordinator

The council staff who oversees the Higher Award process. Questions that can't be answered through this manual can be directed to Customer Care at customercare@gswpa.org.

Your Team

Your Silver Award team should include a variety of people. These people can include friends, family, fellow Girl Scouts, community members, and organizations. You should recruit and lead a volunteer team of 3-5 people outside of your immediate circle to show leadership.

Other Girls Scouts (outside of your Silver Award group) may be part of the team you lead, but their hours spent working on your project will not count for their Silver Award hours.

The Dirt on the Green

Project plans should take into consideration the scope and cost of the identified project. Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania has made exceptions for Girl Scout Silver Award candidates regarding solicitations of charitable donations. Projects can be carried out without any money and you should consider the resources of your community when asking for donations. When working toward your Girl Scout Silver Award, you should:

- Follow council rules for approved money-earning. All additional money-earning activities must be done at the troop level and be council-approved.
- All donation requests should be done by letter—you should compose the letter and present your project pitch, but an adult must do the actual asking.
- Unlimited amounts of money from yourself, troops*, and your parents and/or grandparents are allowed.. This money should be documented on the budget worksheet in your Final Report.
- Any other monetary donations must be capped at \$249.00 per project. This includes gift cards.
- In-kind donations are donations of materials. These types of donations are not considered part of the \$249.00 limit and can be unlimited. All in-kind donations should be documented on the donation forms in your Final Report.
- Be specific on what you need when asking for donations, and plan you project before you ask. For example, if your project is to build bat houses, list the number of pieces of lumber by size, such as, “We need X number of lumber sized Y by Z and X number of nails.”
- At the end of your project, all money must balance out to zero.
- Don’t forget, you can not raise money for another organization as a Girl Scout, and this can not be included in your project. This means you can’t have a bake sale and tell people that you are giving the proceeds to a homeless shelter for meals, you can’t pledge for a walk-a-thon to benefit breast cancer research, and you can’t hold a benefit dance to raise money for Sally’s kidney operation.
- Rules for Indie Girl Scouts are slightly different. The money you earn must go into an account held by a troop or service unit. Next, you need to present your need for funds to that group. Once you have completed your Girl Scout Silver Award project, you may submit your Girl Scout Program Rewards Certificates for reimbursement. Redemption requests will only be accepted for completed projects. The Redemption Request form will need to be completed and submitted to council, along with receipts and the appropriate amount of Girl Scout Program Reward Certificates. No change will be given for unused portions of Girl Scout Program Reward Certificates.

*Please note: Troops are permitted to make a donation to a Silver Award project, but 100% of the troop must vote and agree to donate.

Example Request for Contribution Letter

Below is an example of the Request for Contribution Letter Outline that can be used when asking for in-kind donations. Don't forget, you should compose the letter and give your Silver Award pitch, but an adult must do the actual ask for the donation. Other financial worksheets, like the Budget Planning Worksheet, In-kind Donation form, and Record of Income and Expenses can be found at the end of this guide and should be submitted with your Silver Award Final Report form.

Silver Award Request for Contributions Letter Outline

Date (Month Day, Year)

Contact Name (Prefix First Name Last Name)

Contact Title

Company Name

Company Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr. Last Name,

Paragraph 1—Introduction

Inform the potential donor who you are and the basics of your Silver Award project.

- Start with a strong opening sentence that catches the donor's attention.
- Include who you are, which troop and council you represent, and the Girl Scout mission statement.
- Describe what the Silver Award is, why you want to earn it, and the name of your project.

Paragraph 2-3—Project Details and Impact

Provide details about your project and how it will benefit the community. This is where you let your enthusiasm about your topic show in your writing!

- Describe what issue you've identified and your plan to address it.
- Include details about the project and the impact it will have on the community.
- If your project benefits another organization, describe it and how it will benefit.
- If your project is a special event, include the event date, time, and location.
- Be sure to mention how the project is sustainable.

Paragraph 4—Statement of Need

State the amount of your request and how it will be used to complete your project.

- Reinforce how this support will benefit the community.
- Refer the donor to the attached project budget for a detail of anticipated expenses.
- Let them know that their gift may be tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law and where to send it.
- Thank the donor in advance for their consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

SIGN YOUR NAME

Type your Name

Your Title (Cadette Girl Scout)

Your advisor's signature

Format Your Letter:

Use the template with our council servicemark in the header and tax details in footer (file included). **Note:** *The servicemark and tax details are required and cannot be altered in any way.*

Margins—top and bottom 1.25", right and left 1"

Font Style—Times New Roman

Font—size 11-12 point, black

Spacing—single or 1.15

Safety First

During your Silver Award Take Action project, keeping yourself, your team, and your participants safe is key! Make sure to ask yourself these questions:

- Do I have any volunteers or participants under the age of 18? If so, I definitely need to have permission slips for them. Girl-to-adult ratios must be followed as outlined in *Volunteer Essentials*.
- Are photos being taken or a video being made? Photo releases must be signed by participants or parents (for minors).
- Have I thought about having any snacks or meals? Do my participants have any food allergies? This is a great question to ask on permission slips. Once permission slips are reviewed, what allergens might I need to avoid?
- Are the activities I'll be doing during my project, or activities like them, listed in the online *Safety Activity Checkpoints*? If so, what do I need to do to ensure the safety of my project participants?
- Do ALL Girl Scout meetings and activities need a first aider? No, but a first aider is required for:
 - physically-demanding activities.
 - activities involving potential injury, such as but not limited to: hiking, camping, backpacking, bicycling, caving, climbing, horseback riding, skating, skiing, swimming, and boating.
 - an activity of 24 hours or more.
 - an event of over 200 people (from *Volunteer Essentials*).

Additional insurance may be needed for any non-Girl Scout participants. Instructions on how to purchase additional insurance can be found in *Volunteer Essentials*.

All publications should say "Girl Scout Silver Award Project" but should not have personal information about you. Consider making an email just about the project or listing your parent's or troop leader's contact information.

Silver Award Final Report Checklist

Documentation:

- _____ Report and timeline is written by you, not an adult (except in cases where the girl is unable to write, ex. learning disability).
- _____ If a group project, you each have submitted your own report, in your own words.
- _____ You are in grade 6-8 and your Final Report is received by September 30 of the year you begin 9th grade.
- _____ Report is filled out completely, including a time log and finance log. Other formats are acceptable for these logs.
- _____ Answers are written in complete sentences and are as detailed as possible. Your final report should give a detailed story of your project so that the whole picture can be identified.

Project Plan:

- _____ Project Advisor is a community contact outside your immediate circle of family and troop volunteers and is an expert in the subject matter of your project.
- _____ Your Take Action project reaches beyond Girl Scouts to include the larger community. It also addresses an issue outside of the Girl Scout community.
- _____ Project addresses the root cause of your chosen issue.
- _____ Your project is a new, fresh idea, generated by you, to address your chosen issue or build sustainability on what others have done.
- _____ Your project is not a service project where girls are the workforce helping with an effort others have already established.
- _____ Demonstrates an understanding of sustainability in the project plan and follow through; some aspects of your project may provide lasting benefits.
- _____ If a group project, you each take the lead in your own distinct role, and this is clearly outlined in your Final Reports.
- _____ Complies with council troop finance and fundraising policies, especially in regards to Girl Scouts not being permitted to raise money for any other organization.

Results:

- _____ Answers on your Final Report show evidence of personal growth and/or expanded worldviews as a result of working through the Silver Award process.
- _____ Time log details at least 50 hours of work you each invested in the Take Action project, not including the Cadette Journey, which is a prerequisite for the Girl Scout Silver Award.
- _____ You have reflected on what you have learned during the experience and answered the questions thoughtfully.

My Notes

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