

**Girls Soliciting Donations for
Girl Scout Gold Award Take Action Projects
Frequently Asked Questions**

Q: Why change the policy on Girl Scouts soliciting financial donations?

A: We believe it's important to provide girls with flexible options to gain financial support for their Girl Scout Gold Award projects. By expanding girls' opportunities to secure resources, they can implement significant projects, effectively partner with the community, learn new skills such as grant-writing, budgeting, planning, networking, advocacy, and about philanthropy, and surpass expectations of what girls can do.

Q: When would a girl submit an approval request to solicit donations?

A: A girl would submit a request when she presents her project plan to the council or at the council's discretion, the Gold Award committee. All requests are forwarded to the CEO, CDO, or designee for action

Q: Can girls raise funds for another organization?

A: No. Solicited funds are to be used explicitly for the girl's Gold Award project, which should have a defined project scope. Girls may not solicit donations for another non-profit organization.

Q: Who at the council approves the girl's plan to solicit donations? Can volunteers approve the solicitation of donations?

A: The council CEO, Chief Development Officer, or their designee approves the girls' request to solicit funds. The council may designate a volunteer committee supported by council staff to provide recommendations.

Q: What is the role of the girl's Gold Award advisor with regard to the solicitation of funds?

A: Advisors can support girls in the solicitation process but girls determine the best route for funding and secure council approval.

Q: How would the money come through —would it go directly to the girl or through the council and then to the girl?

A: Donations are processed through the council so a donor receipt can be provided and then administered to the girl in line with her project proposal. Councils may also determine to allow donations to be deposited into a council-approved bank account such as a troop account. This must be an account with a council EIN. Each council will determine the most effective financial accounting process for it. For donations solicited through crowdfunding websites, the council should ensure that the site directs donations into an account approved by the council with a council EIN; the crowdfunding site itself may provide the council with tools to administer donor receipting.

Q: Will the council need to issue tax letters to the donor?

A: Yes. The council will issue acknowledgement letters for tax purposes in accordance with its usual financial accounting process just as they would with any other donor. Generally speaking, donors cannot claim a tax deduction for any contribution without a record of the contribution such as a bank record or receipt from the charity, and so any approved fundraising method should provide for this. In addition, any philanthropic donation of \$250 or more requires an acknowledgement letter from the beneficiary organization — in this case, the Girl Scout council. Certain crowdfunding sites may provide tools to administer receipting and tax acknowledgements.

Q: Is there an IRS restriction about girls' soliciting cash? Does "the ask" need to come from an adult?

A: Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors can solicit cash and in-kind donations for their Gold Award projects. As long as the donation is being used exclusively for their Gold Award projects, the funds are deposited in an approved account, and the council is aware of the donation, they are not in violation of IRS regulations.

Q: Will girls need to prove they used all the funds from the donation?

A: Encourage girls to keep good records of their expenditures by maintaining all receipts and invoices associated with their projects. At the end of the project, girls will need to account for every dollar donated and spent.

Q: What happens if the girl does not complete her project or use all donations?

A: Councils can either return the funds to the donors or ask donors if they would like the funds to go to the council for future Gold Award projects or more generally to support the council's mission. Returning funds to the donors may complicate the tax acknowledgment process. Accordingly, a council may wish to institute a policy requiring that unspent funds remain with the council and that donors are informed of this in connection with their donation. Councils may require girls' crowdfunding pages to disclose this information to the donor (e.g., "This is a donation to ABC Council to support a Girl Scout's Gold Award project in accordance with her budget. If the project is completed under budget, any unspent funds will be applied by the council to support future Gold Award projects.").

Q: Can girls do 'walk-a-thons' for their own cause? i.e.: walk for hope?

A: Yes, as long as all funds raised from the event are dedicated to the approved Gold Award project. This means girls will have to launch and participate in their own walk-a-thons created for their own particular causes (their projects). Girl Scouts may not do walk-a-thons or solicit funds on behalf of another organization.

Q: Does this mean girls can use crowdfunding websites?

A: Yes if approved by the council. Councils at their discretion may select particular crowdfunding platforms for girls' use. The site must direct the funds into a council-approved account with a council EIN. Crowdfunding platforms should be vetted with regard to the particular platform's terms of service, including fees and ownership/use of donor names. Crowdsourcing maximum amounts cannot exceed the Gold Award project budget.

Q: Can girls sell products or engage in other money earning activities to raise funds for their Gold Award?

A: The Blue Book change to allow girls to solicit donations for their Gold Award projects does not change existing guidance on product sales and other money-earning activities. With regard to product sales, girls may not sell products outside of the Girl Scout Cookie Program and council-run Girl Scout Product program. Money-earning activities are troop or individually registered girl's activities such as car washes, babysitting, or computer tutoring. A troop may, as a troop, decide to apply troop funds raised from such product sales or troop money-earning activities to support a Girl Scout's Gold Award project.

Q: What about safety?

A: Girls should read, discuss and sign the Internet Safety Pledge with her project advisor.

Q: Can girls earning their Bronze or Silver award also solicit financial donations?

A: No. Only Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors working on their Gold Award projects can solicit funds.

SMALL GRANTS-at the councils' discretion, girls may apply for grants for Gold Award Projects.

Q: If a girl applies and receives a grant, would the grant money need to go through the council as a 501(C)(3)?

A: Yes, typically, funders require a non-profit organization to serve as fiduciary agent.

Q: Are there any national guidelines on the amount of grant funds for which a girl can solicit?

A: Each grant is unique. However, most youth grant awards range from \$250 - \$1,000. Councils should encourage girls to solicit only the necessary funds for their projects.

Q: When a girl applies for a grant, is council approval needed?

A: Yes. Girls need to list small grant requests on their Gold Award proposal forms or request approval when applying for the grant to support a Gold Award project, the same as they would with any request for donations.

Q: The grant process usually involves a report to the funder when grant is complete. Who would complete this?

A: If a girl is awarded a grant, she would complete the required paperwork for grant completion and submit a copy to their council. Councils are encouraged to provide girls support with this process.