

Federal Policy Agenda

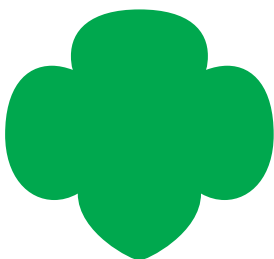
With over 1 million Girl Scouts, 111 councils positioned to serve every zip code, and 50 million alums nationwide, Girl Scouts has the power to enhance learning and leadership on a broad scale. Girl Scout programs evolve with girls as they grow, turning each moment into an opportunity to create a lifelong, positive impact. Girl Scouts combines time-tested, research-backed program delivery methods with fun, innovative experiences to speak to the interests of today's girls, all while tailoring leadership development to fit girls' learning styles.

In a rapidly changing world, girls need Girl Scouts more than ever. Girl Scouting opens the door to life-changing, year-round, girl-centered, fun experiences. Nationwide, Girl Scouts offers a wide variety of programs—including STEM, life skills, entrepreneurship, and the outdoors—to equip girls with the skills and experiences needed today to become the leaders of tomorrow. Girls from all backgrounds and abilities can discover their strengths, rise to meet new challenges, and be unafraid to make mistakes—a space where they can be unapologetically themselves.

Girl Scout programs, which may be after school or in school, enrich learning through a diverse lineup of badges and other hands-on activities. Girl Scouts build community and connection. They explore new experiences. And they build the skills and confidence to say, “I know I can do this!” Through exploring activities and experiences in the four pillars of Girl Scouting (STEM, Outdoors, Life Skills, and Entrepreneurship), Girl Scouts set big goals and achieve even bigger successes.

Policy Priorities

- Expand girls' access to outdoor exploration
- Inspire greater civic engagement and civics education
- Fuel girls' passion for STEM
- Strengthen girls' financial literacy and business skills
- Uphold a strong nonprofit community



“The desire to do good is universal. To the extent that each person contributes to making the world a better place, they become a beacon of hope.”

—Juliette Gordon Low

Founder of Girl Scouts of the USA

The Girl Scout Difference

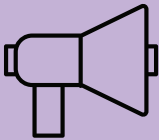
Program Pillars



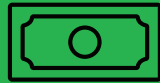
STEM



Outdoors



Life Skills



Entrepreneurship

Girl Scouts' mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

During a time when girls face innumerable challenges to their mental health and social development, Girl Scouts offers a space where they can make meaningful connections, discover new passions, engage with life-changing mentors and role models, and understand the power they have to achieve their dreams.

Girl Scouts provides a supportive environment and fun experiences for girls, helping them develop the skills necessary to navigate life with purpose and joy. It offers a holistic experience as well as the space girls need to explore their interests, build self-confidence, and strengthen their sense of self. Girl Scouts helps girls become Life Ready—for today and tomorrow. Research shows that many girls struggle with growing their confidence and self-esteem, building the skills necessary to successfully navigate today's complex world, and leading happy and fulfilling lives. Girl Scouts is the answer.



Girl Scout alums are more likely than other women to:

- Exhibit courage, confidence, and character
- Attain higher levels of education and management positions at work
- Volunteer and contribute to causes they support
- Be civically engaged and involved
- Exhibit leadership attributes and hold more leadership roles
- Be satisfied with life—personally, professional, and financially

Girl Scout Leadership Experience

The **Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)** is our evidence-based learning model, created in 2008 in collaboration with Tufts University. The GSLE includes three essential components that are needed to create the magic of Girl Scouting:

- 1. Variety of Activities:** Girl Scouts participate in a variety of activities that can take them anywhere in their communities. This allows girls to become comfortable trying new things in new places, with new people!
- 2. Supportive Relationships:** Caring adults who can truly connect with and mentor girls are vital to the Girl Scout experience. These wonderful people create safe spaces for exploration and discovery.
- 3. The Three Girl Scout Processes:** The Girl Scout program is developed to intentionally engage girls in three different ways. Girl Scouts experience these three processes differently, depending on their age, but they're built into the foundation of every experience!
 - **Girl Led:** Girl Scouts follow their own lead, no matter their age. From selecting the badges they'll pursue to deciding how they'll organize an activity, Girl Scouts have the chance to follow their dreams and grow their skills—and gain the confidence that comes with that.
 - **Learning by Doing:** Hands-on activities are fun for Girl Scouts of any age, but they also help them feel empowered to shape their own experience. Girl Scouts unlock their “I got this” attitude as they discover they can always dust themselves off and try again when things don't go according to plan.
 - **Cooperative Learning:** There's power in having a tight-knit group of friends who will learn with you, grow with you, and always cheer you on. Girl Scouts see firsthand that teamwork, respect, and collaboration can fuel them through any challenge that comes their way.

Girl Scout programming has long promoted independent decision making, which helps girls develop agency, challenge themselves to move beyond their comfort zones, and build confidence in their abilities.



Girl Scouts is proven to help girls:

- Develop a strong sense of self
- Seek challenges and learn from setbacks
- Display positive values
- Form and maintain healthy relationships
- Identify and solve problems in their communities

Inspire Greater Civic Engagement and Civics Education

Civics education is central to preserving and strengthening our country's democracy for the future. Informed citizens are far more likely to be engaged, active participants who stand up for issues they care about at the local, state, and national level. With less than half of US adults able to name all three branches of government, it's vital that we inspire girls to be informed, engaged, and civically minded individuals equipped with the tools needed to take action and make positive change in the world.

The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows:

- Only 22 percent of eighth graders performed at or above proficiency in civics.
- Only 13 percent of eighth graders performed at or above proficiency in U.S. history.

For most K-12 students, civics is a one-semester course in high school. Only five states require a stand-alone civics course in middle school, and elementary schools spend less than 30 minutes per day on social studies, civics included. Rural students, students of color, and low-income students are more likely to attend schools with fewer civic learning opportunities. Out-of-school programs are critical to supporting this glaring gap in educational achievement in civics.

Girl Scouts aims to support our democracy through service, leadership, and advocacy. Girl Scout civics education programs invite girls to dive into democracy and learn skills that empower them to make the world a better place. **Our civics education programming consistently trends as the most sought-after badges across our entire K-12 programming, with more than 96,000 girls taking action in 2024.**

In 2020, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, Girl Scouts launched the first national *Promote the Vote* initiative to engage Girl Scout troops in the democratic process during a general election. It revived the program for the 2024 election, in partnership with League of Women Voters. *Promote the Vote* engages girls in civics, providing them with resources and information to encourage adults in their community to vote. Through *Promote the Vote*, Girl Scout troops are given information and tools to support a range of outreach, from letter writing to texts, encouraging potential voters, providing girls with the opportunity to get involved in the democratic process, even if they are not old enough to vote.

Through Girl Scouts' civics education programs, girls are equipped for effective civic engagement and taking the reins of responsibility for our country and its future.



"Civic engagement is a core element of the Girl Scout experience. We prepare our girls to lead and offer them the tools to confidently engage in their communities, collaborate with others on solutions, and create the change they want to see in the country and the world. We are committed to ensuring that Girl Scouts are prepared to live lives of purpose and be informed, engaged, and involved citizens."

–Bonnie Barczykowski
Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts of the USA

Girl Scouts strongly supports actions to increase civics education opportunities, including:

- Expanding girls' access to civics education, including service-learning projects and informal educational programs that take place out of school.
- Improving girls' practical understanding of the systems, laws, and processes that govern society at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Encouraging a sense of personal and community responsibility to engage in civic processes.

Fuel Girls' Passion for STEM

For decades, Girl Scouts has been innovating in extracurricular science, technology and math (STEM) education through programs aimed at increasing girls' interest, confidence, and competence in STEM—which we assess through standardized outcomes. Girl Scout programs give girls the training, mentoring, and hands-on experiences to help them understand the value of STEM to society and the options for their own careers. Whether girls are interested in computer technology and cybersecurity robotics, coding and app development, or everyday tools like online safety and data protection, Girl Scouts connects them with STEM experiences, no matter their age or zip code.

Without question, STEM skills are critical to solving today's problems. Despite the exponential growth in STEM occupations, women remain vastly underrepresented in the STEM workforce, in holding STEM degrees, and in opportunities to develop STEM interest as youths. Addressing the gender gap in STEM requires starting early and investing in STEM opportunities for girls.

Girl Scouts plays a pivotal role in reaching girls early by ensuring they have experience with STEM at a critical time in their development and that their interest is sustained through high school. STEM badges reach girls as young as five, with 59 percent of all Girl Scouts participating in STEM programs or activities. Girl Scouts' research suggests that participating in at least one Girl Scout STEM activity sustains girls' interest in STEM during middle school and into high school, despite traditional declines in interest. **Non-Girl Scouts' interest in tech careers drops by 21 percentage points in middle school, compared to only a two-percentage point drop in Girl Scout tech career interest** (Decoding the Digital Girl, Girl Scout Research Institute). By high school, 74% of Girl Scouts show interest in STEM fields.



From 2017 to 2021, GSUSA launched over 100 new STEM programs and Girl Scouts earned over **3.5 million** STEM badges.



As a trusted partner and leader in the STEM field, Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Invest in STEM programs through federal partnerships with community organizations and schools.
- Promote proven techniques for engaging girls in STEM, including single-gender learning environments and hands-on, inquiry-based learning.
- Introduce girls to diverse role models and mentors in STEM.
- Expand opportunities for out-of-school STEM programming for girls.
- Encourage federal agencies to invest in developing STEM career paths for girls and other traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Secure girls' online safety by equipping them with the tools, safeguards, and transparency to protect their health and well-being online.

Expand Girls' Access to Outdoor Exploration

Girl Scouts has a long and storied history of getting girls outdoors and instilling a lifelong appreciation for nature, conservation, and the environment. When girls spend time outdoors and increase their exposure to nature, they thrive physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

Despite the known benefits of spending time outside, young people are increasingly sedentary and disconnected from nature. Technology-based lives, hours spent online for school and leisure, and limited active extracurricular hours contribute to this demise. Girl Scouts' outdoor programs offer girls an alternative, with 67 percent of girls participating in one or more outdoor activities. Through troop activities, earning badges, camps, and other outdoor programs, girls get outside, get active, and explore.

Girl Scouts' outdoor programming is designed for girls to explore nature, connect to the environment, and take on adventures from trail running and rock climbing to snow sports and hiking. **The unique girl-led approach gives girls the confidence to support one another, take on challenges, and spend dedicated time in nature on their own terms.** Girls' confidence soars as they join their friends in trying new things, taking healthy risks, and exploring the world around them.

- **Girl Scouts Love State Parks** allows Girl Scouts to explore the natural wonders of our state parks and collect trash from public lands to **#PickUpAmerica**. More than 780 events were held in 713 state parks in all 50 states across the country, with girls in 107 Girl Scout councils participating. **To date, Girl Scouts have cleaned up an estimated 23 metric tons of garbage.**
- **Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors** is an annual challenge that inspires and encourages girls to connect with the outdoors, regardless of where they live or their age. Some of the interactive activities include practicing yoga outside at sunset, writing a "thank you" note to nature, and connecting with local environmental groups. More than 46,000 Girl Scouts participated in the Love the Outdoors Challenge in 2021.
- **The Girl Scout Tree Promise** continued to be a favorite among Girl Scouts who want to make an environmental difference, with over 250,000 trees planted.



Machicomoco State Park in Hayes, Virginia

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Ensure all girls can participate in transformative outdoor experiences regularly and in varied ways.
- Identify and eliminate barriers impacting girls and their ability to seek outdoor experiences and activities.
- Provide girls with opportunities to explore solutions to conservation-related issues, thereby advancing their understanding of the natural sciences, natural resource management, and related STEM careers.
- Engage girls in environmental stewardship and advocacy so they learn the value of protecting our world and, in the process, learn to advocate for themselves.

Highest Awards

Girl Scouts offers three levels of Highest Awards: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. At each level, Girl Scouts demonstrate leadership, possibility thinking, and civic mindedness to identify problems, create solutions, and make the world and others' lives better.

The Gold Award, the most prestigious award in Girl Scouting, is earned by trailblazing Girl Scouts who are willing to tackle pressing challenges in their communities with measurable and sustainable results. To earn the Gold Award, high school Girl Scouts must identify and investigate an issue they care about, devise a plan, and lead a team of experts and community members to implement a project that produces lasting change. Over the course of one to two years, Gold Award Girl Scouts demonstrate initiative, commitment, and leadership. **Through their resourcefulness and perseverance, they embody the Girl Scout Promise and Law to truly make the world a better place.**



Making the world
a better place

3,000

Girl Scouts earned their Gold Award, with projects that included addressing education needs or gaps, children's issues, health, environment and sustainability, life skills, and more.

287,000

Volunteer hours invested

\$1.6 million

Fundraised were directed to create and deploy community-centric projects.

About the Virginia Girl Scout Legislative Coalition

There are seven Girl Scout councils with geographical jurisdiction in the Commonwealth. Together, as advocates, we build strong relationships with state legislators and members of Congress, as well as with state departments and agencies. Through advocacy efforts, we inform and educate key representatives about issues important to the well-being of girls and lobby for increased program resources that may improve girls' lives. This advocacy network allows for more communication to constituents on key issues facing girls. The network serves as a state "voice of girls"—voices that need to be heard as future leaders who will change our world.

Virginia Girl Scout Councils

Girl Scouts of
Southern Appalachians
Johnson City, TN 37601
423-929-8185 • 800-474-1912
girlscoutsappalachians.org

Girl Scouts of
Black Diamond Council, Inc
Charleston, WV 25322
304-345-7722 • 800-756-7616
bdgsc.org

Girl Scouts of the
Chesapeake Bay Council, Inc.
Newark, DE 19713
302-456-7150 • 800-341-4007
gschb.org

Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast
Chesapeake, VA 23322
757-547-4405
800-77SCOUT
gsccc.org

Girl Scout Commonwealth
Council of Virginia, Inc.
Richmond, VA 23230
804-746-0590
800-4SCOUT4
comgirlscouts.org

Girl Scout Council
of the Nation's Capital
Washington, DC 20008
202-237-1670
800-523-7898
gscnc.org

Girl Scouts of Virginia
Skyline Council, Inc
Roanoke, VA 24019
540-777-5100
800-542-5905
gspsc.org



A Place for Girls, Council headquarters and regional program center in Chesapeake

Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast (GSCCC) is one of 111 councils in the nation that is chartered by the Girl Scouts of the USA. We serve nearly 7,000 girls with the help of more than 4,000 adults in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.

GSCCC offers outdoor programming and camping at five sites:

Camp Apasus
Norfolk, VA

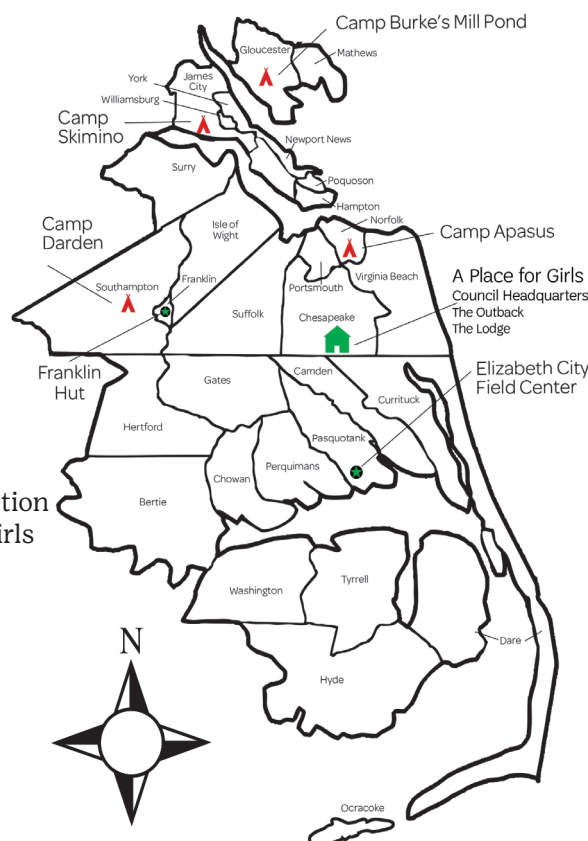
The Outback
Chesapeake, VA

Council Mailing Address:
A Place for Girls
912 Cedar Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322

Camp Burke's Mill Pond
Gloucester, VA

Camp Skimino
Williamsburg, VA

Camp Darden
Courtland, VA



These properties are open year-round and are also available for outside rentals. Each site offers a unique opportunity for exploration, education and exciting outdoor experiences!