Building a Gold Award Project Proposal

5 Important Overall Steps
1. **Brainstorm issue and project possibilities**. Use GSUSA's GoGold to assist you.
2. **Investigate your issue!** Find the root cause, the effects, the perspectives of the issue and how it is currently being supported in your community of choice.
3. **Talk to community members.** Verify the community need and begin to seek out tentative permissions from those that you'd like to work with.
4. **Begin your first draft of the Project Proposal.** Start early and well in advance of any GSEMA Gold Award Deadlines! See Gold Award Deadlines on our GSEMA Activities page.
5. **Share the plan.** Share the plan with those that you will be working with, get feedback and collect signatures.

Investigate the Issue

Research everything you can about the issue.

Benefits:
- ✓ Prepares you to speak confidently to peers and community members
- ✓ Helps to identify the root cause
- ✓ Helps to validate the need
- ✓ Highlight examples of how others are addressing the issue

Research the issue by finding the answers to these questions:
- What is the history of the issue?
- What causes it?
- Why does it matter?
- How does it impact communities?
- How is your community already addressing it? If your community is addressing it – is there a true need?
- How have others outside your community tackled this issue? Why have those solutions worked?
- Do community members agree on the causes or importance of the issue?

Tip: Use the Explore the Issue Handout to help you!

Keep in mind that a Gold Award Project is not:

- X *A Collection Project*. Collecting food for an animal shelter, for example, wouldn't qualify. When you collect donations, you aren't addressing the root cause and aren't addressing the sustainability of the effort as donations must be continuously gathered.
- X *A Fundraiser.* Planning a 5k or another event to raise funds for a cause wouldn't qualify. As a Girl Scout, you cannot raise money for another organization. And Money alone doesn't usually address the root cause of an issue. Just like collections, resources will run out.
- X *A Make or Donate Project.* Making blankets, birthday bags and other donations to local organizations and community members also wouldn't qualify. While it is helpful like collections, it doesn't identify and address a root cause and only addresses immediate needs.

X **Just a Tool.** Trails, physical structures, websites and videos are all important tools that can assist you in educating your community on issues. But alone these tools would not be a project.

X **A pre-established program.** A Gold Award project should not exist without you, the project lead. Establishing an already created program in your community would not be considered a Gold Award project.

Both the collection and donation projects are community service projects.

Gold Award Projects use these 3 take action solutions

✓ **Work directly on the problem and with the community you have identified**. A Gold Award project cannot be earned without multiple face to face interactions.

✓ **Educate.** Past Gold Award Projects have educating on the issue, taught life skills that connect to their issue, educating influence-makers in their community and more.

✓ **Advocate for a change by influencing appropriate decision-makers to address the proble**m.

Then as you write your proposal, keep the following in mind!

- **You take the lead**. This is your project. You'll need to create a team to support you but remember the Gold Award is an individual recognition.
- **Include facts and data that support your project's need and the proposed solutions**. Try to go beyond just personal observations. GSEMA recommends identifying 3 quick facts that you support your project need.
- **Share details!** In order to understand your project plan, we need details.
- **Explain the outline of your plan**.
    - ☐ What is the impact you want to see (aka your overall project goals)?
    - ☐ Who do you wish to work with?
    - ☐ What take action solutions are you offering to address the root cause?
    - ☐ Who will you include in your team? Challenge: look for experts to support as well as peers outside of Girl Scouts.
    - ☐ How will you spend the minimum 80 hours asked for the Gold Award project? You can count up to 12 hours on the research and time you have spent building your project proposal.
    - ☐ What are the major steps you'll need to take to implement your plans?
    - ☐ What budget is necessary to support your project? How will you earn the money necessary?
    - ☐ How will you measure success? What tools and methods will you use?
    - ☐ How will your project be sustained? Who will manage the project in the future?

Important Tips for Gold Award Project Proposals

- **Answer each question with enough detail to create a full picture**. One to two sentence explanations do not help the Gold Award Committee and GSEMA's Program team in understanding what you set out to do.
- **Provide evidence to confirm the need of your project and your solutions.**
- **Review your Project Proposal with others to ensure it is clear, your plan is well communicated and if edits are needed.** GSEMA suggests giving the completed project proposal to someone who knows nothing about your plans. Ask them to read it and give feedback. You might ask one person to be your editor—looking at grammar, spelling, and structure—while another reviewer focuses on content, checking

if you have complete, robust answers with specifics and clear connections between the answers for related questions. Your reviewers should be from outside your family and troop.

- **Identify a Project Content Advisor outside of your family and Girl Scouts.** Project Content Advisors should be adults and experts on the issue you have chosen. This person is also your primary subject matter expert. Past Project Content Advisors include social workers, teachers, nurses, directors and staff at local organizations and businesses, coaches and more.
- **Set up a meeting with your Project Content Advisor to review the proposal**. Point out what you hope to achieve, how you're communicating that to the Gold Award committee, and ensure you've thought through every aspect of the project. Keeping your Project Content Advisor informed gives you the opportunity to gather feedback and results in your advisor having confidence in your ability to carry out the project.

What happens after a Project Proposal is submitted to GSEMA?

Project Proposals received by GSEMA are reviewed first by members of our GSEMA Program Team and our Gold Award Committee. We use the following steps.

- **Each proposal is reviewed first to see:**
    - Have the prerequisites been met?
    - Has the need of the issue been verified?
    - Does the project proposal utilize take action solutions?
    - Are there any concerns or gaps that may need to be addressed?
    - What is the sustainability plan?
- **Reviewed Gold Award Project Proposals are placed into three categories:**
    1. Project Proposal Meets Criteria
    2. Project Proposal Needs Improvements
    3. Project Proposal Does Not Meet Criteria
- **Email confirmation from GSEMA will be sent directly to the Gold Award candidate**. This email helps GSEMA confirm prerequisites and share feedback, questions to expand on, or next steps. An opportunity is always given to candidates to set up calls with GSEMA to review feedback.
    - **Project Proposal Meet Criteria**: Gold Award candidate moves forward to Gold Award Interview.
    - **Project Proposal Needs Improvement**: Gold Award candidate receives explanation of why the proposal needs improvements and is sent back to the candidate to make improvements. It is possible for candidates to make changes and still enter into an upcoming interview. Decision is made on a case by case basis.
    - **Project Proposal Does Not Meet Criteria**: Gold Award candidate receives explanation of why it does not meet criteria and is sent back to the candidate to make improvements. Candidates are asked to submit for a later Gold Award deadline.

Those who are asked to make improvements and have submitted their Project Proposals through GSUSA's GoGold will receive a separate email from the tool itself when we send back the Project Proposal.

Gold Award Project Proposal Rubric

		Does Not Meet Criteria	Needs Improvements	Meets Criteria
Take Action Project Characteristics	*Project Purpose*	• Project description is confusing • Community issue is not clear and too broad • Little to no research has been completed beyond personal observations • No set target audience	• Project description is mostly understood • Community issue is defined but lacks detail • Highlights 1-2 research points to support need • Target audience is identified but needs more definition	• Project description is easily understood • Community issue is clearly defined • Highlights 3 research points and community validation of need • Target audience is clear and fully described
	Root Cause	• Does not identify root cause of issue. • Does not list action to address issue. • Lacks link to larger context (national/global)	• Includes at least 1 root cause of issue but lacks detail • Has at least 1 action to address issue but lacks details • Explains a link to larger context (national/global)	• Includes at least 1 root cause of issue • Has at least 1 action to address issue • Shows project's clear link to larger context (national/global)
	Goals	• No SMART goals • No clear project purpose • No measurement methods or tools	• Includes 1-2 SMART goals, but not specific • SMART goals connected to project purpose • Includes methods/tools that might relate to SMART goals	• Includes 2-3 SMART goals • SMART goals are directly related to project purpose • Includes methods/tools that directly related to SMART goals
	Sustainability	• Lacks idea of who will continue project • Only includes website, video	• Includes an idea of who will continue	• Includes an idea of how will continue • Explains who will continue the project
Leadership	*Team*	• Does not include team members • Includes only family members and Girl Scouts	• Includes team members but less than 5 • Has some diversity of expertise but most are from the same organization	• Includes team members from several varying backgrounds with diverse skills (approx. 5 members)
	Leadership	• Has no information about personal strengths • Does not highlight HOW they will use the team	• Includes vague strengths • Highlights 1-2 ways they will use the team	• Contains information about personal strengths • Shares clear strategies for using team
Project Planning	*Timeline*	• Less than 80 hours • Doesn't highlight ANY action steps • Includes time of other volunteers	• Somewhat realistic but less than 80 hours • Highlights many major steps • Is fairly easy to understand what candidate looks to do	• Fairly realistic with 80+ hours • Highlights many major steps clearly • Easy to understand what candidate looks to achieve
	Budget	• Incomplete information • Income and expenses do not balance • Very few expenses have been anticipated and uses their own money.	• Income and expenses balance • Doesn't raise money for another organization • Most expenses have been anticipated	• Income and expenses balance • Doesn't raise money for another organization • Nearly all likely expenses have been anticipated