

Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) Outcomes Revision

Bringing Rigor to Program Evaluation

Leadership has been at the core of Girl Scouts since our founding in 1912, when Juliette Gordon Low recognized that developing girls' leadership skills was critical to ensuring they would be the change-makers of the future. But even back then, Juliette realized that traditional models of (or "top down") leadership wouldn't necessarily be the most effective or engaging for girls and women.

Our own research confirms Juliette's intuition and suggests that our complex world requires a collaborative leader—one who values diversity, inclusion, and teaming together—to create sustainable change. This is also the type of leadership that girls value most and want to become involved in. Moreover, when girls think of leadership, they think of someone who has a solid sense of themselves, displays strong ethical behavior, brings people together, and works collaboratively. This research became the foundation for GSUSA's leadership model released in 2008, which featured 15 measurable leadership benefits, or "outcomes."

Through our national curriculum, girls learn about themselves and their values, and stretch to seek and meet challenges beyond what they might in other settings. They also learn to connect with friends, family, and community to create positive relationships and band together on issues of importance to them. Girls are challenged to look and think critically at the world around them and consider how they can best address significant problems they are passionate about solving.

Earlier in 2016, we simplified our national program model in the interest of telling a more succinct and consistent Movement-wide story about the impact of Girl Scouting on girls. We refined our outcomes, identifying those that most strongly communicate the unique impact that Girl Scouting has on girls today and since our founding.

Goals of the GSLE Outcomes Revision Process

1. Reduce our 15 Girl Scout Leadership Experience outcomes to a set of 5, with validated measures that are closely connected to Girl Scouts' mission and program activities
2. Simplify the evaluation process for GSUSA and councils to ensure consistency across the Movement
3. Ensure outcomes are consistent with what the larger youth-development field cares about

Benefits to the Movement

1. Clear and succinct story—nationally and locally—about the impact of Girl Scouting on girls
2. User-friendly resources (council communication materials and evaluation tools)
3. Ability to evaluate a broad range of programs to inform activity development and refinement

The Revision Process

Girl Scouts delivers leadership programs to nearly 2 million girls across the nation. A key driver of this success is our commitment to evidence-based program evaluation. As the applied research arm of Girl Scouts of the USA, the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI), founded in 2000, measures the impact of Girl Scout program and leads national conversations about girls and their development. In 2015, GSRI, in partnership with the Girl Experience Team at GSUSA, embarked on a process to review the organization's leadership model and revise the outcomes used to assess it.

PHASE I

- In spring and summer of 2015, GSRI interviewed developmental experts, youth-serving organizations, and research institutes that do exceptional work on outcomes measurement to ensure that our outcomes model and measurements would reflect the latest and most relevant information in the field regarding positive youth development.
- GSRI collaborated with the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development (IARYD) at Tufts University to review past GSRI outcomes research, identify the most critical aspects and related outcomes of our program for girls, crystallize definitions of those outcomes, and create revised outcome measures and Girl Scout processes measures that theoretically and empirically matched Girl Scouts' mission and program activities.

PHASE II

- In fall and winter of 2015, GSRI and IARYD conducted a psychometric study with four Girl Scout councils from diverse regions in the country to test the validity and reliability of six potential outcomes measures and the Girl Scout Processes (Girl Led, Cooperative Learning, and Learning by Doing).
- Reading comprehension across Girl Scout grade levels were also analyzed and assessed.
- Problematic measures were revised or removed.

PHASE III

- In spring 2016, additional girl data was collected from 65 Girl Scout councils for further testing and refinement of outcome measures.
- Analyses confirmed that the five revised outcome measures and three Girl Scout Processes are valid and reliable.

Next Steps

Currently, in summer 2016, GSRI is gathering feedback from GSUSA leadership and local councils and creating a library of resources—including messaging materials and survey instruments—and will provide extensive trainings to staff to ensure adoption of the revised GSLE outcomes and to facilitate their use.

For more information about the GSLE outcome revision, please contact: gsresearch@girlscouts.org.