When you think Girl Scouts, you might think cookies, campfires, and friendship bracelets. Yet while those things are a part of many people’s Girl Scout journeys, there’s so much more to it! With more than a century of experience in the field and varied, research-backed programming, Girl Scouts of the USA helps girls take the lead—in their own lives and the world.

Girl Scouts is 2.5 million strong—more than 1.7 million girls and 750,000 adults who believe in the power of every girl to change the world. At Girl Scouts, we’re always thinking about what we can do to help the next generation of female business owners, educators, scientists, artists, and community leaders succeed—and we know that one big thing we can do is to continue offering girls an unparalleled **Girl Scout Leadership Experience**, which encourages them to develop a strong sense of self, connect with their local and global communities, and unleash their potential to make a difference.

In response to the COVID pandemic, we have adapted our methods of reaching and supporting girls and their families by offering at-home activities. But still, like other national nonprofit organizations, we experienced—and continue to experience—financial hardship. Across the country, GSUSA and Girl Scouts’ 111 councils continue to suffer from the ongoing effects of the pandemic and precautions necessary to prevent its spread. Traditional revenue streams, including through cookie sales, camps, and in-person programming, have been severely disrupted.

Despite these significant challenges, we continue to build girls of courage, confidence, and character. Since the start of the pandemic, Girl Scouts’ hands-on activities, peer engagement, and informal educational experiences have been more important than ever, providing girls with social interaction, supplementing their traditional education, and sparking their curiosity and ingenuity.

As we enter the 117th Congress, Girl Scouts looks forward to working with policymakers to advance solutions that offer every girl a chance to practice a lifetime of leadership, adventure, and success.

**On the following pages, you’ll read more about the:**

- Girl Scout Leadership Experience and what we call the “Girl Scout difference”
- Girl Scout Gold Award
- Girl Scout Research Institute
- Girl Scout Cookie Program
You’ll also learn about Girl Scouts’ work to:

- Increase civic engagement and civic education among girls
- Strengthen girls’ financial literacy and business skills
- Expand girls’ access to outdoor exploration
- Fuel girls’ passion for STEM
- Uphold a strong nonprofit community

Further, across our work and channeling the collective power of the Girl Scout Movement, we are committed to confronting and dismantling systemic racism and inequities in our organization and beyond. We recognize that this is far from easy or fast work, but we are Girl Scouts—we believe in sisterhood, fairness, and justice—so we are in it for the long haul.

**The Girl Scout Difference**

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 thrive in five key ways as they:**

- 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 the community

Girl Scouts offers girls of all backgrounds and interests the single best leadership experience in the world, as well as helps families support their girls’ development into strong, confident leaders.

**Girl Scout Gold Award**

The [Gold Award](#) is the standout achievement of Girl Scouts who develop meaningful, sustainable solutions to prominent issues in their communities. A Gold Award Girl Scout gains the experience and life skills—including strategic thinking, communication, collaboration, problem solving, and time management—that set her apart in the college admissions process and set her up for success throughout her life. In fact, many of these young women mention their Gold Award in college application essays because of its pivotal influence on their lives and intended educational and professional paths. Numerous universities and colleges offer scholarships to these remarkable individuals, and Gold Award Girl Scouts who enlist in the United States Armed Forces may receive advanced rank.

Becoming a Gold Award Girl Scout is an opportunity available exclusively to Girl Scouts. The rigorous process of earning the award calls for leadership at the highest level as girls tackle issues they feel passionately about.
**Girl Scout Research Institute**

The **Girl Scout Research Institute** delivers customer-centric, data-driven insights across the Girl Scout Movement and beyond—measuring the impact of Girl Scout programming and leading national conversations about girls and their development via groundbreaking original studies. Findings from these studies inform programming, public policy, and advocacy for Girl Scouting—and we’re happy to share them with you!

**In 2020 alone, the Girl Scout Research Institute released in-depth reports that explore the following crucial subject areas:**

- Girls’ access to careers in cybersecurity
- Girls’ mental health, including sources of stress, the role of social media, and the best opportunities for support
- How the Girl Scout experience shapes the lives of Girl Scout alums
- The benefits of volunteering with Girl Scouts
- Girls’ perceptions of leadership (a timely update of the 2008 study *Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership*)

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**The Girl Scout Cookie Program**

The **Girl Scout Cookie Program** is the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world. And although what’s inside the box is super tasty, it’s the amazing experiences that happen outside the cookie box that make Girl Scout Cookies® so special.

Whether it’s a trip she’ll never forget, a STEM activity that opens her mind, a service project that improves her community, or the chance to build a lifetime of memories at camp, Girl Scout Cookies make it happen. And because proceeds from purchases stay local, customers help the budding entrepreneurs who sell Girl Scout Cookies in their community power awesome experiences for themselves and their troop.

**Inspire Greater Civic Engagement and Civic Education**

At Girl Scouts, our civic education programs invite girls to dive into democracy and learn skills that empower them to make the world a better place. A crucial element is understanding the systems, laws, and processes of our country’s governing bodies. When asked how we can close the gender gap in politics, girls call out the importance of civics education and role models—along with intentional education that addresses stereotypes about who can be a leader. Combined with Girl Scouts’ supportive environment, our expert programming and badges bring the values and lessons of democracy to life while empowering girls to create positive change in their communities.

Through Girl Scouts, girls experience our democracy firsthand. From virtual conversations with Members of Congress to our first-ever nationwide civic engagement project, “Promote the Vote,” we aim to provide a close-up view of our democracy to inspire service, leadership, and advocacy for the issues girls care about. Through our civic education programs, girls are equipped for effective civic engagement and taking the reins of responsibility for our country and its future.
National statistics clearly illustrate why our civic education programming is critically needed. In 2018, only 24 percent of eighth graders performed at or above proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics assessment. In the same year, only 15 percent of eighth graders performed at or above proficiency in U.S. history—a decrease from 18 percent when the assessment was last conducted in 2014.

At Girl Scouts, we believe out-of-school civics programs are a critical component of education. In 2020, we introduced a new series of K–12 Civics Education badges to bring girls more experiences that will deepen their understanding of government, prepare them for a lifetime of civic engagement, and motivate them to be catalysts for the change they want to see. Also in 2020, we launched Girl Scouts at Home, offering exciting virtual programs in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Our Civics Education badges consistently trend as the most sought-after badges across our entire K–12 programming, with more than 21,000 girls taking action between July and November 2020.

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

- Expanding girls’ access to civic 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; and
- Encouraging a sense of personal and community responsibility to engage in civic processes such as voting.

Strengthen Girls’ Financial Literacy and Business Skills

Entrepreneurship and financial literacy have been cornerstones of the Girl Scout experience for more than a century. The Girl Scout Cookie Program, the foundation of entrepreneurial experience in Girl Scouts, is an important (and exciting!) part of the overall Girl Scout experience. And while what’s inside the box is super tasty, it’s the amazing experiences that happen outside the cookie box that make the cookie program so special.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program inspires girls to develop business and entrepreneurial acumen, building five skills that serve them for life: (1) goal setting, (2) decision making, (3) money management, (4) people skills, and (5) business ethics. In addition to traditional in-person cookie sales, girls can participate in the Digital Cookie® platform, which puts Girl Scouts in the driver’s seat of their own digital cookie businesses. It teaches them vital twenty-first century lessons about online marketing, app usage, and ecommerce.
And the Girl Scout Cookie Program is just one of the countless hands-on, age-appropriate Girl Scout experiences that build financial literacy and business aptitude. Girls learn to think like entrepreneurs as they participate in activities that spark curiosity, confidence, and innovation. Research shows that girls are actively interested in becoming entrepreneurs, developing financially stable futures, and using their skills to make a big impact on the world. In fact, according to a 2019 survey from the Girl Scout Research Institute, 98 percent of girls want to make a positive impact in their future careers!

As our workforce and economy continue to evolve in the wake of the coronavirus, these skills along with entrepreneurial energy are more important than ever. But there are possible stumbling blocks on a girl’s path to entrepreneurship. Research shows that girls may fear failure, have concerns about bringing a big idea to life, and hold the perception that men are more likely to be entrepreneurs than women. As a result of the coronavirus, 84 percent of girls are stressed about the future and how the pandemic will affect their prospects for attending college, finding internships, or landing a job. While entrepreneurship may not be right for every girl, every girl will benefit, and maybe even discover a future career path, by learning to think like an entrepreneur. The keys are education and early opportunities to build financial acumen, business skills, and entrepreneurial curiosity. By providing these foundations, Girl Scouts is the perfect place to support young girls on this journey toward future success.

Nearly 8 in 10 girls are interested in careers in entrepreneurship

• Black and Latina girls are especially interested in entrepreneurship
• Girls have five requirements for their careers:
  1. Doing something they’re good at (98%)
  2. Making positive changes (98%)
  3. Helping people (98%)
  4. Working in an environment where men and women are treated equally (97%)
  5. Having a steady income (95%)

Source: TODAY’S GIRLS, TOMORROW’S ENTREPRENEURS

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

• Ensure all girls gain financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills;
• Bolster the role of youth-serving organizations in promoting real-world financial literacy and entrepreneurial experiences in all-girl environments;
• Expand federal initiatives that support financial literacy and entrepreneurial programs through partnerships with community organizations and schools; and
• Leverage educational technology to strengthen youth’s financial literacy capabilities.
**Expand Girls’ Access to Outdoor Exploration**

Girl Scouts has a long and storied history of getting girls outdoors and fostering within them a lifelong appreciation for nature and the environment. When girls spend quality time outdoors and increase their exposure to nature, they thrive physically, emotionally, and intellectually. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have adapted our programming to offer virtual experiences tied to the outdoors and activities away from the screen, building in girls essential skills and behaviors that will help them become effective leaders in the outdoors and beyond. Girl Scouts offers many unplugged activities, ensuring that all girls, regardless of their access to technology, can explore the natural world.

While the impact of the pandemic on children is not yet fully understood, the interruption to schooling, possible loss of family income, and social isolation raise valid mental health concerns. Research shows that spending time in nature can improve mood and curb negative thinking, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recognizes that outdoor socially distanced activities and gatherings pose less risk than indoor activities. Despite the known benefits of spending quality time outside, youth are becoming increasingly sedentary and disconnected from nature. Long school hours, reduced school recess periods, and tech-based leisure activities like video games are all factors—but Girl Scouts’ outdoor programming, which spans a girl’s childhood and adolescence, offers girls another way.

With programs in every zip code, Girl Scouts offers all girls opportunities to get outside and explore nature. According to a 2019 Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) study, *Girl Scouts Soar in the Outdoors*, 86% of girls agree they learned more about nature through Girl Scouts, and 80% state that they participated in outdoor activities through Girl Scouts that they never would have done otherwise. Our wide-ranging portfolio of outdoor badges and Leadership Journeys 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. Our unique girl-led approach gives girls the confidence to support one another, take on challenges, and spend dedicated time in nature. And their confidence promises to soar as they join with other girls in trying new things, taking healthy risks, and learning through adversity.

**Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:**

- Ensure all girls can participate in transformative outdoor experiences regularly and in varied ways;
- Engage girls from underserved and marginalized communities in outdoor experiences by identifying barriers to access and inclusion;
- 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; and
- 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.

75% of Girl Scout camp alums say that in camp, they developed an understanding of how to preserve and protect the natural world; 84% developed an appreciation for nature.

*Source: 2019 Girl Scouts Research Institute (GSRI) study titled “Girl Scouts Soar in the Outdoors”*
Fuel Girls’ Passion for STEM

Research shows that girls are keenly interested in STEM and excel at it. Yet for a variety of reasons, girls often do not pursue STEM as they move from middle school to high school and beyond. As early as elementary school, girls’ interests and activities can influence their future pursuits, which is why Girl Scouts is committed to ensuring every girl has chances to explore and build interest—and a possible career path—in STEM fields.

When it comes to their future careers, girls want to use their talents, make a positive impact in the world, and achieve financial stability. Careers in STEM fields can provide all that and more, and Girl Scouts can help propel girls toward achieving those goals. It’s no secret that women and people of color are underrepresented in STEM fields. For example, women only hold only 14% of jobs in engineering. And although the number of computer science jobs have grown since 1990, women’s representation has actually decreased. When girls and women opt out of STEM, we all lose. And that’s why programs that address the STEM gap early on are critical.

At Girl Scouts, we’re dedicated to creating opportunities for girls to explore a range of STEM interests, understand how STEM helps people and society, connect with role models and caring adults, and access resources and support. With a long-standing history in STEM programming, a nationwide network of councils, over 750,000 volunteers, and a best-in-class curriculum, Girl Scouts is uniquely suited to deliver meaningful STEM experiences.

For decades, Girl Scouts has been innovating in extracurricular STEM education through programs aimed at increasing girls’ interest, confidence, and competence in STEM—which we assess through standardized outcomes. Our programs give girls the training, mentoring, and hands-on experiences to help them understand the societal value of STEM and options for their own related career paths. And it works! Our research shows that Girl Scouts are more likely than girls who are not Girl Scouts to be interested in STEM careers—including app development, robotics, coding, and cybersecurity.

We’re proud to be a recognized leader in providing girls with STEM programming in an all-girl, girl-led space—demand for our STEM experiences remains high. By May 2020, Girl Scouts earned more than 1 million STEM badges, including more than 150,000 Cybersecurity badges since their debut in September 2018. Whether girls are interested in computer technology and cybersecurity robotics, coding and app development, or everyday tools...

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like online safety and data protection, Girl Scouts connects them with STEM experiences, no matter their age or zip code. Girl Scouts develops confidence and perseverance, as well as key skills relevant to STEM, that set girls up for success and prepare them to take action for a better world.

Girl Scouts’ interest in STEM fields increases from age 8, when 67% show an interest in STEM fields, through high school, when 74% show interest. And while Girl Scouts see a slight drop in tech-focused career interest from middle school through high school (from 61% to 59%), the drop is not as significant as it is for girls who are not Girl Scouts (from 52% to 31%), suggesting that Girl Scout involvement promotes interest during these years.⁴

To encourage more girls to pursue STEM, 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 out-of-school STEM programming to girls and traditionally underrepresented groups, including English-language learners, racial minorities, and other students served by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and
- Encourage federal agencies to invest in developing STEM career paths for girls and other traditionally underrepresented groups.

Uphold a Strong Nonprofit Community

As one of the nation’s largest nonprofit organizations, Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) is committed to advancing policies and programs that ensure strong and viable charitable organizations across the country. Our effort includes partnering with other charitable organizations and coalitions, including Leadership 18, the National Council of Nonprofits, and the Charitable Giving Coalition.

From churches and cultural centers to food banks and more, the nonprofit sector—which includes Girl Scouts—is a bedrock in American communities. Nonprofits bring Americans together to pursue common goals, solve problems, demonstrate leadership, and promote civic engagement. Moreover, the nonprofit sector is an economic engine. It employs over 11.4 million people—just over 10% of the U.S. workforce—with a payroll that exceeds many U.S. industries, including construction, transportation, and finance. Beyond direct jobs, it creates opportunities for millions

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⁴Girl Scout Research Institute, Decoding the Digital Girl, 2019.
more by providing child and elder care, job training, and job placement services. And the nonprofit sector is a consumer of more than $1 trillion annually in goods and services, spurring further economic activity.¹

Nonprofits have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. Most organizations experienced increased demand for services while managing declines in revenue, limited access to brick-and-mortar facilities, clients without digital access, and fewer volunteers. As the nation continues to experience the coronavirus impact while looking ahead, nonprofit organizations play a critical role to play in our nation’s recovery and rebuilding. But they can only do that with the necessary supports in place.

GSUSA and Girl Scout councils were eligible for economic relief programs Congress enacted to address the immediate economic needs brought on early in the coronavirus pandemic. For instance, the Paycheck Protection Program, included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, provided a short-term lifeline to councils when their primary source of revenue—Girl Scout Cookie sales—was derailed by social distancing and closures. The relief covered approximately eight weeks of payroll and operational costs. But since late spring 2020, that relief was expended; meanwhile, fallout from the pandemic continues to unfold.

**Greater long-term support is needed for nonprofit organizations to maintain their operations and continue their role as viable community leaders. Girl Scouts of the USA therefore seeks:**

- Full coverage of unemployment insurance for self-insured nonprofit employers. Massive unemployment bills may force self-insured nonprofits to lay off even more workers. Congress must enact 100% coverage of unemployment costs.
- Direct financial support. Congress must provide additional grant funding and expand nonprofit eligibility for forgivable loans.
- Economic relief through the tax code with refundable payroll tax credits to maintain payroll and offset costs incurred to resume operations and program delivery.
- Greater incentives for charitable giving. Charitable giving policies fuel the health of our nation and communities around the world. Congress can bolster the country’s vibrant and independent civil society by creating a permanent above-the-line charitable deduction.
- Reduced premiums for charitable and small employer cooperative (CSEC) pension holders. GSUSA and Girl Scout councils need to focus resources on reaching girls in this new environment, not on paying off the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. Girl Scouts’ ability to continue to fully fund vital programs, offer opportunities to girls in underserved communities, retain staff, and develop volunteers is jeopardized if Congress fails to adopt these measures. Every dollar that Girl Scouts spends on taxes to employee benefits or PBGC premiums is one dollar less spent on our mission—to provide the best leadership development experience for girls around the world.