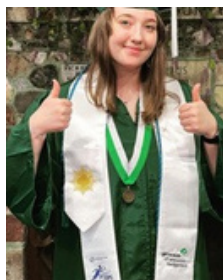




# SERVICE UNIT Guidebook



## INCLUDED IN THIS RESOURCE:

- SU Structure & Roles
- Year-at-a-Glance calendar
- SU Meeting Guide
- SU Budgeting Tools and Templates
- SU Recruitment Resources
- SU Event Planning Guide
- SU Day Camp Guides and More!

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## Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try: To serve God\* and my country, To help people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

\*Members may substitute for the word God in accordance with their own spiritual beliefs.

## The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and do, and to respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout.



## Welcome to the Service Unit Team!

We are SO excited you've chosen to be part of a key element of the Girl Scout experience in your community! Volunteers are the heart of Girl Scouts and we are happy to have you on board in this role. As a Service Unit (SU) Team member, your role goes beyond planning programs and holding meetings; you are a direct representation of Girl Scouts in your area. A well-functioning Service Unit not only provides program opportunities, but also increases awareness about the Girl Scout movement, supports the council and Girl Scout volunteers in the area, and increases the reach of Girl Scouting through membership, service, and programming. These actions are critical to sustaining and expanding the Girl Scout movement throughout our council. Thank you for taking this step into leadership with Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest Council and we look forward to seeing the amazing things you do as a Service Unit Team member!

# The Girl Scout Movement & Mission

**“I’ve got something for the girls  
of Savannah, and all of America,  
and the world, and we are going  
to start it tonight!”**

**- Juliette Gordon Low**

## The Girl Scout Movement

On March 12, 1912, founder Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low brought together 18 young women for the first Girl Scout meeting. Her vision was to bring girls out in the open air and into community service. Those first Girl Scouts camped, hiked, learned skills, and had fun. They grew into leaders by discovering the world around them and taking action in their community, and all of this eight years before women had the right to vote.

Today, Girl Scouts is the world’s largest leadership development organization for girls. We are urban, rural, and suburban. We are in schools, public housing, foster homes, churches, mosques, shelters and detention centers. We are in every zip code and abroad. GSUSA is active in 92 countries around the world.



**10**

**Million  
Alums**



**2.8**

**Million  
Girl Scouts**





# Building girls of courage, confidence, and character that make the world a better place

## The Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Girl Scouts strives to be the premier leadership organization for girls and experts on girl growth and development. We keep our eyes on the pulse of the experience in order to be in touch with the changing needs of youth in the 21st century. We use what we learn to develop strategies that ensure that the Girl Scout movement is positioned to bring the Girl Scout Leadership Experience to everyone.

## Your Role in the Girl Scout Movement

As a Service Unit Team member, you will take a lead in delivering the Girl Scout mission and experience within your community. But you won't be going it alone. You'll collaborate with our local council to bring the latest programs, activities, and organizational changes to the Girl Scouts and volunteers in your community.



## What is the Service Unit?

A Girl Scout Service Unit is a peer-led community of volunteers and youth in a geographic area defined by a cluster of schools. The Service Unit (or SU) is your connection to Desert Southwest and GSUSA, providing an essential support system that organizes meetings, trainings, mentorship, programs and events, youth, and families. Desert Southwest is comprised of 32 Service Units that incorporate our council's diverse footprint.

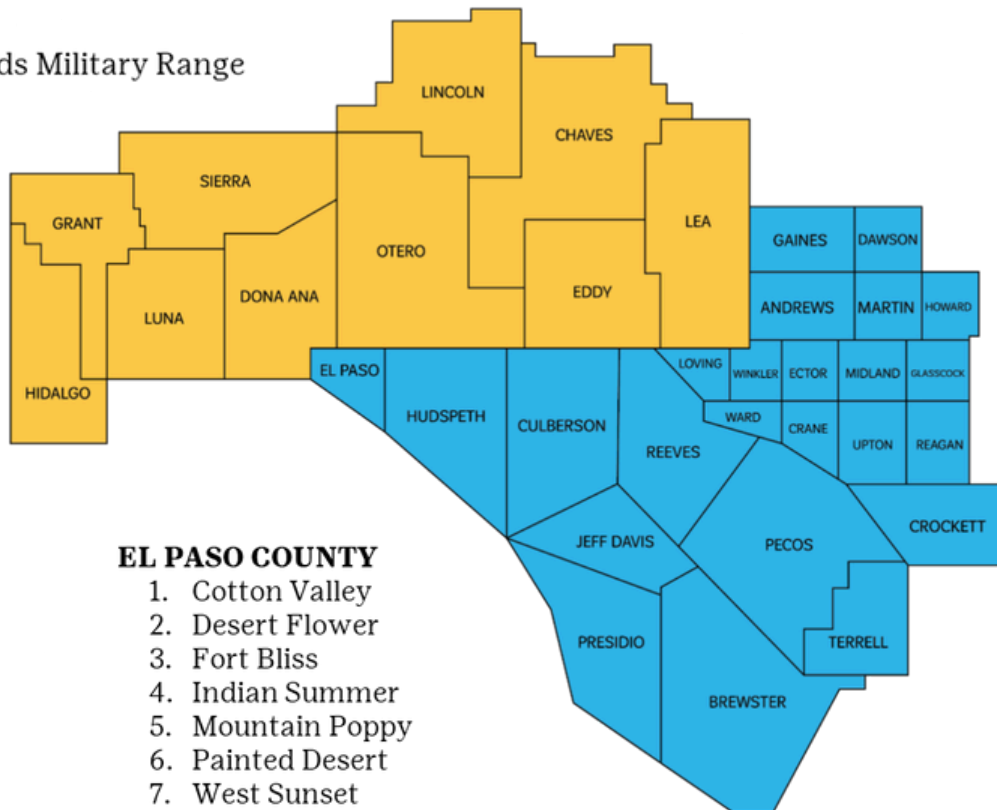
## What Do Service Units Do?

Each Service Unit has a shared goal: to best serve the needs of its youth and volunteers. Service Units host regular meetings where they share information about upcoming events and new information from Desert Southwest and GSUSA with representatives from each troop.



### NEW MEXICO (10 counties)

1. Cavegirls (Carlsbad)
2. Chaves
3. City of Champions (Artesia)
4. Desert Diamonds (Las Cruces)
5. Desert Mountains (Alamogordo)
6. Grant/Hidalgo
7. Lea
8. Lincoln
9. Luna
10. Mescalero
11. Sierra
12. White Sands Military Range



### EL PASO COUNTY

1. Cotton Valley
2. Desert Flower
3. Fort Bliss
4. Indian Summer
5. Mountain Poppy
6. Painted Desert
7. West Sunset
8. Stateline

### TEXAS (24 counties)

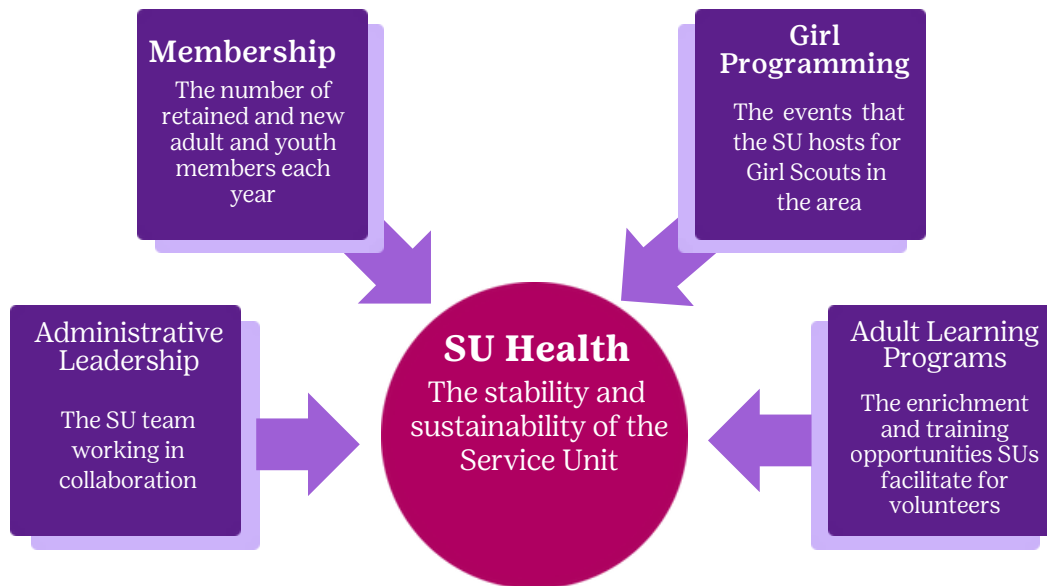
1. Andrews
2. Alpine
3. Big Lake
4. Crane
5. Emerald (Midland)
6. Fort Stockton
7. Gaines
8. Howard
9. Odessa
10. Ozona
11. Pecos
12. Sanderson
13. Rankin
14. Winkler/Ward



# The Health of Your Service Unit

***“Girl Scouting rises within you and inspires you to put forth your best.”  
-Juliette Gordon Low***

With the support of Desert Southwest staff, Service Unit volunteers can regularly assess the health of the Service Unit. The health of a Service Unit is determined by its strength in four areas: administrative leadership, membership, youth programming, and adult learning.



## Administrative Leadership

The Service Unit team ensures that Girl Scout troops and Individually Registered Girls (IRG's) within the Service Unit are fully supported. One component of Service Unit health is developing administrative processes that equip SUs to collect and share information and opportunities in a way that are simple and efficient. These processes include:

- Developing effective communication strategies
- Participating in council-wide events such as the Howl at the Moon

## Membership

Healthy membership is a significant indicator of the health and sustainability of the SU. Membership isn't just youth, adults are a key part of the delivery of the Girl Scout experience. Membership can be further refined as retained and new members. Here is how we define each type of membership:

- New and retained adult membership
- New and retained youth membership

The SU is sustainable when new membership grows each year.

## Youth Programming

Girl Scout youth programming comes from different sources. Some programs, like STEM workshops, outdoor opportunities, and entrepreneurial programs are offered by GSUSA and Desert Southwest. Service Units provide valuable Girl Scout programming, too. It's a collaboration!

When your Service Unit develops youth programs, you can add a unique twist that reflects the distinct culture of the SU community. No two Service Units are alike, and that unique twist is what makes each SU so special.

# STEM



# Outdoor



# Entrepreneurship



# Life Skills



## Adult Learning Opportunities

Successful Service Units understand the importance of equipping their volunteers with the right training to excel in their roles. They recognize that well-trained volunteers feel more confident, enjoy their experiences, and grow as leaders. Additionally, offering training and enrichment opportunities helps retain dedicated volunteers, which is essential for the sustainability of the Service Unit. By ensuring that volunteers receive proper training, the SU team not only strengthens its community, but also makes its own tasks more manageable in the long run.

Here are a few things to know about training:

- Virtual Training - Service Unit team trainings are available on gsLearn. These are intended to help SU team members provide support to local communities.
- Required [Trainings](#) - Service Units play an important role in encouraging new and returning leaders to complete required and available trainings. These offerings will be further detailed in the training section of this guide. New leaders are directed to a series of trainings through their onboarding process. Additionally, specific trainings are required for trips and overnight events, as well as use of small watercrafts and target sports on GSDSW and other recreational properties.
- Request an Expert - GSDSW staff are available to support your community through expert learning opportunities and event support. Choose from a list of available adult training options or pitch your own idea if you don't see the training your community needs. Details can be found in the [event section](#) of this guidebook.
- Short and Snappy Training - add short and snappy learning opportunities to your SU meetings or share them with leaders and volunteers. Anyone can lead one and they're quick: most take only 15-30 minutes. Details can be found in training section.

# gsLearn Experts Trainings



# Building Your Team

Service unit teams thrive when there is a committed and diverse pool of adults to be considered for positions. It's important to identify individuals who understand and can commit to fulfilling service unit team position requirements. To help get you started, here are some tips on recruiting superstar volunteers:



**Familiarize yourself with the requirements of each volunteer position.**



**Observe the skills and abilities of others within in your service unit.**



**Consider skills an individual may want to develop that could apply in their career.**



**Make a personal request with a specific job in mind.**



**Consider recruiting former troop leaders, lifetime members, alums, and community members.**



**Be honest about the time commitment that the position will require.**

Sometimes, you may need help getting those volunteer roles filled. Never fear— your Customer Engagement Specialist will help with recruiting new team members! They will guide and support your search for volunteers and give you advice along the way.

# Service Unit Team Structure & Progression

Each Service unit is supported by a Service Unit team; a group of volunteers that take on a leadership role and help to support and guide the Girl Scout experience in their community. This peer-led team will work together to build sisterhood in their local community through volunteer meetings, local events, product program support, and community service projects. They will make decisions by consensus, but each team member can take the lead in a particular area of interest, expertise, or need to help keep the team moving toward community goals.

SU Team roles are divided into three areas of focus: Operations, Program, and Support. This team structure is meant to be scalable, so that each community is able to build a team that suits their needs. As the team develops and the community grows, the team is able to add members and grow to meet these changing needs. By taking on an SU Team role, volunteers are able to share the load and work together to support fellow volunteers in building a vibrant local Girl Scout Community.

# Service Unit Team Roles

***“Leadership is not about being in charge, but about taking care of those in your charge.”***

***-Juliette Gordon Low***

## Operations Team

As part of the Service Unit Leadership Team, Operation roles are responsible for the administration, communication, financial viability, and fund development needs of the Service Unit.

### Service Unit Manager

The SU Manager provides leadership and oversight, maintaining fiscal integrity, meeting facilitation, and engaged communication, ensuring the SU is organized, cohesive, and on track to meet SU goals.

- Works with SU treasurer to ensure financial records are in order and annual SU financial report (SUFR) is submitted on time
- Collaborates with Communications to maintain open lines of communication within the SU, share the good news about local Girl Scouts activity, and act as a second Admin on SU social media accounts
- Works with Secretary to schedule regular meetings and maintain accurate SU records and up-to-date rosters

### Secretary / Communications

The Service Unit Secretary / Communications organizes, facilitates, and takes notes for SU meetings, maintains an up-to-date roster and SU calendar of meetings, events, and activities, and ensures the accuracy of SU records. They spotlight the great things that Girl Scouts and volunteers are doing in the community and are responsible for establishing and maintaining open communication channels within the SU, Desert Southwest, and the public by proactively managing the SU communication platforms (Facebook, email).

- Organizes and facilitates SU meetings, including preparing and sharing agendas, taking notes, and sharing them with the team
- Maintains an up-to-date SU roster using the Looker platform
- Maintains an up-to-date calendar of SU meetings, events, and activities
- Keeps accurate records of SU goals, progress, and notes
- Encourages robust active participation on the SU social media by all members
- Assists SU team members in promoting programs, events, activities, recruitment, etc., to all SU members
- Submits information and digital photos to Desert Southwest for highlighting in publications and social media to celebrate SU Girl Scouts
- Submits photos along with a short description to [Communications@gsdsw.org](mailto:Communications@gsdsw.org)



## Treasurer

The Service Unit Treasurer is responsible for the administrative oversight of the SU bank account, finances, and financial reporting.

- Oversees the SU bank account by reviewing monthly statements, balancing the account, and providing updates on SU finances at SU meetings
- Submits an SU Finance report (SUFR) to Desert Southwest by June 30 annually.
- Advises troops as needed on financial resources & trainings, including gsLearn, VTK, money-earning approval process, and troop in-kind money donation process

- [Troop/SU In-Kind/Monetary Donation Form](#)
- [Money-Earning Activity Approval Form](#)



## Program Team



As part of the Service Unit Leadership Team, Program Roles are responsible for product program support, events and outdoor experiences.

### Product Program Chair

The Service Unit Product Program Chair supports the success of the GSDSW Fall program at the SU level, including mentoring of the Troop Coordinators at SU meetings, managing product delivery, assisting with the vendor system, and receiving and distributing the program materials and rewards.

- Act as primary SU contact and coordinator for the Desert Southwest Fall Product Program
- Share council updates and information, and assist with volunteer online vendor platform questions at SU meetings
- Confirm that assigned troops have entered orders and recognitions into vendor data entry system
- Facilitate product delivery and coordinate reward distribution for troops within an assigned community
- Complete product distribution and payment receipt paperwork and forwards to Desert Southwest

### Product Program Chair - Cookies

The SU Product Program Chair for Cookies supports the success of the Cookie Program at the SU level, including mentoring of the Troop Cookie Coordinators at SU meetings, managing product delivery, assisting with the vendor system, and receiving and distributing materials and rewards.

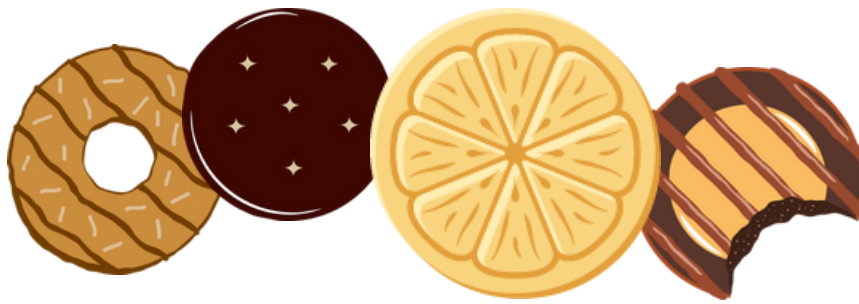
- Acts as primary SU contact and coordinator for the Cookie Program
- Shares council updates and important information at SU meetings, including information about of money collection, online vendor systems, available trainings, and maintaining safety protocols
- Confirms that troops have entered orders and rewards in vendor online data entry system
- Facilitates product delivery for troops within assigned community
- Completes product distribution and payment receipt paperwork and forward to Desert Southwest
- Coordinates reward distribution for troops within an assigned area



## Cupboard Lead

The Service Unit Cupboard Lead coordinates all aspects of the cookie cupboard including identifying an approved location, product distribution, and inventory management.

- Attends cookie trainings hosted by council and completes all relevant training modules
- Is familiar with all Product Program resources, including Troop Guide, gsLearn
- Secures an approved cupboard location within the Service Unit footprint
- Manages the product inventory to keep cookies in stock and moving so that Girl Scouts can maximize their cookie business success
- Establishes and publishes hours of availability for troops in the SU
- Coordinates deliveries to and transfers from other cupboards
- Records transactions in vendor system by the end of each “open for business” day



## Events Coordinator

The Service Unit Events Coordinator oversees the creation, promotion, and execution of SU events designed to meet the needs and interests of Girl Scouts and furthers the Girl Scout Mission while aligning with the GSLE, Safety Activity Checkpoints, and outcomes.

- Designs, coordinates, and promotes events that meet the needs and interests of Girl Scouts and furthers the Girl Scout Mission by cultivating experiences that build sisterhood in the SU.
- Coordinates team event planning to make sure things stay on track
- Empowers Girl Scouts to lead activities, learn by doing, and cooperate with others on current issues that involve their interest and needs while having fun
- Identifies SU Event Coordinators and planning committees as needed to assist them in the development and promotion of a specific event



## Trainer

The Service Unit Trainer recommends and organizes training opportunities and connects volunteers to available GSDSW resources and actively elevates SU volunteers to receive GSDSW and GSUSA recognitions.

- Guides volunteers in training offerings on gsLearn and encourages a growth and development culture within the SU
- Coordinates with GSDSW to provide adult learning opportunities that speak to the needs and interests of volunteers and families in your community
- Creates an atmosphere of appreciation within the SU using both GSUSA and GSDSW awards & recognitions, and encourages members to nominate volunteers
- Is an encouraging advocate for the utilization of VTK for program planning and troop management and provides support as needed



## Recruiter

The Service Unit Recruiter serves as an ambassador for Girl Scouts, seeking to engage and recruit new members and assisting with membership renewal within the SU.

- Collaborates with the SU Team on recruiting new youth and adult members to the Girl Scout movement while working to support current member retention
- Coordinates with the GSDSW Community Engagement team and volunteers to support SU membership recruitment and renewal efforts, including pre-K recruitment, and back-to-school events
- Coordinates with the GSDSW Community Engagement team to host engaging, fun and relevant recruitment events and parties





# Who Supports the Service Unit?

By now, you know that the service unit plays a key role in supporting Girl Scout youth, volunteers, and troop families. But you might be wondering, "Who supports the service unit?" The answer is that Desert Southwest teams and staff are here to assist and support SU teams as they, in turn, support their local community. While the Girl Scout experience is delivered by YOU, our amazing volunteers, you're always backed by the dedicated support of your Desert Southwest staff.

## Customer Care

Customer care is every volunteer's first point of contact as they seek out support. Not only is the Customer Care team able to assist with general questions, they are also able to help you find the subject expert you need. This process also helps us track these requests to make sure each inquiry is responded to in a timely manner.

915-566-9433 | 8:00 AM- 6:00 PM Monday-Friday | [info@gsdsw.org](mailto:info@gsdsw.org)

## Volunteer Experience Team - coming soon

The Volunteer Experience Team is dedicated to supporting service unit teams as they deliver local Girl Scout events, programs, and resources. Whether you're looking for access to materials, requesting training or expert educators, brainstorming ideas, or resolving conflicts, the Volunteer Experience Team is here to guide and assist. As you lead your community by hosting events, facilitating meetings, and creating empowering experiences tailored to its unique needs, remember that the power is in your hands—but GSDSW staff are always here to support you in bringing your vision to life.

# Service Unit Year-at-a-Glance

This calendar is a guide of what service units can aim to cover during the Girl Scout year. While not all the items in the calendar are required, these ideas are a recommended starting point to provide a full, enriching experience for local Girl Scouts.

## Fall: Sept - Nov

- Download updated rosters
- Back-to school recruitment events
- Help youth find or start a troop with support from the Engagement Team.
- Send SU calendar to all leaders and Juliettes
- Host leader meeting kickoff
- Onboard new troop leaders and other volunteers
- Desert Southwest Fall Product Program
- Hold Fall SU event or day camp
- Nominate volunteers for recognition awards

### Important Dates

- 10/1 Start of Girl Scout year
- 10/31 Founder's Day/Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday

## Winter: Dec - Feb

- Host Winter SU event or day camp
- Host Cookie Rally
- Participate in local holiday parades, if available
- Identify bridging troops and encourage collaboration for bridging awards
- Organize Spring events
- Cookie Program

### Important Dates

2/22 World Thinking Day



## Spring: March - May

- Promote renewal incentives with troops
- Host Bridging & Awards Ceremony
- Spring parade opportunities
- Hold end-of-the-year planning meeting and schedule first meeting of coming year
- Host Volunteer Appreciation event



### Important Dates

- 3/12 Girl Scouts' Birthday
- Girl Scout Week is in mid-March, around the birthday
- April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month
- 4/22 Girl Scout Leader Appreciation Day

## Summer: June - Aug

- Summer Parades
- Hold a start-of-the-year planning meeting to plan schedule of meetings and events for the coming year
- Request recruitment materials for Fall recruitment events
- Confirm back-to-school event coverage
- Reserve Desert Southwest properties and spaces for SU events
- Plan fall events or encampments

### Important Dates

6/30 [SUFR](#) due



# Finding Success in Succession

Succession planning helps ensure that you can fill the openings in service unit team positions. When you plan for succession, you identify and develop volunteers so that they are prepared to assume team roles. Not only that, but planning ahead ensures that new team members stepping into a role are able to benefit from the mentorship of the current team before taking over the role.

## Tips and Tricks to Succeed



- Look beyond current troop leaders; consider former troop leaders, lifetime members, parents, and community members.
- Speak with enthusiasm about volunteering with the service unit - potential volunteers are always listening.
- Always be on the look-out to identify the strengths of adults in your community.
- Ask them to join the team in a position that is a natural extension of their skills.
- Prioritize the development of new service unit leadership over SU traditions.
- Keep in mind your role is to coach volunteers when they take on new opportunities.
- Allow them to develop their own style and to try new things.
- Encourage the spirit of risk-taking and innovation when asking new volunteers to tackle service unit projects.

## Habits to avoid



- Avoid negative talk about Girl Scouts or the service unit. Volunteers are always listening.
- Avoid waiting to ask a volunteer to take on more responsibilities until the last minute.
- Avoid using a narrow vision of what leadership or events look like in your service unit.

## Strategies for success



- Have fun! Volunteers will be drawn to a team that is positive and lighthearted.
- Send a survey to volunteers asking them to nominate a fellow volunteer for a role.
- Work with Desert Southwest's Customer Engagement Specialist to identify potential team members.
- Partner with the volunteer stepping down to coach a fellow volunteer toward stepping into the role.
- Encourage volunteers to grow by starting with a small SU team role and then coach them in advancing to roles with more responsibility.

# Recruitment & Retention

Service unit teams play a pivotal role in recruitment and retention in our local communities. The service unit can coordinate with the Desert Southwest Engagement team to recruit new adult and youth members and retain your current members.

## Building Strong Service Unit Recruitment

Below are some strategies you can use to encourage new youth and volunteers to join Girl Scouts each year:

- Positive word of mouth is one of the most powerful tools in recruitment. Encourage all volunteers to speak positively about their Girl Scout experience in all spaces. You never know when a future Girl Scout family or volunteer is listening.
- Be a presence in your community. Girl Scouts go places! Turn the work you already do into tools to aid recruitment by making sure that your SU is visible. March in a parade, encourage Girl Scouts to wear their uniforms to school, display yard signs, or make banners and signs they can display.
- Have fun! Troops can help recruitment efforts and have fun too. Girls can design tables and booths for recruitment events. The SU can design creative flyers to encourage attendance at recruitment events.







## Building Strong Service Unit Retention

Below are some strategies you can use to encourage existing Girl Scouts and volunteers to continue each year.

- Ask the troops and IRG's what they want to do. Ask troop leaders and/or Girl Scouts to complete occasional surveys or questionnaires to ensure the SU supports and develops events aligned with their interests.
- Build close ties with volunteers. Adult volunteers want a community, just like Girl Scouts in a troop. Greet volunteers with a warm welcome and create spaces that support volunteer networking. Examples of such events include investiture and rededication ceremonies, as well as coffee shop meet-ups, crafting nights, and planning sessions.
- Pay attention to on-boarding! New volunteers are a source of strength in your SU. They have new ideas and fresh energy that can keep every SU feeling new. However, when not supported, new volunteers can be overwhelmed. Develop SU procedures and plan activities or events to support new volunteers. Consider partnering with Desert Southwest to offer a new volunteer support meeting.

## The Desert Southwest Engagement Team

At Desert Southwest, the Engagement team is all about creating opportunities for strong community growth and showcasing the amazing adventures of Girl Scouts. In other words, they're all about spreading our Girl Scout love loud and proud, and they want your community to be a part of it!

### How the Service Unit Can Help

The Engagement team is on the lookout for both youth and adult volunteers who are eager to spend some time chatting about Girl Scouts, leading fun activities, potentially selling cookies, or getting involved in awesome volunteer projects like park clean-ups, and more!

### Partner with Desert Southwest on a Recruitment Party

When it's time to grow membership in your community, we're here to support you! The Desert Southwest Engagement team will work with you to plan a recruitment party in your own community. We need your help to choose an event that speaks to your community and will be a fun opportunity for your current members to showcase why they love Girl Scout fun while inviting their friends to the Girl Scout movement.

### Community Tables

Looking for more ways to get involved? Desert Southwest regularly hosts recruitment tables at community events and would love your support. Be sure to bookmark this link and check back regularly! Our event list will keep growing as we discover more opportunities to connect Girl Scouts with community events throughout our council. These events are great opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills and share your stories about Girl Scouts. [SIGN UP HERE!](#) (Coming Soon!)



# Girl Scout Leadership Experience

## Three Keys to Leadership

Through community exploration and the Girl Scout Experience, Girl Scouts:

**Discover:** Girl Scouts discover their interests and values.

**Connect:** Girl Scouts connect with others in their community and identify needs.

**Take Action:** Girl Scouts take action to improve their communities and beyond.

## Five Leadership Outcomes

The Girl Scout program is designed to lead Girl Scouts to five leadership outcomes and benefits:



Strong Sense of Self



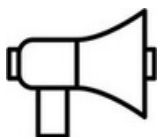
Positive Values



Challenge Seeking



Healthy Relationships



Community Problem Solving

It's not just what Girl Scouts do, but how you engage them that creates a high quality experience.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is designed for Girl Scouts to learn, grow and take on more responsibility and leadership. It also strengthens individual experience as they develop their skills. Events are a great way to reinforce these skills.

## Put it All Together

### Discover

- **Sense of Self:** Girl Scouts have confidence in themselves and their ability, and form positive identities.
- **Positive Values:** Girl Scouts act ethically, honestly, and responsibly, and show concern for others.
- **Challenge Seeking:** Girl Scouts learn to take appropriate risks, try things even if they might fail, and learn from their mistakes.

### Connect

#### Healthy Relationships:

Girl Scouts develop and maintain healthy relationships by communicating their thoughts and feelings directly and resolving conflict constructively.

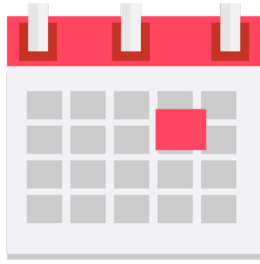
### Take Action

#### Community Problem Solving:

Girl Scouts desire to contribute to the world in purposeful and meaningful ways, learn how to identify problems in the community, and create “action plans” to solve them.



# Events



**“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, patience and passion to reach for the stars and change the world.”**

**-Juliette Gordon Low**

One thing all Girl Scout youth programs have in common is that they are designed to build Girl Scouts of Courage, Confidence, and Character with the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) in mind. Service unit youth programs and events allow our members to show their community how proud they are to be called Girl Scouts. They also provide an opportunity to pass down Girl Scout traditions to the next generation. You can celebrate SU pride and Girl Scout traditions by creating programs like day camps, World Thinking Day celebrations, bridging ceremonies, and more.

Your SU can also host adult events such as volunteer appreciation events, volunteer overnights or camp events, social or networking events, or leader/Girl Scout events. Don't forget that our volunteers are looking for sisterhood, too!

## **Community Connections List**

Whether Girl Scouts are earning badges, exploring their community, or engaging in educational activities, we've made it easier than ever to connect with trusted local partners who support the Girl Scout mission. Service Unit teams can use these partnerships for event planning, offering Girl Scouts unique, safe opportunities to build skills and connect with their communities through engaging programs.



## Traditions and Ceremonies

The sense of pride you feel when sharing a special Girl Scout handshake with someone you've just met—regardless of where they're from or whether they were a Girl Scout fifty years ago or five—is unmatched. Whether at a troop meeting, a council-wide event, or when connecting with Girl Scouts from around the world, there are a few timeless traditions that every Girl Scout should know.



Ceremonies help Girl Scouts celebrate special moments and accomplishments throughout the year, such as bridging to another level or earning a National Leadership Journey Award. They can plan a ceremony around a theme, such as friendship or nature, and express themselves in words or song.

**Whether at a troop meeting, a council-wide event, or meeting Girl Scouts around the world, here are a few traditions that every Girl Scout should know.**

- **Girl Scout sign:** Girl Scouts make the Girl Scout sign—raising three fingers of the right hand with the thumb holding down the pinky—when they say the Girl Scout Promise. The three fingers represent the three parts of the Promise.
- **Motto:** The Girl Scout motto is "Be prepared." In the 1947 Girl Scout Handbook, the motto was explained this way: "A Girl Scout is ready to help out wherever she is needed. Willingness to serve is not enough; you must know how to do the job well, even in an emergency." The same holds true today.
- **Slogan:** The Girl Scout slogan is "Do a good turn daily." The slogan, which has been used since 1912, is a reminder that Girl Scouts can make a difference in big and small ways.
- **Greeting:** Girl Scouts can greet one another with the Girl Scout handshake, used by Girl Scouts and Girl Guides all over the world. The handshake is made by shaking hands with the left hand and making the Girl Scout sign with the right. The left hand is nearer to the heart and signifies friendship.
- **Friendship Circle:** Representing the unbroken chain of friendship among Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the world, the Friendship Circle involves Girl Scouts standing in a circle, crossing their right arms over their left, and clasping hands with their friends on both sides. Everyone then makes a silent wish as a friendship squeeze is passed from hand to hand around the circle.



# Volunteer Support



***“The work of today is the history of tomorrow and we are its makers.”  
-Juliette Gordon Low***



At Desert Southwest Girl Scouts, our focus is first and foremost on youth development and guidance. But supporting our volunteers to make sure that they have quality experiences and opportunities for personal growth is a close second. We know that it's volunteers like you that are delivering Girl Scout programming to local Girl Scouts and helping to create a vibrant Girl Scout experience for Desert Southwest youth. It's your hard work that fosters leadership and builds Girl Scouts of courage, confidence, and character that make the world a better place! We're just here to support you and celebrate your success. Volunteers who feel supported and fulfilled in their roles are essential to the Girl Scout movement and the growth of youth leadership.

Though the volunteer relationship often begins in troops or when members sign up with council, much of the long-term support, guidance, and comradery comes from within the service unit. Thus, the service unit plays a significant role in volunteer satisfaction.

As a service unit team member, you can help to keep your service unit strong and supported in timely and positive ways. Let's take a look at how you can support volunteers through mentorship, recognition, and meeting facilitation.

# Mentorship

***“Ours is a circle of friendship united by ideals.”  
-Juliette Gordon Low***

As a service unit team member, you are a mentor to the volunteers in your service unit community. A mentor is a trusted advisor who offers a helping hand to those in need of support. There are a lot of ways to be a mentor:

- Mentorship can be formal or informal
- You can mentor in person, by phone call, or by email
- You can role model, collaborate with others, or share what you know through social media posts
- You can mentor any way and anywhere - at SU meetings or smaller meet- ups at your favorite local coffee shop or park



## Collaborate



## Share Knowledge

## Support





## What is a Mentor and What is Their Value?

A mentor provides guidance at any number of points in a person's life, be it personal, academic, or professional in nature. They can help you, in effect, make sense of the world and your place in it. Drawing from their own experiences, an effective mentor shares insight and offers support and encouragement. They are...

- Often knowledgeable in areas that you are not. They may be a professional in a field or discipline new to you. Often, they've been through experiences you hope to pursue (or maybe avoid!).
- In essence, a cheerleader! Having encountered similar challenges to those along your path, they know when to step in and show their support, sharing their own relevant experiences and guidance to help you stay positive and on track. A mentor can also offer constructive criticism and insight into why you might want to consider a different approach.
- Able to provide fresh perspective. Your mentor isn't your parent or your boss; they see you and your experiences from a different and uniquely valuable perspective.
- Often eager to invite you into their network. Mentors are often fairly established in their disciplines and welcome the opportunity to connect their contacts.
- FREE! But keep in mind that this doesn't mean there's not significant work involved. Being accountable to a mentor is a commitment—so don't pursue it if you aren't interested in upholding it in support of this important relationship.





Do you remember your first few months as a troop co-leader? You might have had many questions and you might have felt overwhelmed or confused. Below are important ways the service unit team supports new volunteers:

### **ENGAGE**

new co-leaders to participate in and embrace their Girl Scout network

### **CONNECT**

new co-leaders to programs, resources, and opportunities



### **EMPOWER**

new co-leaders to provide exceptional leadership to girls

- Welcome new troop co-leaders to the Girl Scout community
- Connect new troop co-leaders to the service unit team by making introductions at a meeting and ensuring they understand the role of the service unit team positions
- Invite troop co-leaders to attend your or a fellow volunteer's troop in-person or virtual meeting to get first-hand experience
- Encourage them to participate in co-leader trainings and explore online resources:
  - gsLearn Volunteer Toolkit (VTK)
  - Tutorials
- Don't forget to utilize other helpful volunteer resources like Volunteer Essentials
- Encourage them to attend volunteer events and activities:
  - SU Volunteer Meetings
- Share past experiences and best practices
- Offer to help plan the first troop and parent meeting
- Share tips of how to incorporate the GSLE (Girl Scout Leadership Experience) into troop meetings
- Offer secondary support during council-sponsored product sale programs (Desert Southwest Fall Fundraiser and Cookie Program)
- Schedule regular times to meet or chat informally



## Supporting Juliettes

Not all Girl Scouts are part of a troop—you can absolutely join Girl Scouts as an individual! This type of membership is called Juliettes, named after our founder, Juliette Gordon Low. As a Juliette, Girl Scouts have the flexibility to participate based on their own schedule and interests.

Becoming a Juliette is ideal for those without a nearby troop or those who want to enjoy Girl Scout activities with their family. Juliettes can start right away by earning badges independently or attending events to connect with other Girl Scouts in their area.

Juliettes and their mentors, often parents or guardians, can benefit greatly from the support of the service unit. Juliette mentors can receive guidance from the SU team, while Juliette Girl Scouts can enjoy the sense of sisterhood at SU events, much like being part of a troop.



### **Desert Southwest best practices for Juliette support within the service unit:**

- **Use Looker (individually registered girl) label in the roster and make sure to include those who have indicated they would like to receive emails in SU communications.**
- **Keep an eye out for any new Juliette mentor/guardian at SU meetings.**
- **Confirm that Juliette mentors are registered members so they have access to all available trainings and resources and they appear on SU rosters.**
- **Identify a volunteer to act as the SU Welcome & Mentorship Lead to establish a relationship with existing Juliette mentors and welcome new mentors into the service unit.**
- **Ask Juliettes and their mentors what types of activities they'd like to do with other Girl Scouts and leaders in their community. Service Unit events can provide opportunities for Juliettes to experience that collaborative Girl Scouting experience that is so integral to the movement.**
- **Respect their space. If any Juliette mentors in your service unit do NOT wish to participate in meetings or events, please respect their wishes. The SU will always be there if any mentor wishes to connect with their local Girl Scouting community, and it is never a requirement to participate.**



# Welcoming New Troop Leaders

Signing up as a brand-new troop leader can feel overwhelming! There's a lot of information to absorb, and the service unit can be an invaluable source of support, helping these volunteers succeed in their new roles. To better assist service units in supporting new troop leaders, it's helpful to understand the process at the council level.

When new co-leaders join Girl Scouts, the Customer Engagement Specialist takes the lead in guiding them by providing education about Girl Scouts, GSDSW, available resources, and how to effectively run a troop. With this foundational support in place, service units can further help these new leaders thrive.



## The Service Unit's Role in Supporting New Troop Leaders:

Suggestions on connecting new leaders with their local GS community could include:

- Welcoming them to SU meetings
- Keeping them informed of SU events through your SU's preferred method of communication
- Post a welcome greeting introducing them to the SU community
- Connecting them with an SU mentor who can check in on them from time to time

To better support new leaders, please review the new leader onboarding process to gain better understanding of how the service unit can play a role in lifting up your newest leaders!





## New Leader Welcome

**WELCOME EMAILS:** Once brand-new troops have their 2 background-cleared co-leaders and at least 5 Girl Scouts, a welcome email is sent out. Note that new troop leaders joining an existing troop will also receive this welcome email. Reports of new troop leaders are pulled 2-3 times a month.

**SU INTRO EMAIL:** These emails will connect new troop leaders to their service unit team. These are sent out 1-2 weeks after the welcome email.



# Training



You want to see your Girl Scout happy, confident, strong, and ready to succeed. We want the same things for you as a volunteer! We know volunteers have a lot of questions about Girl Scouts and Desert Southwest is ready to help you along the way. Desert Southwest and GSUSA offer a variety of trainings and educational opportunities for volunteers.

## Short & Snappy Learning Opportunities

Get ready to enrich your service unit meetings with Short & Snappy Learning Opportunities! These are not just any trainings—they're quick, impactful sessions that pack essential knowledge and skills into a brief, engaging format. Perfect for keeping the momentum high, Short & Snappy sessions are flexible and can be led by any volunteer. This is your chance to share vital information and best practices, making a real difference in your Girl Scout community! Each activity takes 15-45 minutes.

**Check out these Short & Snappy Learning Opportunities! - Coming Soon**

## gsLearn

There are a wide range of training and educational resources available for volunteers on gsLearn, which offer essential courses covering everything from leading activities the Girl Scout way to safety procedures and guiding Girl Scouts across all grade levels. Additionally, GSUSA has developed specific trainings just for service unit volunteers.

gsLearn is accessible on any desktop, tablet, or mobile device, and it will be populated with any trainings you should view. A great starting point for any SU volunteer is the Support Your Service Unit Learning Path.

### Support Your Service Unit Learning Path

- GSUSA SU Training - Developing & Growing the SU Team
- GSUSA SU Training - Goal Setting and Planning
- GSUSA SU Training - Effective Meetings
- GSUSA SU Training - Leading Effective Digital Meetings
- GSUSA Volunteer Toolkit - Demo/Service Unit Access
- GSUSA Effective Recruitment Tactics
- Logging into Looker for Service Unit Volunteers
- Important Forms and Documents



# Volunteer Recognition

*“One cannot manufacture confidence,  
but one can inspire it.”  
- Juliette Gordon Low*

Everyone likes to feel appreciated for their hard work, and expressing gratitude goes a long way in keeping the service unit community strong and thriving. Volunteers are more likely to continue giving their time and energy when they know their contributions are valued.

It's important not to assume that volunteers feel appreciated. When they start to feel their efforts are overlooked, the quality of their efforts may decline, or they may become disconnected from the group. Recognizing volunteers with thoughtful appreciation provides the positive reinforcement they need to stay engaged and motivated.

Make it a priority to recognize volunteers. In some cases, a simple thank you to a volunteer for a job well done will do. But at other times, a more formal recognition is best. Work with the Volunteer Experience Team and regularly reserve time at service unit meetings to discuss award nominations, volunteer appreciation events, and other efforts. Set goals in your service unit to make sure that your outstanding volunteers are given the formal recognition they deserve.

[Check the Desert Southwest website for submission deadlines](#) [Adult Recognition and Awards Nomination Form](#)



## ***The Power of Volunteer Recognition***

*If you notice a volunteer posting frequently on social media about a troop's activities, take a moment to thank them for sharing their experience. Compliment them on their communication skills and let them know that their infectious enthusiasm helps to inform and motivate their fellow leaders and makes them an excellent leadership candidate. This small show of recognition may encourage them to share more and may even lead to them accepting a service unit team role in the future.*



## 5 Languages of Appreciation



Gary Chapman and Paul White delve into the concept of the languages of appreciation in their book, “The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace.” They describe five key ways to express appreciation: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Acts of Service, Tangible Gifts, and Physical Touch.

**Words of Affirmation** involves verbally letting someone know that what they are doing or have done is valuable to the community.

Be specific. A generic “Good job!” becomes less effective with each use. Identify a specific action, activity, or aspect of that person’s contribution, and give meaningful praise that both acknowledges hard work and encourages continued involvement.

**Quality Time** means setting aside time to listen. Give your full and undivided attention to someone and allow them to share their ideas.

Whether over a cup of coffee or after a volunteer meeting, make sure that you are not rushed and avoid distractions to ensure that the volunteer you are acknowledging knows that they are important and that they are not competing for your attention.

**Acts of Service** are an active way of acknowledging someone’s service.

Physically or mentally taking something off someone’s plate shows that you recognize how much they are doing for the community and provides a bit of relief.

**Giving Tangible Gifts** is less about how much money was spent and more about offering a token of appreciation to help someone feel seen and acknowledge their contributions.

It could be as simple as a cup of coffee, a fun patch, or a gas card.

**Appropriate Physical Touch.** In a volunteer or professional setting, this must be approached carefully.

A fist bump, high five, two-handed handshake or a pat on the back would all be appropriate.





# Service Unit Meetings

Service units support many areas of growth in local communities. As a member of the SU Team, you will help to keep fellow volunteers informed. You'll encourage them on their journey as they assume different leadership roles. You'll support them through challenges, and you'll invite them to be part of SU activities. In the service unit, there are always things to teach and learn from each other! The service unit meeting is the place where much of that learning happens.


SU's host two kinds of meetings: a service unit team planning meeting and a service unit volunteer meeting. Often, they are held on a rotating schedule, alternating between planning and support meetings or they are held the subsequently on the same day. This schedule is decided upon by each community to serve their individual needs.



## Service Unit Team Planning Meeting

- The SU team comes together to share updates and supports SU event and activity planning takes place during the planning meeting so that volunteer meetings can focus on volunteer and troop support
- The agenda for the SU volunteer meeting is developed at this time

## Service Unit Volunteer Meeting

- All volunteers in the SU are invited to this one-hour meeting
  - The SU team or volunteers can share updates, facilitate activities, demonstrate crafts and offer mentorship
  - The SU team can facilitate council led trainings or arrange for community experts to provide instruction
- 

## Planning Service Unit meetings

Hosting service unit meetings is an important activity of the service unit team. These meetings can happen monthly, bi-monthly, or once per quarter and should focus on the specific needs within your service unit. Before meeting as a full service unit, a service unit team meeting should be held to discuss and address what is to be presented to the service unit at-large. Conducting these meeting is a very important part of building a vibrant Girl Scout community.

### Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Meeting should start and end on time, unless the participants have been warned that the meeting could run longer than usual. Remember, your time—and the time of all the other participants—is valuable and should be honored.
- Ideally, 20% of the meeting should be spent on announcements, council updates and service unit business; the other 80% should be spent on collaborating with each other, mentoring each other, planning events, and learning new skills.
- Include a “fun thing” on the agenda whenever possible (i.e., learning a new song, playing a game, having a contest, teaching a new craft).
- Regularly thank individuals and recognize special services or achievements.
- Have something at each meeting that the leaders can take back to their troop.
- Whenever possible, incorporate a learning opportunity like a Short & Snappy training.
- Adding these into service unit meetings or events can keep volunteers informed and engaged while enhancing their leadership abilities.

### Using Meeting Time Wisely

#### Tips & Suggestions:



It is critically important that the meetings be kept to a specific time schedule. Make sure you do not spend too much time presenting information that could have been learned via notes or a post-meeting email; instead, spend the majority of your time on volunteer support, learning opportunities, event planning, or activities.

If your volunteers want to stick around and talk afterwards, they should be given a window of time to do so when possible. Sometimes being given the opportunity to share ideas is the best use of your time together. However, be mindful of the closing time of the space you are using for your meeting.

The opportunity to share information and face-to-face with service unit team members and other leaders can make a huge difference in a volunteer’s Girl Scout experience.

## Basic Elements of an SU Meeting

### Part 1: Arrival Activity / Snacks / Start Up

Consider adding some kind of self-directed activity that leaders may do if they arrive early for the meeting. The activity should not require a lot of time to complete and little, if any, clean up. Supplies for the pre-meeting activity should be set up and ready for the leaders when they arrive. This activity gives the SU team time to greet people as they arrive and keeps attendees busy with something structured.



Some possible examples include:

- A digital photo album with pictures of past/most recent SU events to look at
- Pick a single topic such as “behavior management” or “something my troop did that I am proud of” or “field trip ideas” and write it on a piece of paper that is passed around
- Ask leaders to write down and share one of their best practices or recent activities
- Put out a veggie or cheese and cracker tray — people tend to bond over food

### Part 2: Opening

Have an official start to the meeting. Take a moment to go around the group and do brief introductions including name, age-level of troop or Girl Scout if appropriate, and perhaps a fun fact, favorite Girl Scout activity or favorite Girl Scout cookie.

### Part 3: Service Unit Business and Council Updates

Have an agenda and stick to it. People feel good when they can visually see that the group is accomplishing tasks. Give them only what is necessary to cover the agenda. Less is more.

### Part 4: Activity

Pick one of the options below:

1

#### Training Snippet

Teach a skill at the meeting. Try out one of the Short & Snappy trainings.

2

#### Program Tid-Bit

Have something at the meeting that the volunteer can take back to use with their troop.

3

#### Sharing Time

Allow time for leaders to share the troop activities that they are proud of.

### Part 5: Closing / Clean Up

- Confirm or schedule the next meeting
- Set tentative agenda for next meeting
- Invite volunteers to help clean up after the meeting - working together builds stronger connections
- Thank them for coming

## Possible Service Unit Meeting Topics

The calendar below offers a general overview of [possible topics](#) to address at each service unit meeting. Remember, you will choose the topics for each meeting based on the schedule and needs of your service unit. The topics below are only suggestions and can be adjusted as needed.

August

- Draft annual calendar of events and meetings for coming year
- Welcome new troops and volunteers to the service unit
- Encourage troops to participate in the Desert Southwest Fall Product Program
- Remind troops and Juliettes that Girl Scouts must have current membership to participate in the Fall Product Program



September

- Remind troop and Girl Scouts to renew their membership
- Encourage troops to participate in back-to-school recruitment events
- Q&A - Ensure that new troops know how to open a bank account
- Work with volunteers to submit volunteer award nominations

October

- Review health history forms and activity permission forms
  - Girl and Adult Health History form
  - Parent Permission for Activities & Overnights form
- Encourage troops to identify a Troop Cookie Coordinator



November

- Share information about volunteer training resources
- Review SU team roles and structure and any team vacancies
- Plan SU cookie rally and ask for volunteers support
- Remind troops and Juliettes that Girl Scouts must have active membership to participate in the Cookie Program

December

- Review Girl Scout progression
- Review required certifications
- Include volunteer social or networking activity



January

- Discuss mentorship and pair younger troops looking for guidance with more experienced troops
- Hold training on troop finances and strategies for talking to Girl Scouts about money

February

- Inform leaders of plans for World Thinking Day



March

- Talk about best practices in spending troop funds
- Celebrate Girl Scout Week
- Hold refresher for volunteer training resources

April

- Celebrate National Girl Scout Leader's Day and Volunteer Appreciation month
- Encourage troops and volunteers to renew to take advantage of early renewal incentives.

May

- Refresher on completing Troop Financial Report
- Camp Q & A for new leader to learn about Camp from experienced volunteers.
- Review [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#): where to find them and how to use them.

June

- Celebrate volunteers with a special event or social activity

July

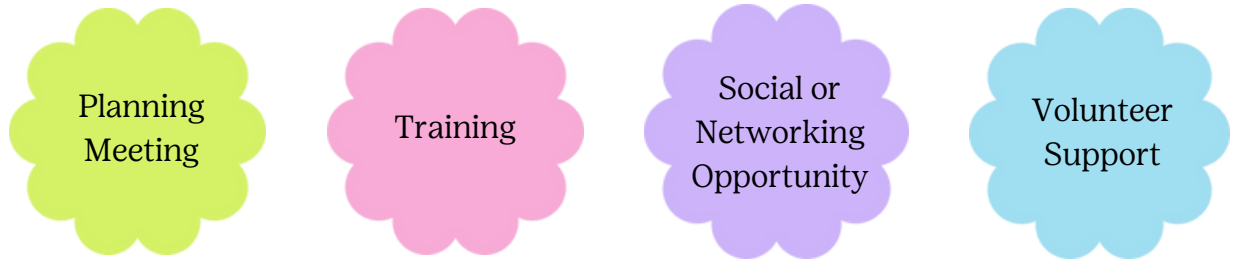
- Host summer event and/or march in parade





## Managing Your Service Unit Meeting

### Service unit meetings can come in multiple forms:



Every service unit volunteer meeting should offer a “take away” for leaders, whether tangible or intangible. Everyone’s time is very limited and valuable. Be sure to plan every meeting as an opportunity to share, educate, and reward your volunteers.

### Arrange for a meeting space:

- A school, church, community building, or a business with a large room are options
- Work with service unit team members and volunteers for an agreed upon day and time
- Suggested meeting time is 1 to 1.5 hours
- Arrange chairs/tables so everyone can see each other

### Work together to set the agenda:

- Solicit topics to be discussed from team members
- Determine best order of topics and how much time is needed
- Conduct meetings in an efficient manner with a defined timeline
- Ensure that team members are connected with each other and are empowered to make presentations and informed decisions

### Call the meeting:

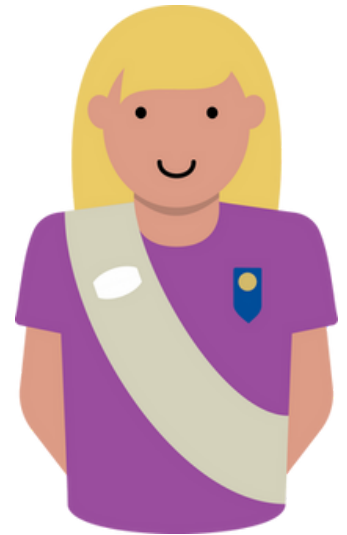
- Share meeting date, time, location and/or zoom link by email and social media well in advance of the meeting
- Setting a standard date and time is beneficial in establishing regular attendance.
- Make arrangements if equipment is needed (paper, markers, laptop, etc.)
- Allot time for open floor discussion and sharing of new ideas
- Information that can be shared electronically should be sent out promptly after the meeting.

## Set the climate:

- Greet volunteers as they arrive
- Introduce new volunteers and/or troop leaders
- Make sure all necessary handouts are present and the service unit meeting agenda is posted, emailed, and/or printed for all attendees

## Conduct the meeting:

- Start and end on time
- Adhere to the agenda
- Guide discussion
- Summarize the conclusions reached
- Develop rapport
- Keep it short
- Speak clearly and don't rush
- Involve the audience as much as possible
- Use humor but avoid jokes
- Smile and have fun!
- Follow up with SU announcement and update post and email:
  - Announcements and updates should be shared with all troop volunteers, not just those in attendance
  - Volunteers should not be penalized for missing a meeting



## Keeping on Track

### Meeting Agenda

It can be helpful to have a meeting agenda available for each service unit meeting. The meeting agenda should include a list of topics for discussion, activities or trainings and/or events being planned. If possible, indicate the time allotted for each topic to help keep the meeting on track.

Post the meeting agenda online or send it in an email prior to the meeting. Having access to the agenda early helps attendees know what to expect and prepare. You can also bring extra meeting agendas to the meeting for those who may need them.



### Meeting Notes

Detailed meeting notes are critical because they help you coordinate the activities of your service unit community. Service units are busy! Remembering all the tasks and deadlines would be difficult without notes. Meeting notes serve as a reminder to you and your volunteers about agreed upon tasks and goals.

Meeting notes also offer a reference for clarification. They are the official record of the discussion and agreements made at each meeting. Identify a volunteer to act as the Secretary / Communications volunteer to keep track of SU meeting notes, meeting agendas, and rosters.

**Tip:** Make it a practice to offer the notes to the group for approval. Then post them so they are available to the service unit community. This helps ensure transparency and accountability.



## Service Unit Meeting Engagement

Choose an activity and identify the facilitator for each agenda topic:

### Break-Outs or Rotations

- Break-outs: Volunteers can break-out into groups based on program level, event planning or area of support.
- Rotations: Set up a series of small sessions and volunteers can rotate, spending a little time at each station.

### Community Building

- Community building strengthens the volunteer relationships in the SU. Activities can include games that allow volunteers to share about themselves and learn about each other.

### Short & Snappy Learning Opportunities

- Add a Short and Snappy Learning Opportunity to your meeting using the links available in the training section of this guidebook.

### Troop/Girl Scout Involvement

- Girl Scouts can participate in SU meetings.
- Troops can present trainings, or facilitate activities.

### Presentation

- A presentation is a formal explanation of a topic to the volunteers.

### Appreciation/Recognition

- Appreciation and recognition are expressions of gratitude. Sometimes a thoughtful act of appreciation is the extra incentive that volunteers need to do their best.

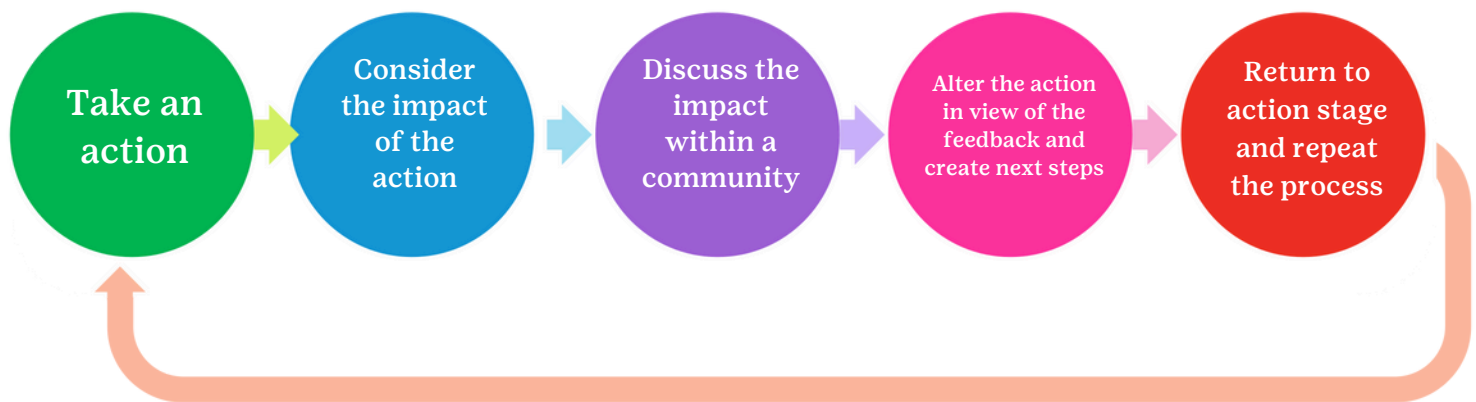
### Fun!

- Make some space to smile! Incorporate fun, silly, and welcoming habits into your meetings. Sometimes fun can be as small as a smile or welcoming someone by name.



## Action/Reflection

Reserve time at each service unit meeting for action/reflection. [Action/Reflection](#) is an important process because it ensures that the service unit considers its ever-changing community and responds to those changes. It is a key activity in keeping the service unit healthy and sustainable. Check out this image to get an idea of what action/reflection looks like:



The action/reflection activity does not need to be complex. You can simply provide leaders with an opportunity to discuss a topic. Then, ensure that the insights they share are considered in any action the SU team takes. Topics discussed can be service unit processes (such as registering for day camp) or service unit events and activities. You can be creative. Here's an example:

- **Take an action:** The service unit hosted their first cookie kick-off event at a local outdoor park.
- **Consider the impact of the action:** Youth and adults who attended the Cookie Kick-Off submitted a brief survey at the conclusion of the event.
- **Discuss the impact within a community:** The SU team read the surveys at their team meeting and looked for themes in the feedback. Girl Scouts reported that they wanted more time to complete activities. Adults reported that the location did not provide enough parking.
- **Alter the action in view of community feedback:** The SU team presented the feedback at the next SU meeting and said that next year the Cookie Kick-Off can be extended and the team would like suggestions in finding a new location.
- **Return to the action stage and repeat the process:** As the next Cookie Kick-Off approaches, the SU team sent a survey to all the volunteers in the SU asking for help in finding a new location. The Cookie Kick-Off was also extended from two hours to three hours.

## Team Norms

An important part of SU team dynamics is creating a set of team norms. A **team norm** is an agreement that defines how a group will interact in SU team planning meetings and activities, how the team will communicate and how duties will be divided. Having team norms in a place is important for several reasons:

- Team norms help your service unit team members carry out their tasks
- Team norms set expectations about how people will be treated and how they may treat others
- Team norms keep confusion and conflict to a minimum when they are shared with the group and respectfully enforced
- Team norms provide a framework with which conflict can be addressed and resolved



## Meeting Norms

SU volunteer **meeting norms** are a set of expectations and practices agreed upon by the group to facilitate effective, cohesive, and respectful discourse during SU Volunteer meetings. These general guidelines help avoid cross-talk and negativity while helping to keep the focus on local Girl Scouts and volunteers, the Girl Scout movement and the tenants of the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

The following norms are a suggested starting point. Each team is welcome to expand upon these to create norms that serve their group. As the team grows, they may choose to revisit and adjust the norms annually or as needed.



# Meeting Norms

SU meeting norms are a set of expectations and practices agreed upon by the group to facilitate effective, cohesive and respectful discourse. The norms below are a suggested starting point. Each team is welcome to expand upon these to create norms that serve the group. As the team grows, they may choose to revisit and adjust the norms as needed.

Norm	Description	Girl Scout Law
Honor the Facilitator	Look to the Administrative Lead/facilitator's lead in directing the meeting.	Friendly and Helpful
One Mic	Only one person speaks at any given time.	Considerate and Caring
Make Space, Take Space	Share your ideas and ensure that others have their opportunity to share as well. Ensure there is space for everyone to have the change to speak.	Honest & Fair
Stay Solution-Oriented	Work together to be collaborative problem-solvers. Stay solution-oriented by offering ideas that move the conversation closer to resolution. Avoid venting or complaining.	Friendly and Helpful
Speak with Intent	Often, you'll need to accomplish a lot in a meeting with limited time. "Speak with intent" asks participants to make mindful contributions.  Some things to ask yourself before speaking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your comment about the topic at hand?</li> <li>• Does your comment express a new idea?</li> <li>• Will your comment honor the facilitator?</li> <li>• Does your comment move towards a solution?</li> <li>• Is your comment a valuable use of time?</li> </ul>	Responsible for What I say and Do, Respect Myself and Others
Assume Good Intent	To assume good intent simply means that you give people the benefit of the doubt, even when it appears that their ideas are in conflict of your own. Often a problem or issue can be addressed in more than one way. Respond with kindness.	Make the World a Better Place
Eye on the Mission	Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place! Remember, all meeting participants are working towards the same goal.	Courageous and Strong

# What if the Group Does Not Practice the Norms?

If a group member doesn't follow norms, it's often because the expected behaviors aren't everyday behaviors for that member. As a member of the Service Unit team you can take action by asking these questions:

1

## **Does a new norm need to be established?**

Here's an example of when you might need to establish a new norm: Let's say a person is taking over meeting time by expressing a grievance. Perhaps the service unit needs to create a norm and/or process for expressing grievances. Listen with patience, recognize that the person has a concern to express, and acknowledge that there is no structure for how to do so. Address the person's concern in a way that feels best at the moment. Then propose the creation of a new norm at the next meeting.

2

## **Does the person know the group norms?**

Your service unit team selects and creates your initial group norms. Share the norms with the entire community. Be mindful, too, that the service unit community is always changing. Members will enter and leave the group. It's a good idea to review group norms periodically.

3

## **Is the person intentionally trying to disrupt or control the meeting?**

- **If the answer is NO:** Do not address the behavior during the meeting. Wait until after the meeting and then privately discuss the norms together. Remind the person that group norms ensure that meetings are effective and welcoming spaces. Ask the person if the norms are not meeting their needs. Consider if the norms need to be revised.
- **If the answer is YES:** When a person intentionally disrupts a meeting, it can be stressful for all in attendance. Take a moment to acknowledge your emotional state. You may feel hurt, frustrated, or angry. However, it's important to set your feelings aside for the moment and focus on re-establishing norms. You can pause the meeting and bring up the norms. Ask what norm is not being followed. Talk about why the norm was established.
- **If you're able to re-establish norms:** Continue the meeting and follow up with the disruptive person in private afterward.
- **If the group can't re-establish norms:** End the meeting. Explain that without group norms, the meeting cannot be effective and that continuing is not a good use of volunteers' time. After the meeting, privately discuss the norms with the disruptive person. Remind the person that group norms ensure that meetings are effective and welcoming spaces. Ask the person if the norms are not meeting their needs. Consider if norms need to be revised. If mediation is needed, contact the Customer Engagement Specialist for support at [info@gsdsw.org](mailto:info@gsdsw.org).



# Conflict Management & Resolution

## When Things Don't Go as Planned

Inclusion is an important practice in Girl Scouts. It simply means that all Girl Scouts and volunteers have a right to belong. It makes Girl Scouts rich by giving us opportunities to learn different ways of seeing both the world at large and the world within our service unit community.

In addition, members come to Girl Scouts with their own expectations. They experience Girl Scouts in a way that reflects their own interests, goals, and ideas. It's natural that members have their own way of doing things. Tasks and activities can be carried out well in many different ways. But occasionally, a problem may surface that disrupts the service unit and its ability to function. When this happens, take a steps quickly to manage conflict and get back on track.



**All Girl Scouts and volunteers  
have the right to belong.**

**There are different levels of conflict intensity. By understanding the possible escalation of conflict, it is possible to keep a conflict from escalating to a point it becomes unmanageable. The escalation stages of conflict are often:**



### **Differences**

People have various views about their world and circumstances and those views don't always align with others.

### **Misunderstandings**

People often misunderstand each other. People make presumptions, and “filter” what others say through their own experiences, knowledge, and beliefs. This is a critical stage of conflict and one in which the situation can escalate quickly, depending upon how people respond.

### **Disagreements**

It is okay to disagree with someone. People can explore their disagreements, and they can debate issues to learn from each other. The danger lies in letting emotions get out of control. While some level of emotion is okay, when people become too passionate, they can lose their reasoning and say or do things they later regret.

### **Discord**

Conflict at this level is characterized by generally deteriorating relationship between the conflict partners. The discomfort is apparent not only in discussing the issue, but also in dealing with the person. Emotions tend to run incredibly high at this point. Consequently, a person will likely try to avoid the other person, avert eye contact, or say things that are hurtful. One way to tell when conflict is at this level is when people find themselves having difficulties with that person even when they are not dealing with the original conflict.

### **Polarization**

This is the stage of conflict that is damaging to relationships. People often recruit others to join their cause; make themselves “right” and others “wrong;” expend a lot of energy to defend their position and demean the other person; and refuse to work toward resolving the conflict. At this stage, a person is so emotionally vested in the conflict that it turns to “winning” the fight at any cost. Consequently, the issue goes unresolved, and the relationship continues to deteriorate.

## Conflict Management

Conflict can be minimized by using group norms, action/reflection, and volunteer recognition suggestions outlined in this guidebook. However, conflict cannot be avoided entirely. It arises when people feel that their needs, interests, or concerns are threatened. To manage a conflict, take action! Don't wait for an issue to spiral out of control. At that point, it is harder to move forward.

- 1.ASK "COULD THIS OUTCOME BE POSITIVE?" Believe it or not, many situations that are addressed honestly and openly end up resulting in better communication, improved relationships, and a stronger SU community. Seeing the positive potential in a conflict can help everyone move forward.
- 2.ASK "WHAT DOES THE PERSON OR COMMUNITY NEED?" This question is important because conflict is often a signal that a person isn't getting what they need. Discovering that need and helping to meet it can dissolve conflict and help the service unit move forward.

Here are some common sources of conflict:

### Unclear Definition of Responsibility

- A person is not sure of what is expected of them.

### Limited Resources

- Resources can include time, money, space, and supplies. A person may be asked to give more than they have.

### Conflict of Interest

- A person may experience a difference in their personal goals and the goals of the organization. Or, two people may have differing opinions on the strategies that should be used to achieve the same goals.

### Unmet Personal Need

- Primary needs include food, clothing, and shelter. In addition, people need to feel appreciated, in control of themselves, and good about themselves.

### Lack of Follow Through

- A volunteer has not followed through with their troop or team commitments.

It's important to know that sometimes a conflict will be triggered by a person's feelings or perceptions, rather than an unmet need. In this case, the conflict is more likely to have a negative outcome. Statements like these provide clues about the source of the conflict:

**A feeling:**

- "I am mad!" or "I feel threatened!" or "I can't talk to her!"

**A perception of events**

- "She's a liar!"
- "I tried to talk to them, but they wouldn't listen!"
- "I did everything the way it was supposed to be done!"

3. PREPARE TO MEET. It's likely that the service unit will need to occasionally intervene in a conflict. This is a task that can be supported by the Customer Engagement Specialist who can act in the role of facilitator, guiding those in conflict to resolution. If the conflict has moved to a harmful state, you may feel fear or anger. You may feel emotional and/or physical fatigue. These feelings are normal and may be a sign that you yourself have needs that aren't being met. If so, take action to make sure that your personal needs are addressed before you meet.

4. CONTACT THOSE IN CONFLICT AND PLAN TO MEET. Contact those in conflict and ask to set up a meeting time. Pick a place that is neutral territory. Things to consider: Is this space comfortable? Will the attendees be hungry or thirsty? Has everyone involved had time to cool off?

5. PRESENT TEAM/MEETING NORMS TO THOSE AT THE MEETING. Ask if anyone would like to adjust or add to the norms for that meeting.

**Conflict is more detrimental if it stays in the feeling or perception stage. The goal is to move it to a conversation of the effected person's/community's needs.**

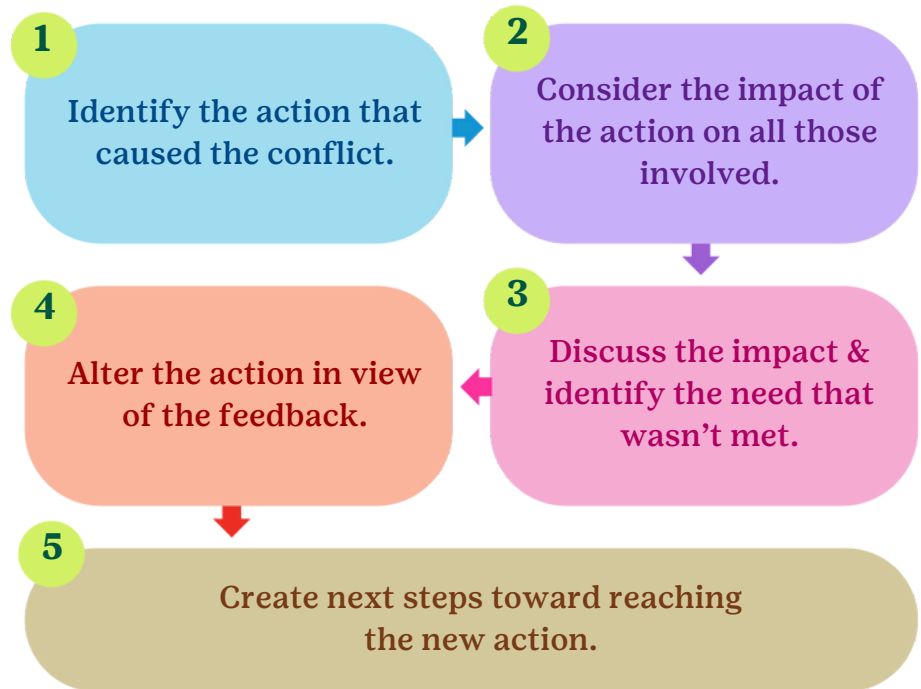




6. FOLLOW THE CONFLICT ACTION/REFLECTION MODEL AS AN AGENDA. The action/reflection below has been specifically adapted to address harmful conflict.

**Action/Reflection model questions to use:**

- What was it that sparked the conflict?
- How did the action impact each of you?
- How could the action have been changed to meet the needs of all those involved?
- What could the group do differently in the future?



7.DEFINE NEXT STEPS. At the conclusion of the meeting, document next steps. These are the actions that the attendees agree to in order to resolve the conflict. Write the next steps down. Read the next steps aloud and ask attendees to state that they agree to the next steps.

8.DOCUMENT LOOSE ENDS. Loose ends are topics that were not addressed in the meeting. They may also be areas of concern that attendees still have. Decide together whether to schedule another meeting to address loose ends. Plan the meeting or create next steps to schedule a meeting if necessary.

9.GIVE EVERYONE COPIES OF MEETING INFO. Give a copy of the next steps and loose ends that were decided in the meeting to the attendees. If a future conflict crops up, you can review the notes together at a new meeting and repeat the action/reflection process.

## Conflict Resolution

The good news is people can make conscious choices about their responses to conflict and take responsibility for their behavior. While a person cannot control the behavior of others, a person can control their own actions – or at least try, which is, admittedly, very hard to do without practice. The following behaviors can be useful in helping you effectively deal with conflict:



### **Use “I” statements.**

Respectfully let the other party know how you feel when the conflict is occurring, as well as your reaction to the conflict. Also let the other person know which of your rights you feel is being ignored in the conflict. example: “It is challenging for me when you don’t follow through on your assigned tasks. It makes it difficult for me to do my job if yours isn’t getting done. I feel that behavior is not considerate to me or my time.”

### **Be assertive, not aggressive.**

Speak about your feelings and your reactions. Keep the statements focused on how you are behaving, thinking and feeling rather than on how the other is acting. Try to take the emotions out of it and focus on the issue or behavior that has caused the conflict.

### **Speak calmly, coolly and rationally.**

In this way you will be listened to, and you will be able to maintain better control of yourself. Otherwise, the other person may take on a defensive attitude. Avoid blaming. This will keep the communication flow going. It encourages understanding and empathy, and recognizes that for a conflict to exist there must be at least two parties who are adversely affected by the conflict.

### **Create an atmosphere of cooperation.**

In an attempt to create an environment of cooperation after a conflict, all parties involved must feel that they are being listened to and understood; that their rights are being respected. They must have a desire to work things out, and they must be committed to the process of working things through.

### **Show respect for yourself and others.**

Conflict is more effectively resolved when all parties treat each other with respect. If you are on the receiving end of disrespect, remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible. When things have cooled down, resume the discussion in a more respectful manner.

# Service Unit Budget

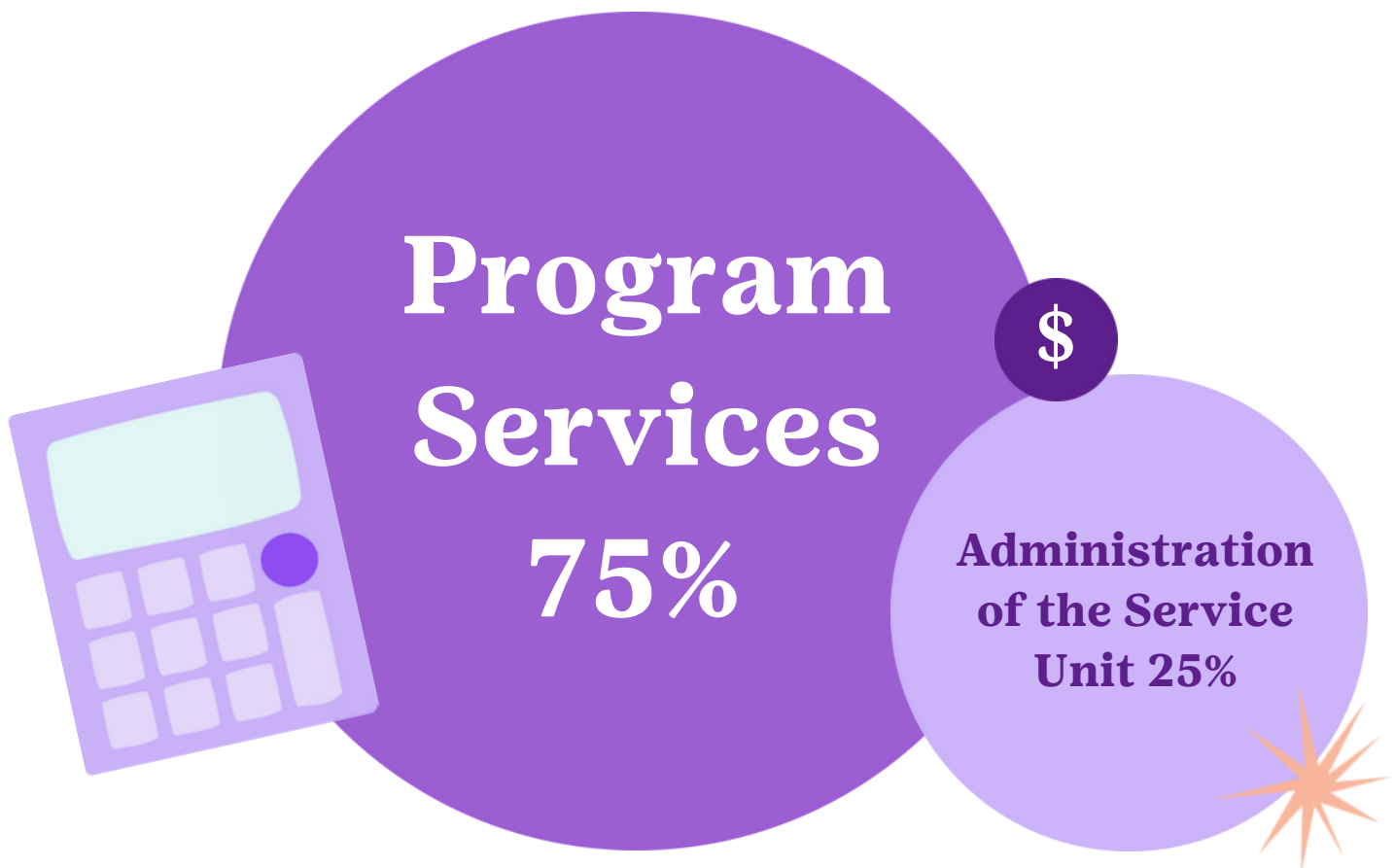
## Creating the Service Unit Annual Budget

At your yearly service unit planning meeting, the SU team will create a budget for the year. In creating a budget, it is helpful to identify potential service unit expenses for the year. Once the service unit team has made a list of potential expenses and events, it is time to determine how much these items will cost. It may be useful to look at last year's budget to determine some of these numbers. You can use the Sample Budget Planning Worksheet on paper or spreadsheet to record this information. These numbers don't need to be exact, but they will guide your decision making as you plan events for the year.

**This is an example of how expenses are typically distributed.**

1. **Program services—75%** This includes all expenses for providing programming for Girl Scouts and volunteers such as service unit events, recognition events and other activities.

2. **Administration of the Service Unit—25%** This includes expenses for administrative costs including photocopies, paper, postage, and meeting place rental fees.





## Solicitation of Funds

Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest is part of GSUSA, a charitable/public non-profit organization. In order to protect this status, GSUSA has created strict guidelines governing solicitation. These policies are discussed in detail in GSDSW's Money-Earning Guidelines. You should be familiar with the solicitation policies:

- Service units and troops are not allowed to directly solicit monetary donations.
- Service units and troops may accept unsolicited donations from community and civic organizations.
- Service units and troops cannot contact major corporations.
- Girl Scouts are not permitted to fundraise for any other organization as representatives of Girl Scouts.
- Girl Scouts are encouraged to help organizations with service projects.
- Girl Scouts are not permitted to "bell ring" as representatives of Girl Scouts. This falls under the category of fundraising for another organization.

## Service Unit Finance Report (SUFR)

- You are required to submit a service unit finance report by June 30 each year.
- Make sure your service unit finance report is turned in by the deadline to receive any available incentives and minimize disruptions in the receipt of incentives and/or product program earnings.

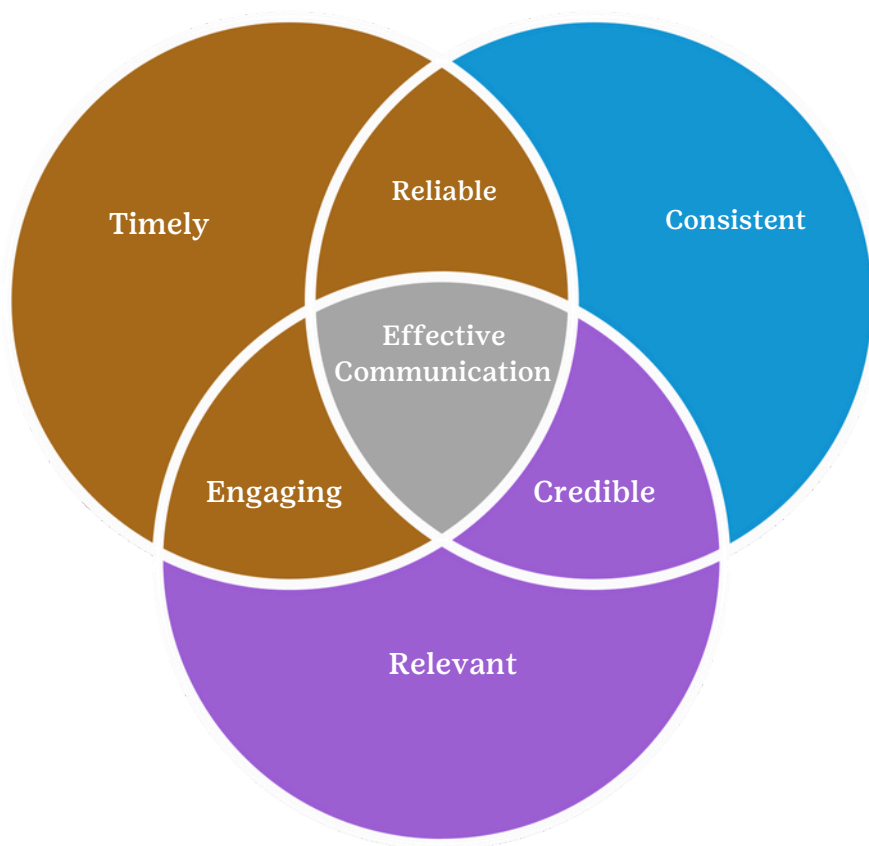
## Service Unit Budget Worksheet

INCOME	Proposed Budget	Actual	+/-
CARRY-OVER BALANCE (from prior year)			
Cookie Reward			
Event Surplus, if any			
Donations			
Other -			
<b>Total Income</b>			
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Administration (clerical supplies, etc.)			
Adult Development—training (supplies, fees)			
Adult Adult Development—Volunteer Appreciation Event			
Adult Development—end-of-year event			
Programs/Events — Encampment			
Programs/Events—World Thinking Day			
Programs/Events—Cookie Rally			
Programs/Events— Bridging & Awards Ceremony			
Programs/Events— Service Projects			
Programs/Events— Other			
Programs/Events— Other			
Programs/Events— Other			
Camperships/Scholarships (if applicable)			
New Troop Start Up Assistance (if applicable)			
Other -			
<b>Total Expenses</b>			
<b>GRAND TOTAL (income minus expenses)</b>			

[DOWNLOAD FILLABLE  
WORKSHEET](#)



# Communication



Effective communication is a key aspect of a healthy and vibrant Girl Scout community. The service unit team plays a vital roll in keeping local Girl Scouts and volunteers connected.



**Effective communication is relevant, timely and consistent.**

- **Create a communication strategy**
  - Ensure a consistent schedule of communication
  - Maintain two-way communication channels
  - Provide relevant and timely content
  - Be discreet and maintain confidences
  - Utilize a multi-faceted approach (email & social media)
- **Post & maintain an updated SU calendar of meetings, trainings, and events**
- **Build sisterhood through community engagement**
  - Share the good news about what SU Girl Scouts are doing with local Girl Scouts, families, and with Desert Southwest
  - Celebrate local Girl Scouts' accomplishments
  - Provide networking and support to volunteers and families during product programs
- **Share Desert Southwest events and training opportunities**

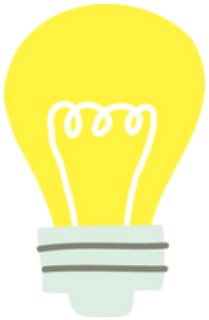
## SU Email Updates and Announcements

Sending out a service unit update and announcements email following each SU meeting is one way to provide local Girl Scouts reliable and consistent information about what is happening in your community. These emails are also a good way to show volunteers the value in attending SU volunteer meetings. You can draft your own update style or utilize the SU Email update templates in this guidebook.



### SU volunteer update emails should include:

- Timely updates regarding SU events
- Requests for needed volunteer support
- Mentorship or training opportunities
- Updated SU Calendar of upcoming events and meetings
- Communication channels: how can volunteers connect with the SU team Useful links or resources



### Tips:

- **Be concise** - only share the basic information that volunteers and families will find relevant in SU announcements. Save meeting minutes and event planning details or next-steps for the SU team or event committees.
- **Less is more.** Set a communication schedule, and stick to it when possible. Save day-to-day updates for your monthly/bi-monthly SU announcements rather than sending overly frequent emails.



# Email Templates

**Hello Service Unit {insert number} Volunteers!**

**Please join us for at our next volunteer meeting [insert date]  
at  
{insert location or Zoom link for virtual meeting}**

**Service unit meetings are a great place to:**

- Ask questions
- Connect with fellow volunteers
- Receive GSDSW updates Get
- support from fellow volunteers

**Tentative Agenda:**

- Q& A
- SU updates {insert specific updates as needed}
- Event planning {insert specifics}
- Desert Southwest updates {insert agenda items as needed}

*\*Please let us know if you would like to add anything to the agenda for this or future meetings.*

**Upcoming Events:**

- {insert dates and descriptions, including any meeting dates}

**Helpful Links:**

- [Service Units](#): Learn about your Service Unit, what SU Teams do, and how to get involved.
- {add link to SU social media groups}
- Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest Customer Care: [info@gsdsw.org](mailto:info@gsdsw.org)

[Need to get in touch with the SU team or interested in getting involved?](#)

- {insert preferred method of communication, email list of SU volunteers or ask members to respond to this email}

**See you there!**

**Sincerely,**

**The SU {insert name} Team**





# Copy, paste, edit!

**Hello Service Unit {insert name} Volunteers!**

Thanks to those that joined us at our recent SU Volunteer meeting. Here is what we discussed:

- *Insert updates that will be relevant to volunteers.*

*Upcoming Events:*

- *{insert dates and descriptions, including any meeting dates}*

**Please join us for at our next volunteer meeting {insert date}  
at  
{insert location or Zoom link for virtual meeting}**

*Helpful Links:*

- *Service Units: Learn about your Service Unit, what SU Teams do, and how to get involved.  
{add link to SU social media group}*
- *Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest Customer Care: [info@gsdsw.org](mailto:info@gsdsw.org)*

*Need to get in touch with the SU team or interested in getting involved?*

- *{insert preferred method of communication, email list of SU volunteers or ask members to respond to this email}*

*Sincerely,*

*The SU {insert name} Team*

## Branding

Girl Scouts is a beloved, iconic brand that stands out in today's busy media landscape with a strong and consistent visual identity. These design elements are the core of our brand and communicate the values represented by the Girl Scout organization.

The Trefoil is the single visual element that has been with us throughout our entire history. While its form has varied over the years, the essence of its shape has remained the same.

By using this iconic symbol consistently, we speak with a singular voice to represent the Girl Scout Movement. In doing so, we enhance our brand perception as more people continue to associate the Trefoil with Girl Scouts.

In addition to covering guidelines for use of the Trefoil, the [Brand Architecture Overview \(Coming Soon!\)](#) summarizes the only approved service marks approved for branding Girl Scout communications and materials. No other logos, service marks, or mockups should be created to represent Girl Scouts. Please review the brand architecture overview before creating branded materials for SU events, programs and communications.



Girl Scouts' brand is evolving to meet today's Girl Scouts' needs, and we want to tell you all about it. GSUSA developed a short video so you can learn all about the changes. Thank you for your help implementing our brand—volunteers are essential to sharing this new information.

Materials featuring the new branding are rolling now, so we want to make sure you're in-the-know and feel prepared for any questions that might come your way. In gsLearn (login through myGS), you'll see a 20-minute Branding course on your dashboard. You can access this video at your convenience as an on-demand training resource that you can stop and start as many times as you'd like.

## Photos

Sharing photos can be a great way to celebrate what Girl Scouts are doing in your community. Photos can be shared in your service unit communications, with GSDSW or with local media. Make sure to always obtain permission before sharing Girl Scout images. Please review these [Photography Tips \(Coming Soon!\)](#) to help ensure that your photos look their best.



## Working with the Press

As a Girl Scout leader, you may occasionally be approached by members of the media or you may have a story you'd like to share. To ensure that our messaging remains consistent and professional, all media requests and press interactions should be coordinated through the GSDSW council.

Here's how to handle these situations:

- Initial Contact
  - If the press contacts you, do not provide statements.
  - Direct them to contact Desert Southwest Council directly.
  - Collect the journalist's name, contact info, and inquiry details and forward the journalist's information to [info@gsdsw.org](mailto:info@gsdsw.org). The team will handle all follow-up communications.
- Sharing Your Story:
  - Email your story details and any materials to [info@gsdsw.org](mailto:info@gsdsw.org).
  - The team will coordinate with local or national press as appropriate.
- Press Events:
  - Notify the council in advance of events that may attract media attention.
  - The team will help with press releases and on-site coordination.

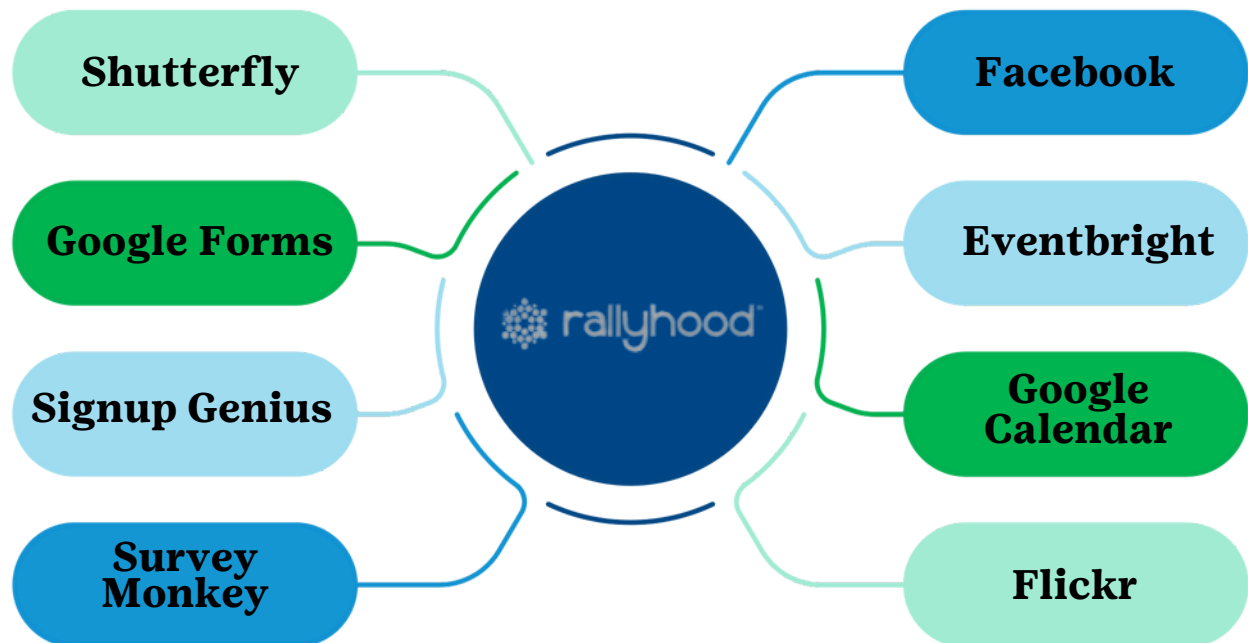


### Key Points:

- Always refer press inquiries to the Desert Southwest at [info@gsdsw.org](mailto:info@gsdsw.org).
- Do not make statements to the press without prior approval.
- The council ensures effective and accurate media interactions.

# Social Media

Rallyhood is an all-in-one online platform that combines many of the tools we all use to communicate with each other, manage event promotion and registration, share files and photos, post, respond, and collaborate with other volunteers and parents, and more! Service units and troops can customize their sites with their own photos and information, creating their own space for volunteers and parents to communicate. Not only that, but Rallyhood doesn't have any ads or distractions - it's all Girl Scouts!



## Looker

Looker is an online tool that service unit teams can use to access real time membership data for their service unit. Service unit volunteers can log in any time to view data on all current Girl Scout members in their area. New memberships and updates to current membership data sync overnight and will appear in Looker the following day. Volunteers in the SU Operation Lead and SU Administrative Lead roles will have access to Looker. Once formally put into those roles, volunteers may take the Looker training in gsLearn and sign the confidentiality agreement. Looker can be used from any computer or electronic device with internet capability. The tool can be accessed at [girlscouts.looker.com](https://girlscouts.looker.com). Looker can provide the following information for all registered SU Girl Scouts and volunteers:

- Contact information
- Membership status
- Role assignments
- Troop status
  - Some Girl Scouts are still actively looking for a troop. SU's can use this report to identify these Girl Scouts and help them find a troop.



# Looker Studio