

Community v. Take Action Projects

Take Action is one of the three leadership keys in Girl Scouting, and each Journey culminates in a Take Action Project. While community service projects will always have a place in Girl Scouting, girls deserve the benefits of the full Girl Scout Leadership Experience by having the opportunity to do Take Action projects. Through participating in Take Action projects, girls really do have the opportunity to change the world!

Community Service Project <i>Addresses a one-time need</i>	Take Action Project <i>Address the root cause of a problem</i>
Example: A one-time food drive. (People will be hungry again when the food is gone). Nearly 4 million Californians experience food insecurity, which means that they have limited access or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate food.	Example: One of the root causes of hunger is that not enough stores accept food stamps (EBT from the CalFresh program). Girls might identify a store in an impacted area and work with them to adopt the food stamps to make nutritious food available.
Example: Beach cleanup (litter will accumulate again).	Example: Beach cleanup with a publicity campaign of the quantity and types of litter picked up to educate the public

We have a proud tradition in Girl Scouting of being a service organization—one that has provided countless hours of valuable service to local and broader communities. However, when questioned about the “Take Action outcomes”, girls are consistently reporting that, while they believe that girls can make a difference in the world, they don’t see themselves personally in this way.

We are faced with the challenge of finding ways to help girls raise the bar from simply performing community service to truly taking action and making a difference in the world.

A Take Action Project has three qualities:

1. It is a **sustainable solution**—it addresses the root cause of the issue in some way so as to make a lasting impact. When girls create a change that directly addresses the root cause of the problem, the project could almost always be considered sustainable. Sustainable means that there is lasting effect, it does not necessarily mean that somebody has to continue the project yearly. As an example; a beach clean-up is a community service project, because the beach is just going to get dirty again. But a beach clean-up could be a Take Action Project if other people were educated and inspired to act. For example, you could place informational signs to educate people about why they should throw out trash and provide trash cans for them to use. This creates lasting change.

2. It makes a **measurable impact**—girls identify their project goals for their community, target audience, and themselves by developing success indicators so that they can see the impact they've had.
3. It is **girl-led**. The girls (even the youngest girls) need to be involved in the planning and carrying out of the project—not just showing up and participating.

These aspects of a Take Action project may seem like lofty ideals that are not possible for girls to achieve. However, like almost anything else in Girl Scouting, the idea is to start small and think about providing stepping stones for our youngest girls so that they are ready for even larger steps as they get older. And, it's always easier to ensure that you arrive at your destination if you know ahead of time where you are planning to go! Journeys for all grade levels walk girls through the process of doing Take Action projects in age-appropriate ways.

Community Service Projects

Does all this mean that there is no place for community service projects in Girl Scouting? Absolutely not! These projects can provide girls with experience so that they can later take action themselves. Service Projects are a great first step toward helping girls to do their Take Action projects. "To do a good turn daily" is an important part of the Girl Scout philosophy, and all troops are encouraged to seek out opportunities for service. Service projects may involve helping other people, animals, or our environment. Girls should be encouraged to plan, promote, and participate in service projects for the joy and satisfaction of helping others rather than to earn something for themselves. GSNorCal offers a variety of patch programs. It is important to be mindful that receiving these patches should be a welcome surprise for girls, not a motivating force.

Council-Wide Service Projects

Each year, GSNorCal coordinates a variety of council-wide service projects open to troops throughout the council. Information on council-sponsored service projects will be available at your service unit leader meetings and in the GSNorCal Guide or on our website: <https://www.gsnorcal.org/en/about-girl-scouts/community-service.html>

Planning Your Own Service Project? Girls and adults should feel free to use their local community contacts to design community service projects (or Take Action projects) that are of interest to them.

Choose A Take Action Project

1. Identify an issue or problem you want to take action on. Always start here, rather than thinking of a project and then trying to find someone who needs it.
2. Investigate thoroughly to ensure it is a problem/issue.
3. Identify root causes of the issue or problem.
4. Brainstorm possible solutions that address a root cause.
5. Assess your resources.
6. Create a realistic plan, including a timeline.
7. Spread the word— and solicit help from the people you need.

Feeling stuck and just can't come up with a project? Reach out to others! Ask students and teachers at your school what problems they have seen in the community. What would they like to

change? What are some of the hot issues that you have read about in your local news? You may want to invite guest speakers from community organizations, or take a trip to visit their facilities.

For inspiration, check out the Map It! Interactive map that shows how Girl Scouts all over are changing the world at www.girlscouts.org/en/for-girls/girls-changing-the-world.html. Whether it's Gold Awards, Silver Awards, Bronze Awards, Forever Green, or Journey Take Action projects, browse what girls are doing around the country! It's a great way to get inspiration for your Girl Scout year or just see what other girls are doing to change the world! Map It! features Take Action projects, not service projects.

One of the hardest things is to avoid giving the girls a list of projects to choose from. But they will really miss out if they don't get to go through the process themselves. If you find yourself wanting to rush the process or solve the problems or do the planning, resolve to only ask questions. Instead of "That won't work—we'll have to do it this way", ask, "How do you think we should find out if it's OK if we do this project?", or, "Do we have all the important information on the flyer?". These leading questions will help the girls think through the process. Finally, trust the process— even the youngest girls can come up with some ideas of issues and solutions.

Sustainable Take Action Projects

Pass It On: Choose a Journey activity that you participated in. Think about who else could benefit from doing the same activity. For example, get permission to lead a special lunchtime (or early morning or after-school) session for kids who are interested in learning how to create a personal budget. Adjust the activity for your audience. Enhance your project's sustainability by leaving behind a tip sheet or activity kit for teachers or other employees.

Pass It Down: Assist younger girls by educating them about your issue and solution. Organize a mini-workshop by adapting the Journey activities or games for younger girls. Organize a "get ready for middle school" session for girls in elementary school.

Increase Adult Awareness: Do you think adults could be savvier about global warming issues? Organize a workshop for adults on ways to reduce the causes of climate change, including changes they can make in their homes and daily lives. Encourage them to think about how they can pass their ideas on!

Spread the Word: On a website or the radio or in print, develop a "miniseries" or awareness campaign of an issue you explored.