

Collaborating with Sponsors & Other Organizations

Sponsors help GSNorCal ensure that all girls in the community have an opportunity to participate in Girl Scouting. Community organizations, businesses, religious organizations, and individuals may be sponsors and may provide troop meeting places, volunteer their time, offer in-kind donations, provide activity materials, or loan equipment. The sponsor's contribution can then be recognized by arranging for the girls to send thank-you cards, inviting the sponsor to a meeting or ceremony, or working together on a take-action project.

For information on working with a sponsor, consult the GSNorCal Fund Development staff at Info@gsnorcal.org. They can give you guidance on the availability of sponsors, recruiting responsibility, and other GSNorCal policies or practices that must be followed. GSNorCal already has relationships with certain organizations, or may know of some reasons not to collaborate with certain organizations.

When collaborating with any other organization, keep these additional guidelines in mind:

- **Avoid fundraising for other organizations:** Girl Scouts are not allowed to solicit money on behalf of another organization when identifying ourselves as Girl Scouts (such as wearing a uniform, a sash or vest, official pins, and so on). This includes participating in a walk-a-thon or telethon while in uniform. You and your troop can, however, support another organization through Take Action projects. Girl Scouts, as individuals, are able to participate in whatever events they choose, as long as they're not wearing anything that officially identifies them as "Girl Scouts." When people purchase cookies, patronize a car wash, or donate money to a Girl Scout troop, they believe their money is going to support girls in their Girl Scout activities. Therefore, when girls would like to support other organizations, they must make sure that the organization they are donating to meet the approval of the donors that have contributed to their cause. While exacting restrictions are not generally connected to most donations, the risk is that some donors might not approve of how their money is being used. It is important to be clear with donors on how the funds are being used.
- **Steer clear of political fundraisers:** When in an official Girl Scout capacity or in any way identifying yourselves as Girl Scouts, your troop may not participate (directly or indirectly) in any political campaign or work on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. Letter-writing campaigns are not allowed, nor is participating in a political rally, circulating a petition, or carrying a political banner.
- **Be respectful when collaborating with religious organizations:** Girl Scout troops must respect the opinions and practices of religious partners, but no girl should be required to take part in any religious observance or practice of the sponsoring group.
- **Avoid selling or endorsing commercial products:** "Commercial products" is any product sold at retail. Since 1939, girls and volunteers have not been allowed to endorse, provide a testimonial for, or sell such products.

Fundraising

- GSNorCal maintains the official 501(c)(3) status as a non-profit organization. *Note that service units and troops are not legal entities, and are not non-profit organizations by themselves.* Girl Scout adults who wish to fundraise or apply for grants for GSNorCal (council, service unit, or troop) must work with our Fund Development Department staff to ensure that their solicitation is a part of the council's overall fund development plan. Girls may not engage in fundraising activities.
- GSNorCal has legal obligations in the solicitation of donations, including grant solicitation, as a non-profit organization. Donations must be routed through the GSNorCal accounting processes to ensure proper recording and accountability to protect its non-profit status. To satisfy IRS rules and sound accounting policy, all donations of \$250 or more must be officially acknowledged by the non-profit organization.
- GSNorCal likes to formally recognize donors in its annual report, and often donors would like to retain a record of their gift for tax purposes. Please submit donor information for a letter of acknowledgment to the Fund Development Department via the online [Donation Form](#) which can be found online at www.gsnorcal.org/forms

Fundraising Platforms

GoFundMe Accounts

- GSNorCal maintains the official 501(c)(3) status as a non-profit organization. *Troops and service units are not legal entities, and are not non-profit organizations by themselves.* As such, troops and service units cannot set up GoFundMe sites. Girl Scout adults who wish to fundraise or apply for grants for GSNorCal (council, service unit, or troop) must work with our Fund Development Department staff to ensure that their solicitation is a part of the council's overall fund development plan. Girls may not engage in fundraising activities.
- If troops and service units would like to contribute troop/service unit earnings to specific GoFundMe accounts in support of a cause that is of special interest to the girls, they can do this under the following conditions:
 - Girls in the troop or members of the service unit vote on the decision to contribute their earnings to GoFundMe accounts,
 - The GoFundMe accounts must be vetted to determine their legitimacy, and
 - There is no conflict of interest between Girl Scout families and the GoFundMe account, e.g., a troop parent's business cannot benefit from the contribution.
- The troop leader or service unit leadership team should document the investigation that has gone into the GoFundMe account and the decision-making discussions that have taken place within the group so that there are no misunderstandings later on. More detail is provided in the Volunteer Essentials [[Money: Money-Earning Basics: Projects Benefitting another Organization](#)]
- Girls who use online fund-raising platforms, like GoFundMe, Crowdrise or Fundly, for their own personal, non-Girl Scout projects may not use Girl Scout platforms and/or resources to advertise these efforts. As a non-profit organization, GSNorCal may not use our platform and/or resources to raise funds that benefit individuals.

Donations from the Community

Sponsorship Guidelines

Community members or organizations can sponsor a troop in a number of ways:

- Meeting Place
- Transportation
- Consultants
- Resource Materials
- Equipment
- Financial Support

If the sponsor requires a tax acknowledgment of their donated resources (an in-kind donation), submit the [Donation Form](#) to the Fund Development Department which will formally acknowledge the gift. www.gsnorcal.org/forms

Financial Gifts Made to or Designated to Troops

A donor who wishes to designate their gift or donate directly to a troop should make their gift payable to the non-profit organization, Girl Scouts of Northern California, and it will be processed by GSNorCal and paid out to the designated troop. Any financial gift to the Girl Scout organization, including to a troop, must be officially acknowledged. Additionally, gifts of \$250+ must be acknowledged in accordance with IRS regulations. Submit the [Donation Form](#) to the Fund Development Department so that the gift is formally acknowledged. www.gsnorcal.org/forms.

If the check was made out to the troop and deposited locally, but the donor still needs tax acknowledgment, please submit the online [Donation Form](#) to the Fund Development Department for gift acknowledgement. You should print a copy of what you submit, and attach it to your annual Troop Financial Report. Any troop requesting donations over \$500 must contact the Fund Development Department at Info@gsnorcal.org PRIOR to securing the gift to avoid a duplicate request. The troop must also provide a written plan and budget for its proposed use of these funds. This process is reviewed annually and is subject to change. For additional information about donations made to troops from families [[MONEY: Contributions from Families](#)].

Gifts-in-Kind

(Also known as In-Kind Gifts or GIK). Gifts of goods or services in lieu of cash gifts are also considered donations. GSNorCal also retains information about these donors for recognition. Use the online [Donation Form](#) to record information about the gift both for the troop's acknowledgement to the donor, as well as additional acknowledgment by the Fund Development Department. The [Donation Form](#) is online at www.gsnorcal.org/forms GSNorCal has sample Gift-In-Kind solicitation and acknowledgment letters to help your troop. Contact Info@gsnorcal.org for a Sample Letter and Sample Acknowledgement letter.

Wine / Alcohol Donations

There are many local, state, and federal regulations involved, and several specific permits required when alcohol might be served or given as any sort of prize (auction or any type of prize) at any adult event. Contact Info@gsnorcal.org before beginning planning for such an event for guidance.

In addition to placing the council in legal jeopardy, you may also be held personally liable if laws are inadvertently broken.

Cause-Related Marketing

Many businesses prefer to support non-profit organizations through programs where they agree to donate a percentage of their sales or profits when customers bring in promotional flyers distributed by the non-profit group. This is known as cause-related marketing and not fundraising.

Example: Girl Scout night at a local business or restaurant where GSNorCal (council, service unit, or troop) will be the beneficiary of the proceeds from patrons on a designated date. Girl Scouts might advertise a designated date at a local business or restaurant. The business agrees to donate a percentage of proceeds based on their business sales on that date. The patrons of the business attend to support the cause (Girl Scouts) but choose to buy a product from the business or restaurant, which is, therefore, not considered a donation to Girl Scouts. This type of event creates good visibility for GSNorCal in the community while also building partnerships with local businesses. Any troop wishing to solicit a local business for this type of gift should review sponsorship guidelines and contact either Info@gsnorcal.org, or their local service unit, to ensure that duplicate requests have not already been made in a particular community.

Cause-Related Market Example: A Troop or Service Unit wants to raise money for a project and they contact a local restaurant who is willing to donate a portion of their proceeds to the Girl Scout organization. Here are two examples of cause-related marketing that commercial businesses offer – one example is acceptable according to GSUSA’s standards, and one example is not. Commercial companies want to utilize Girl Scouts’ community networks to ultimately attract more customers and benefit their business. We want to make sure that these partnerships are low-risk and that the girls will ultimately benefit from this community partner’s investment in Girl Scouts.

- **Chipotle’s Fundraiser Night to benefit Girl Scouts: YES.** The Chipotle’s Restaurant creates a flyer for distribution among the Girl Scout troops, and diners must present their flyer to ensure credit for their purchase is designated to Girl Scouts. Chipotle’s Restaurant is the actual donor because they provided diners with food in exchange for the customers’ money, and in turn they are donating their profits to the Girl Scout organization.
- **Chipotle’s Gift Certificates for sale to benefit Girl Scouts: NO.** Chipotle’s Gift Certificates are sold to a group at a discounted rate, and a portion of the cost is donated back to (or retained by) the Girl Scout troop. The final certificate buyer (the customer) is receiving something in exchange for their money. This is the same as any product program, but GSUSA’s standards do not allow the sale of any non-Girl Scout branded product. Girl Scout troops should avoid selling any non-Girl Scout branded products to avoid confusion about endorsing other companies and to avoid risk of loss to the Girl Scout troop or service unit who may have been pressured to fund the initial purchase.