

From the National President and Girl Scouts of the USA CEO

Dear Girl Scout National Delegate,

This is an historic moment for the Girl Scout Movement. On July 25, following significant input from local councils and National Council delegates, Girl Scouts of the USA's National Board decided to call the first-ever special session of the National Council.

Our National Council Session represents the best of our dynamic democratic process—one that is for Girl Scouts, by Girl Scouts. As a delegate chosen to represent your council, you have a critical role to play in helping our Movement stay true to our mission, and we appreciate your service. Our experiences within our troops, service units, and councils will inform our perspectives, and our delegate education will create space for us to learn about the experiences of other members in our Movement and to consider how we can best ensure a sustainable and thriving future for Girl Scouting.

This decision by the National Board followed nine months of discussion with local councils and delegates about our Movement strategy. This strategy has been informed by research, including the clear expectations around what today's girls and families most want and need, and input from stakeholders across the Movement.

To execute our strategy, we will invest in those initiatives that enable us to more effectively serve our current members and reach the 24 million girls who are not yet part of Girl Scouts. To accomplish what we know is possible, we must increase and sustain all financial resources, including philanthropy and membership dues.

We have collectively acknowledged that a membership dues increase is needed which is greater than the 25 percent (or \$6.25) the National Board has authority to approve in a single triennium.

As a leader in our Movement, and in your role as a National Council delegate, we appreciate you carrying out your responsibility to learn about, discuss, and help decide on our path forward. This workbook serves as the formal call to meeting for the Special 57th National Council Session, which will take place virtually on Zoom on Saturday, October 19, 2024, for the purpose of considering membership dues increases and contains the proposal details, as well as parliamentary and business procedures. Delegates are responsible for their own device and internet connection.

Thank you for the input you provided during the development of our Movement strategy. Your support in this process has been invaluable. Collectively and collaboratively, we will chart a course for success for our Movement and an impactful experience for all of the Girl Scouts we currently serve—and those we will serve in the future.

Yours in Girl Scouting,



Noorain F. Khan
National President

Bonnie Barczykowski
Chief Executive Officer

2023–2026 Girl Scouts of the USA National Board of Directors

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*Ex-officio, without vote

**As of September 13, 2023



The Girl Scout Promise and Law and the Girl Scout Mission

The 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.

Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character,
who make the world a better place.

Basics of the National Council

The National Council is the membership body charged with giving broad policy direction to the future of the Girl Scout Movement in the United States. The National Council's responsibilities, eligibility requirements, composition, size, and how and when its meetings are held are outlined in the Congressional Charter and the Constitution of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, as found in *The Blue Book of Basic Documents*.

The National Council convenes regularly every three years, and its responsibilities are to:

- Elect the officers and other members of the National Board and National Board Development Committee
- Amend the Girl Scout Constitution as needed
- Establish requirements for certificates of membership, council charters, and all other credentials
- Act on proposals to foster and improve Girl Scouting, receive reports of the National Board of Directors, and give guidance to the National Board upon general lines of direction of the Girl Scout Movement and Girl Scout program

Special Sessions of the National Council

The National Council may also meet in special sessions between regularly scheduled National Council Sessions. Special sessions of the National Council may be called by the President upon written request of a majority of the members of the National Board of Directors or twenty percent (20%) of the membership of the National Council, which shall represent at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the councils chartered by GSUSA. The purpose of the session shall be stated in the written request.

The purpose of the special session shall be limited to legitimate business of the National Council, and no other business shall be transacted except that for which the session has been specifically called.

Notice of the special session, stating the time, place, and specific purpose, shall be mailed or delivered electronically not less than 30 days before the session to each local council, each delegate from USA Girl Scouts Overseas, each member of the National Board of Directors and the National Board Development Committee, each Past President, and each member elected by the National Council who is entitled to vote at such session.

Composition

The National Council is composed of:

- Delegates elected by chartered Girl Scout councils
- Delegates from USA Girl Scouts Overseas
- Members of the National Board of Directors
- Members of the National Board Development Committee
- Past presidents of Girl Scouts of the USA
- Other persons as may be elected by the National Council

Delegates

The total membership of the National Council shall not exceed 1,500, and at least four-fifths of the entire membership shall consist of delegates from local councils and from USA Girl Scouts Overseas. A formula is used to determine how many delegates each council may send to the National Council Session. This same formula is also used to select delegates to represent USA Girl Scouts Overseas.

Preparation for the Special Session

Every Girl Scout council should prepare its delegates to fulfill their responsibilities at the Special 57th NCS by providing opportunities for delegates to:

- Review and discuss proposals that require action by the National Council
- Study the parliamentary procedure that will be in effect during the session and become familiar with *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th Edition*, including undertaking live and/or on demand training provided on the delegate website
- Become familiar with the various procedures established for the Special 57th NCS outlined in this workbook
- Understand the purpose of the special session so they can participate fully in the decision-influencing process

This Special 57th National Council Session Workbook and the *September 2024 Blue Book of Basic Documents* are essential tools for delegates and should be brought to the meeting.

During the Special Session

At the Special 57th National Council Session, delegates will discuss and make decisions on a topic of great importance and on which members of our community hold an array of perspectives.

There are a number of things we can do as Girl Scouts to concretely embody the values embedded in our Law and Promise as we take part in these courageous conversations.

Specifically, each of us can:

- Assume that each person has good intentions.
- Pause to think of what we would like to convey before we speak.
- Listen carefully to each speaker, trying to understand their perspective, even if we don't hold that same perspective.
- Ask questions when we don't understand something (whether it is an idea, a policy item, or what a particular speaker is saying).
- Consider sharing why this issue or policy item is important to us.
- Know that our body language conveys a message, even when we are not sharing our ideas verbally.
- Try to frame differences as a difference of ideas or perspectives. We can direct our comments toward the different ways we see an issue, not at someone personally. For example, "I hear a number of people speaking about this issue in this way, yet I see it a little differently...." or "[Name], I heard your ideas on this issue, and I really agree with you on x. When it comes to y, though, I do see it differently..."
- Refrain from name-calling or saying anything about another speaker's motives or character.

- Recognize that time is a valuable resource. As Girl Scouts, we promise to use our resources wisely. Consider if the point you had planned to make has already been made by another speaker. If so, consider whether restating the point is necessary to further debate, or whether you could withdraw from the speaker queue to make room for speakers with new ideas to offer.

Our diversity is our strength, and when each person can both share their ideas and be treated with respect and dignity, that makes for a productive experience and embodies our values.

Following the Special Session

National Council delegates are elected for a three-year term and engage in the governance of our Movement throughout their term. Following the Special 57th National Council Session, delegates are responsible for sharing to their constituents decisions adopted by the National Council. GSUSA will provide materials to support delegates in this role. Each council delegation should plan how to report to its council on the discussions held, decisions made and the reasons for them, and all that the delegates may have learned about Girl Scouting as a national and international Movement.

National Council delegates can contribute to the democratic process during the triennium by:

- Being active participants on the official Girl Scout delegate website and sharing information from that site with their council
- Engaging in delegate input gathering opportunities throughout the triennium
- Helping their councils understand their role in submitting agenda items for the next National Council Session
- Sharing their knowledge with the National Council delegates who are elected for the following triennium

Special 57th National Council Session Agenda

Required Action Items

The National Council will adopt:

- **The Credentials Report**

The credentials report is the official roll of voting members.

- **Standing Rules for the Special Session**

Proposed Standing Rules for the Special 57th National Council Session will be shared in an addendum to this workbook prior to the meeting.

- **Program**

The program is the schedule of proceedings, including the sequence of business items, and will be distributed at least 48 hours in advance of the Special 57th National Council Session.



Input from Local Councils and National Council Delegates on Membership Dues Changes

On July 25, 2024, following significant input from local councils and National Council delegates, Girl Scouts of the USA's National Board called the first-ever special session of the National Council. The purpose will be to discuss a membership dues increase.¹

Prior to any decision to change Girl Scouts' membership dues structure or amount, the National Board must seek the input of local councils and delegates on the proposed changes, intended use of the funds, and potential impact on the Girl Scout Movement. After the National Board takes action on membership dues changes, there shall be a report to all local Girl Scout councils and National Council delegates of the decision taken and the impact of the dues change (page 24, *Blue Book of Basic Documents*, September 2024 edition).

The National Board's recommendation to increase dues and to call a special session followed almost a year of discussion with local councils and delegates about our Movement strategy. This strategy has been informed by research, including clear expectations around what today's girls and families most want and need, and input from stakeholders across the Movement.

As the leaders of our councils, council board chairs and CEOs provided valuable perspectives over this period, including input on Movement strategy and on the investments most needed to support current members and families and those yet to join Girl Scouts. In those early conversations, it became clear that an increase in all our financial levers—including philanthropy, licensing, and membership dues—would be needed to be able to successfully deliver our Movement strategy. Council board chairs engaged in a similar process throughout 2024.

In addition, GSUSA convened a Movement Strategy Working Group in December 2023 to develop a three-year Movement strategy. To ensure the strategy was informed by the perspectives of delegates, and to reinforce the role of a National Council delegate in our decision-influencing and decision-making responsibilities, GSUSA held three series of delegate webinars to secure input.

- In April 2024, GSUSA held three delegate webinars to engage delegates in research findings about what today's girls and families most want and need.
- In June 2024, GSUSA hosted another series of three webinars to gather National Council delegate input into a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to highlight where, as a Movement, we have the most opportunities to improve the experience we provide to girls, families, and volunteers and how we might better communicate our strengths to those families yet to join Girl Scouting. This input further evidenced the need for significant investment into our Movement to ensure that more girls and families choose Girl Scouts as the place to learn, grow, and connect.
- In July, delegates participated in information and input gathering webinars on: GSUSA's current financial position and how membership dues were currently used to deliver the Girl Scout mission; the trends impacting our membership and revenue; the membership fees of other girl and youth serving organizations; and the many initiatives being evaluated by GSUSA and the potential impact of those initiatives on the Girl Scout Movement, including the cost impact of these initiatives and the likely impact on membership dues and other sources of revenue.

Delegate feedback from the webinar series was clear: these investments are needed and cannot be funded sustainably through philanthropy and licensing alone, and a membership dues increase would be required.

¹Increases above 25% in a triennium must be approved by the National Council. As the National Board is proposing an increase above 25%, it has convened a Special National Council Session so that the National Council may consider the proposal and take action.



Introduction: Rationale for Girl and Adult Membership Dues Proposals 1 and 2

Movement Strategy Background

Girl Scouting is on the cusp of a historic opportunity; it is a time when we will make choices about our future and what potential it holds. We must build on our strong history and look ahead to engaging and serving more girls, their families, and caring volunteers who, together, make the world a better place. This evolution includes significantly improving how we deliver programming (e.g., the Girl Scout Experience Box), making it easier to volunteer with simplified processes and tools, increasing our public visibility, and, most importantly, remaining relevant by directly addressing the needs of girls through engaging offerings.

Currently, only 1 in 25 girls in the U.S. is a Girl Scout, and membership has declined for both girls and adults. Girls today face significant challenges. The fast pace of life, social media's influence, and the lingering effects of the pandemic have disrupted their lives, weakened their communities, and strained their mental health.

The Girl Scout Movement continuously evolves by listening to Girl Scout voices during changing times and learning from research for additional insights. To more deeply understand how Girl Scouts can more substantially impact the lives of girls and women well into the 21st century, GSUSA commissioned new research in 2023. We learned that, while online learning is growing, girls still crave in-person activities where they can make friends, be themselves, and feel a sense of belonging. Parents and caregivers are looking for opportunities that build girls' self-confidence and independence, foster skill development, and offer mentorship from caring adults. Being part of Girl Scouts provides these benefits. Results from our Girl Scout Voices Count survey support this information. Girl Scouting gives girls a strong sense of self, positive values, and healthy relationships, and provides the opportunities that girls and their caregivers seek.

Ensuring that Girl Scouts can be here for girls both now and in the future requires financial resources. Delegates will discuss proposals to increase membership dues for girls and adults. These dues changes bring the cost of Girl Scout membership more in line with similar organizations and, compared to many activities, Girl Scouts remains less expensive. Girl Scouting offers year-round, girl-centered, fun, skill-building experiences. Our programs evolve with a girl as she grows, and each moment is a possibility to create a lifelong, positive impact. Few, if any, other youth activities offer this value.

To stand effectively for girls, we must commit to making sure no financial barriers prevent girls from joining and staying in Girl Scouts.

Delegate and Local Council Leader Feedback

As outlined in the Gathering Input section of this workbook, GSUSA engaged extensively with delegates and local council leaders to inform the development of both the Movement strategy and the needed investment in it. There was support for raising membership dues and for increasing national and local fundraising to pay for initiatives that will engage with all girls and families in ways that fit their lives.

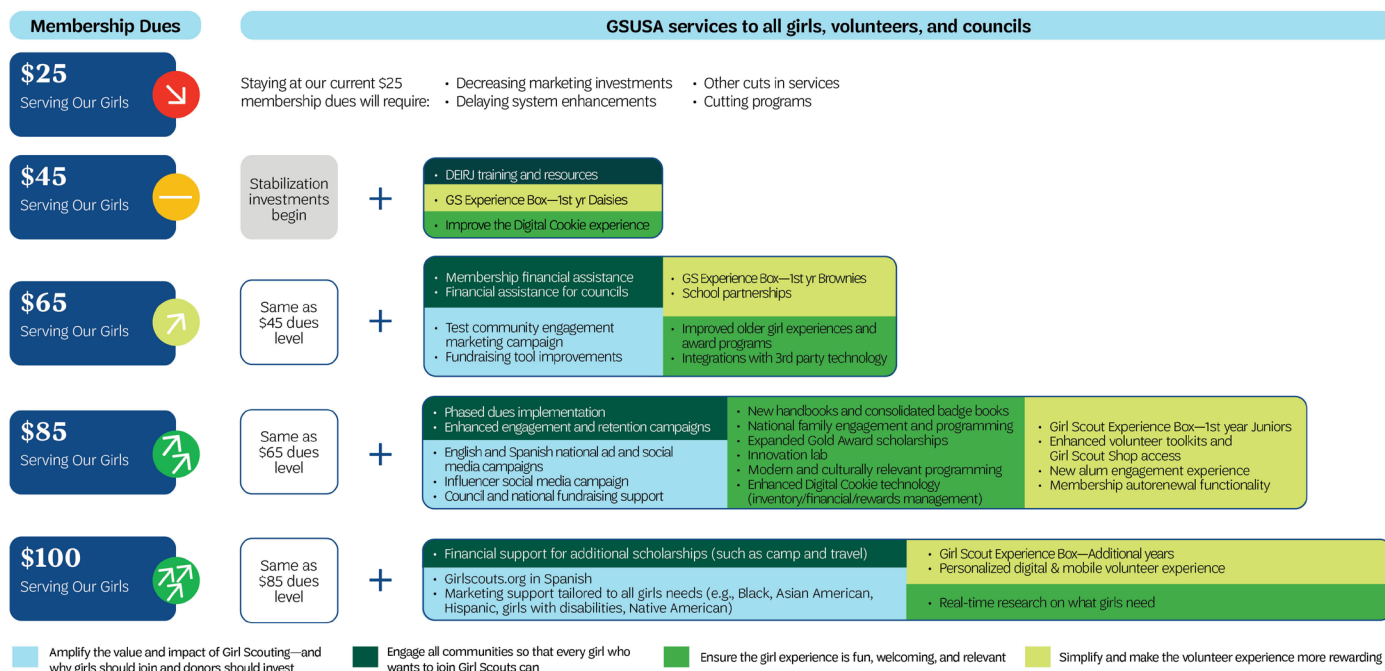
Feedback highlighted the need to

- be a more welcoming organization where girls from all backgrounds feel that they belong,
- ensure that sufficient financial assistance is available for girls and families,
- invest in publicly sharing the value of Girl Scouting and broadly communicating what Girl Scouts do,
- simplify the volunteer experience and make it more rewarding,
- make the older girl program more visible and engaging, and
- improve technology to make it easier for girls, families, and volunteers to join and participate.

The chart below summarizes the investments that are possible based on the amount of annual membership dues.

We must invest in girls. Our choice is now.

Girl Scouting must invest today to better serve our current members and to reach girls who are currently missing out on the Girl Scout experience. These are a few examples of initiatives that would be possible with an increase in national dues:



Looking at the future possibilities we can create for girls, it is essential to focus on the investments that will make the biggest impact on our volunteers, our councils, and the girls and families we serve now and those we will serve in the future.

Financial Implications

Membership dues fund most of the national organization's services which, in turn, support all councils, girls, and volunteers. For additional information on how GSUSA allocates our resources, please review the [State of the Movement briefing](#) (passcode: RVaB%w^L) and the recorded September 16, 2024, [State of the Movement interactive webinar](#) (passcode: FZW4sQ^!).

Across all local councils as well as GSUSA, Girl Scouting has had significant and uncontrollable pressures on our membership and finances, including the global pandemic and soaring inflation. The last few years have been especially challenging for councils and many of our Girl Scout families. As a National Board, we knew that would not have been the time to increase dues. We have held dues steady for 8 years and have not shared the increased costs of technology, which in turn means the GSUSA expense budget is larger because of national technology costs for all members and all councils. Now, as we collectively reflect on the state of the Girl Scout Movement, it is clear from our analysis, as well as local council leadership and delegate input, that to meet the needs of current and future members, we must increase dues.

As we shared during the interactive State of the Movement webinar, GSUSA and councils have cut costs and ended underperforming initiatives. Despite these efforts, GSUSA's expenses are still outpacing revenue. Managing costs is difficult, as many of GSUSA's services for all councils are fixed expenses that do not go down when membership decreases. Because Girl Scouts is a membership organization, declining membership reduces the revenue needed to operate the Movement.

GSUSA ended FY23 with a deficit of \$4.4M, and we expect to end FY24 with a deficit of \$5.6M. Over the past few years, costs have increased everywhere, and neither GSUSA nor our councils have been immune to this pressure. The National Board has used financial reserves (our Movement savings account) to cover the shortfall by continuing to invest in council support, absorb increased costs that would normally be passed on to councils, and invest in initiatives directly impacting all volunteers and girls.

With money from financial reserves and national fundraising, we piloted programs (e.g., the Girl Scout Experience Box), developed national partnerships to engage girls and families (e.g., Major League Baseball), and created the Gold Award Scholarship Fund. We also invested in critical and less visible requirements like insurance for girls and members, information security, data privacy systems, and technology upgrades—all essential elements that national organizations like GSUSA provide in support of all members, and for all of which costs are rising.

Operating at a deficit—spending more than we bring in—as we have been doing, is not sustainable. We can no longer afford to use our financial reserves, and we cannot pass through all escalating costs to our councils. We also cannot continue reducing our expenses without further reducing services to councils, which will negatively impact girls and volunteers. And we cannot risk further deferring the investments to improve the Girl Scout experience for girls and adults across the country. We must increase revenue from all sources—robust fundraising, comprehensive partnerships, and membership dues.

Delegates and council leadership shared many potential dues increase considerations during our input-gathering process, including ensuring:

- that there is sufficient financial assistance to meet the needs of current and future members,
- that we consider the total cost of Girl Scouting to a family, especially when caregivers join to support their girls' experience, and
- if there is a significant increase in membership dues, there would be a phased increase time to give troops and families time to adjust.

With a compelling Movement strategy, continued financial discipline to use resources wisely, increased fundraising, and our choice to increase membership dues, Girl Scouts will be able to accelerate our future like never before. Without increased dues revenue, we cannot, and the Movement will face financial options that do not serve girls well. GSUSA is and will be your partner—being financially responsible, supporting each council, and providing you with what you need to serve girls. The additional revenue generated by national annual membership dues of \$85 for girls and \$45 for adults will enable all of us, together, to deliver our Movement strategy.

Increased dues will:

- make programs easier to deliver for volunteers,
- make technology easier to use, with more integration between platforms, including integrating technology tools that some volunteers already use at your council,
- ensure that processes are easier, faster, and better streamlined, including more 'turnkey' training, recruitment tools, and programs,
- clarify and amplify for families and communities the value and impact of the Girl Scout experience and why girls should join and donors should invest,
- eliminate barriers so that every girl who wants to join Girl Scouts can do so and engage in all that Girl Scouting offers, and
- create new experiences, including opportunities to explore new places and better connect with our global sisterhood.

As you consider the opportunities available with increased resources, it is important that we also consider what opportunities we forgo if the final approved dues are less than proposed. Without dues increases, GSUSA will need to make significant cuts that would negatively impact the Girl Scout experience for years to come. Our girls expect and deserve a different outcome.

Actions Taken to Support Implementation

Delegates spoke with great compassion about not wanting anyone to feel left out of Girl Scouting because of the increased dues cost. In response to this powerful advocacy, and recognizing this is a large increase, the National Board approved three specific actions to support girls and councils with financial assistance. This aid will be effective based on specific amounts for girl membership dues and will support council financial assistance, council membership scholarships, and a gradual increase in girl membership dues. (See Proposal 1, Actions Taken to Support Implementation on page 16 for additional details.)

As part of the extensive financial assessment and strategy work with our local council leaders, GSUSA assessed the impact of potential dues increases on girl and adult membership. While it is difficult to forecast, councils and GSUSA are working together to prepare for a wide variety of possible outcomes, including both membership growth and decline in the initial years following the dues increase.

Families, businesses, and non-profit membership organizations like Girl Scouts are all facing economic pressures. Families are searching for safe, impactful experiences for their children. As a National Council, we must be confident in Girl Scouting's value. For our girls, we need to be bold and consider a dues investment that reflects this value.

This action provides the resources to invest in what girls need and what their caregivers want for them. We will do this while recognizing the potential financial effect on girls, volunteers, and families. Our shared commitment is to make financial assistance available for those who need it. Equally important, we will champion the efforts necessary to attract and retain girls and adults to ensure the public understands what Girl Scouting is and how a girl benefits. We will keep our programming easy to access and relevant—today and into the future. The funds generated by a national dues increase will build on our strong history. Together, we look ahead to engaging and serving more girls, their families, and caring volunteers who, together, make the world a better place.