

YOUR GUIDE TO GOING SILVER

Tips for Adult Volunteers



The Girl Scout Silver Award

SILVER AWARD AT A GLANCE

9 STEPS TO SILVER

STEP 1 

Go on a Cadette Journey, including the Journey Take Action project.

STEP 2 

Identify issues that you're passionate about and how they affect your community.

STEP 3 

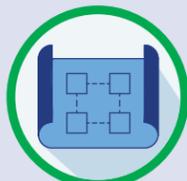
Build your team. Work with a team of up to four girls or on your own. Either way, plan to partner with the community.

STEP 4 

Explore your community to learn more about issues that interest you. This can be your neighborhood, your school, Girl Scouts, your place of worship, or another community of interest.

STEP 5 

Choose a project based on your passions and what you've learned by exploring your community and talking to others.

STEP 6 

Make a plan to carry out your Silver Award Take Action project.

STEP 7 

Put the plan in motion. Spend 50 hours each to earn the award. Your planning time counts too. Use the log in a designated notebook to track your time.

STEP 8 

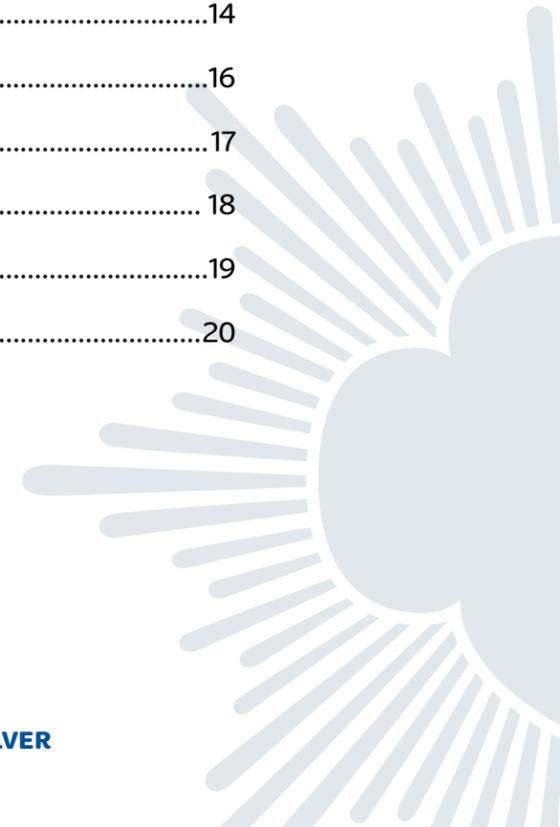
Spread the word about your project when you're done so that you can inspire others! You can give a presentation at your school, to your service unit, or to another Girl Scout troop.

STEP 9 

Submit a final Report before September 30 of your ninth grade year to share your experience with Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan.

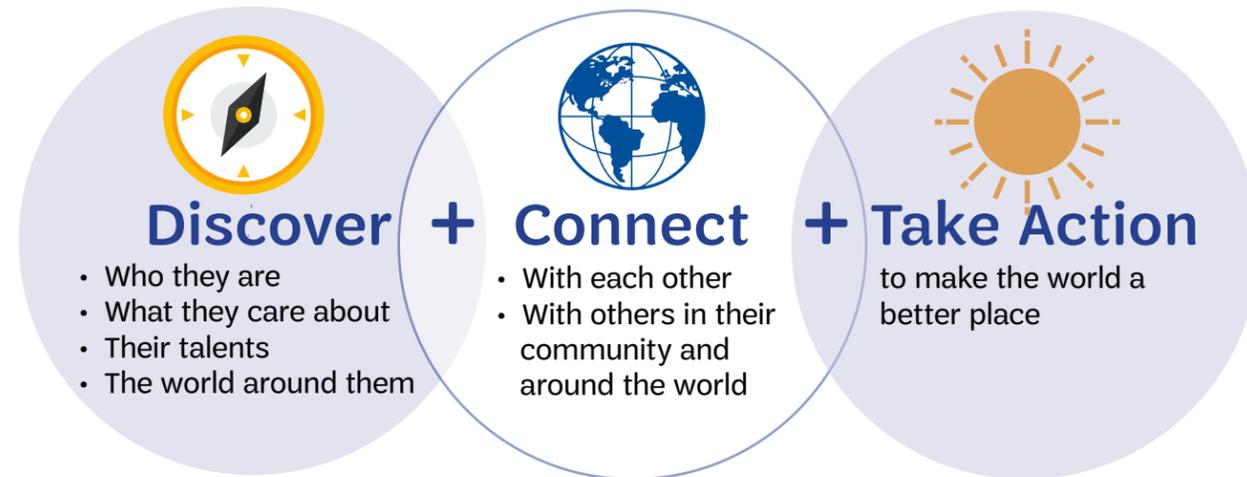
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THANK YOU FOR HELPING GIRLS EARN THEIR SILVER AWARD

The Girl Scout Silver Award is the highest honor a Girl Scout Cadette can earn. With your support, girls:



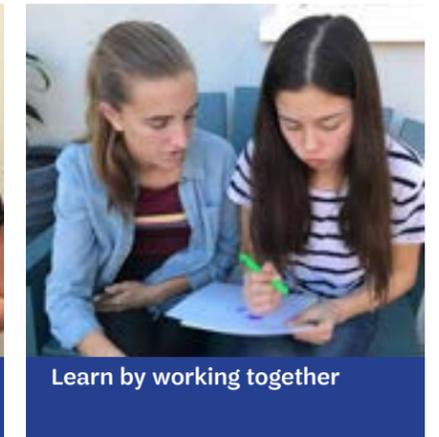
We call this the Girl Scout Leadership experience. It's a special opportunity that gives girls real-world skills that they'll use for a lifetime. Thank you for making the Silver Award experience possible for girls.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide is designed to help you feel comfortable with the Silver Award Take Action project so that you'll know what the project is—and what it isn't. You'll also learn about Silver Award requirements, the nine steps girls take to earn a Silver Award, and tips to help you guide girls each step of the way.

YOUR ROLE IN THE SILVER AWARD PROJECT

Your role in the Silver Award Take Action project is primarily as a guide. This is true whether you are a troop leader, a project volunteer, or a parent. When you think about your role, keep the Girl Scout Leadership Experience in mind. The girls should:



Though you won't be directly participating in the project, you can make suggestions and guide girls to stay on track. You can also help girls find the resources they need, like helping them connect with and visit community experts. You can encourage girls and ensure their safety by following Girl Scout safety guidelines. And, of course, have fun! It's amazing to watch what girls can do. When the girls wrap up, plan to celebrate!

How You Can Help

You know girls are getting the Girl Scout Leadership Experience if you can check these boxes as they work on their Silver Award Take Action project:

- Girl-led**
 - Making decisions
 - Running activities and meetings (as appropriate for their age)
- Learn by doing**
 - Being active
 - Going places
- Cooperative learning**
 - Working with others

ABOUT THE SILVER AWARD PROJECT

The Silver Award Take Action project may be different than other projects you've done with your troop or girl. For example, lots of Girl Scouts do service projects, like collecting coats for the homeless or pet food for a shelter. These projects are great, but they are service projects. The Silver Award is a Take Action project.

Before girls begin, it's helpful for them to understand the difference between a service project and a Take Action project. Girls are often familiar with service projects and might suggest one for their Silver Award. Here's the difference:

COMMUNITY SERVICE VS. TAKE ACTION PROJECT

Community Service Projects	Take Action Projects
Are done for the community	Are done with the community
Solve a problem "right now"—like collecting food for a food bank. The food feeds the hungry "right now," but collecting and donating food doesn't solve or reduce the root cause of why people go hungry.	Look at what causes the issue ("root causes") and work to eliminate or reduce the cause.
Are a "one-time" deal.	Have the potential for making a lasting impact.

Often, a service project idea can be developed into a Take Action project. For example, girls may want to collect items for a crowded pet shelter. That's a service project, of course. But if girls partner with the shelter to understand the root causes of overcrowded shelters and come up with a solution, like workshops to educate others about spaying and neutering, that's a Take Action project.

Know that you can always contact awards@gshom.org to discuss a project idea to ensure that girls are on the right track before they begin.

HIGHEST AWARD TAKE ACTION PROJECT ELEMENTS

Take Action projects have up to five elements. The Girl Scout Gold Award requires all five. The Girl Scout Silver Award requires three. And the Girl Scout Bronze Award requires two. In this way, girls learn something new and have opportunities to be challenged in different ways as they earn the Bronze, Silver, and then Gold Award.

Girl Scout Highest Awards Take Action Project Required Elements

	Leadership	Root Cause	Sustainable	Measurable	Global Link
Bronze Juniors					
Silver Cadettes					
Gold Seniors/Ambassadors					

= required element = introduce concept to girls

To earn a Silver Award, girls need to:



Show leadership. Girls show leadership by either working together as a team (up to four girls max) or by working on their own. Either way, they partner with community members. They also show leadership by taking action to make a positive change in their community.



Research and address a root cause of an issue in their community. Girl Scout Cadettes observe their community for issues that interest them. They research these issues and talk with community members to understand the root causes. Their Silver Award Take Action project addresses one or more root cause. Learn about root causes on p. 7.



Make their project sustainable. A sustainable project makes a lasting impact, even after the girls are done. It's not as hard as it sounds. Learn about sustainability on p. 14.



Understand how to make their project measurable. A measurable project isn't required for the Silver Award, but we recommend introducing the concept to help girls prepare for the Gold Award. Girls make their projects measurable by collecting data that shows the impact of their actions. See p. 15 to learn more.



Understand how to make a global link. A global link isn't required for the Silver Award, but we recommend introducing the concept to help girls prepare for the Gold Award. Girls can create a global link by taking their project outside of their immediate community and inspiring others to take action. See p. 15 to learn more.

Sample

Silver Award Take Action Project Shoe Tying Success

Girls in Girl Scout Troop 5538 were excited to earn their Girl Scout Silver Award. They agreed to be extra observant at school and in their neighborhood to discover potential issues that could be the focus of a Take Action project.

They came together as a team to share ideas, and they chose several ideas to explore. Their leader helped them connect with community members who could help them learn more. One of their observations was that lots of younger kids don't tie their shoes. They researched to find the **root cause**: parents were not spending time teaching kids this skill.

They showed **leadership** by partnering with a preschool. They researched and talked to experts to find a solution. They created a program with a hands-on tool to help kids learn to tie shoes. And they put their program into action at the preschool.

They felt proud when the kids gained the skill and confidence to tie their shoes. And they made their project **sustainable** by having the preschool adopt their program and tools. They made a lasting impact!

Their troop leader explained the concepts of **measurable** and **global link**. They knew these weren't required for the Silver Award. But they decided to keep track of the number of students who learned to tie their shoes, just to practice for the Gold Award. They also discussed how they could make their program available to a preschool in another community to create a global link.



How You Can Help

You can make the prospect of the Silver Award come alive by sharing stories or videos about what other Silver Award teams have done. You can also search “Girl Scout Silver Award video” online. But remember, looking at other projects is just for inspiration. Girls should explore their own interests and their own communities. Taking action in this personal way makes the project meaningful to them.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ROOT CAUSE

The concept of “root cause” may be new to you. The following scenario might help: Imagine that you've agreed to take care of a neighbor's garden while she is on vacation. You drop by after dinner and notice that all the plants are drooping. You quickly grab the hose and water the plants. Whew! You solved the problem.

But the next day, the plants look worse. Why? Well, you assumed that the cause of the wilted plants was lack of water. But, the plants seem to be drooping for another reason. Maybe they have pests. Maybe they've had too much water. Maybe they aren't the kinds of plants that last. As you can see, *it's important to know the real root cause before taking action.*

You find the real root cause by researching and talking to experts in the community. In this case, you could research the type of plant to understand its needs. You could visit a plant nursery and ask an expert.

For the Silver Award project, guide girls to research and connect with community experts to find out what triggers a community issue. Then have girls ask why those triggers happen to find root causes. See pp. 11-13 in this guide to learn more. Girls can make a root cause mapping tool in their designated notebook.

GETTING STARTED

Before you begin, confirm that the girls interested in earning the Silver Award have met these pre-requisites:

- Are in grades 6-8
- Have a current Girl Scout membership.
- Have completed a Girl Scout Cadette Journey (including the Journey Take Action project). If not, don't worry—that's the first step!
- Have a designated notebook for observations, brainstorming ideas, and time log.

STEP 1



Go on a Cadette Journey

All girls must complete a Cadette Journey before they begin. Why do a Journey? Cadette Journeys help girls build skills like how to plan and work with others. And Journeys provide girls with new experiences, like meeting people in their community. Girls need these skills and experiences to succeed on their Silver Award Take Action project. They'll also earn new leadership awards (see the Journey for details).



How You Can Help

Share Cadette Journey options with girls. Classic Cadette Journeys are available in book format at the Girl Scout shop. Digital Cadette Journeys are available in the Volunteer Toolkit.

STEP 2



Identify Issues

In this step, girls spend time thinking about issues that they care about. They also think about how these issues affect their community. This is an important step. Girls who choose a topic that they are passionate about are more interested in making an impact. They see value in what they are learning and doing. As a result, their motivation and engagement is sustained throughout the project. And they reap the benefits of taking action, growing as people and as leaders.



How You Can Help

Encourage each girl to explore, to think about her own experiences and what she could change in her community if she could.

If girls already have a project idea in mind, they may want to reorder the way they work through the Silver Award steps. They must complete the Journey and Take Action project first. Then, they can start with Step 5: Choose a Project followed by steps 2-4 to ensure that their project addresses a real root cause and that they've identified community experts who can help.

STEP 3



Build Your Team

Girl Scout Cadettes can form a team of up to four girls or a girl can work on the Silver Award Take Action project on her own. Either way, girls team up with community members to learn about an issue, discover root causes, make a plan, and take action.

If your troop has more than four girls interested in the Silver Award, it's possible that you'll be guiding more than one team. You may also have a group of girls who want to work together and a girl or two who wants to work on her own. That's OK because it means that girls are branching out in order to take action in a way that's personally meaningful.

If your troop is working on several Silver Award Take Action projects, ask troop parents or other troop volunteers to guide one of the teams or an individual girl. Any volunteer can take training and have access to Silver Award materials. Contact awards@gshom.org with questions.

You can also encourage teams and individual girls to seek out a project advisor. A project advisor is an expert in the issue girls have chosen for their project. Having one isn't required for the Silver Award. But it can be helpful, and it's good practice for the Gold Award.

Girls who have formed a team of two or more should plan a first Silver Award meeting. The focus of the first meeting should be to encourage team bonding—even if the girls have been in a troop together for years.



How You Can Help

Activity 1: Help the girls choose and plan games and activities for this meeting that will help them discover something they didn't know about one another. Pinterest is a great resource for ideas.

Activity 2: Guide girls to create team rules before the first meeting ends. Have them come up with rules that help the team work together. Jump start the list by talking about the values in the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Examples include being on time or listening to each other without interrupting. Post the rules at each team meeting and refer to them as a reminder, if needed.

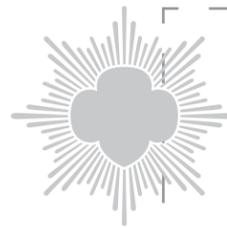
Note: Include all girls in this activity—even girls working on their own. Design this “kick-off” meeting as a celebration where everyone feels good about making the world a better place.

STEP 4



Explore Your Community

When girls explore the community around them, they connect to their community and expand their view. While they may already have a Take Action project idea in mind, actually being out in the community may bring new ideas and information to light. For girls who are unsure, exploring the community can help them discover a focus for their Take Action project. Girls may decide to check out their community on their own with their families or together with their team.



How You Can Help

Plan outings as a group to explore the community.

Stress safety. Follow the supervision and safety guidelines in Volunteer Essentials.

Have girls keep an eye out for things that could be improved or fixed or things that would benefit from their special talents and skills.

Guide girls to map the community they see. It might help girls to know that community can be more than just a physical place on a map. Sure, they can explore their neighborhood. But an athletic team, faith-based group, Girl Scouts, and school are also types of communities. Even a little sister's preschool is a community that they might know something about and want to explore for a project.

Have girls list contact information for any organizations they'd like to explore or that might be able to help.

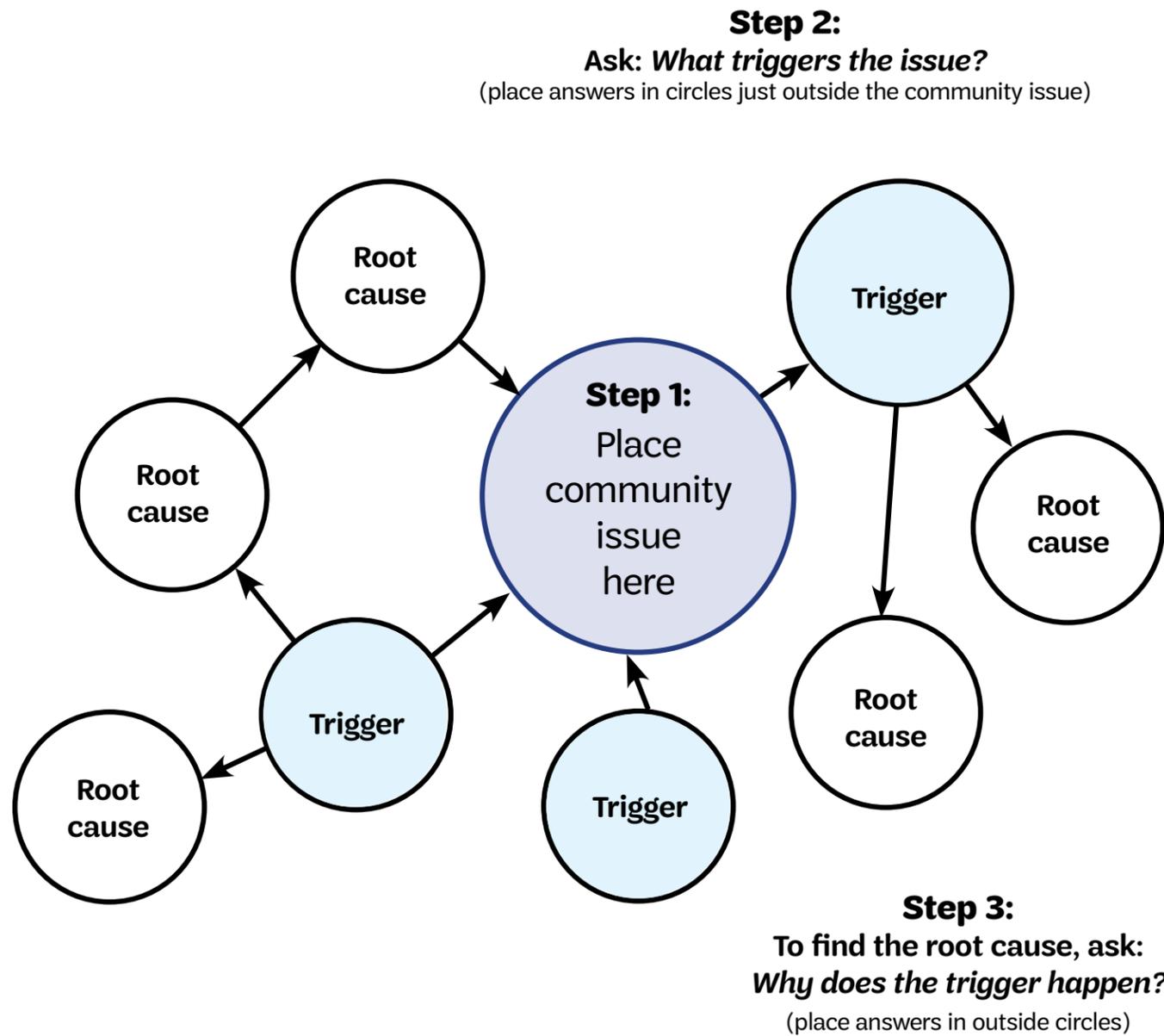
Practice communication skills with girls before they talk to others about community issues. Girls can practice by taking turns explaining the Silver Award Take Action project.

Help girls map out root causes. Once girls have explored their community and identified issues, they'll need to research and talk to experts to understand what causes the issues before choosing a project and taking action.

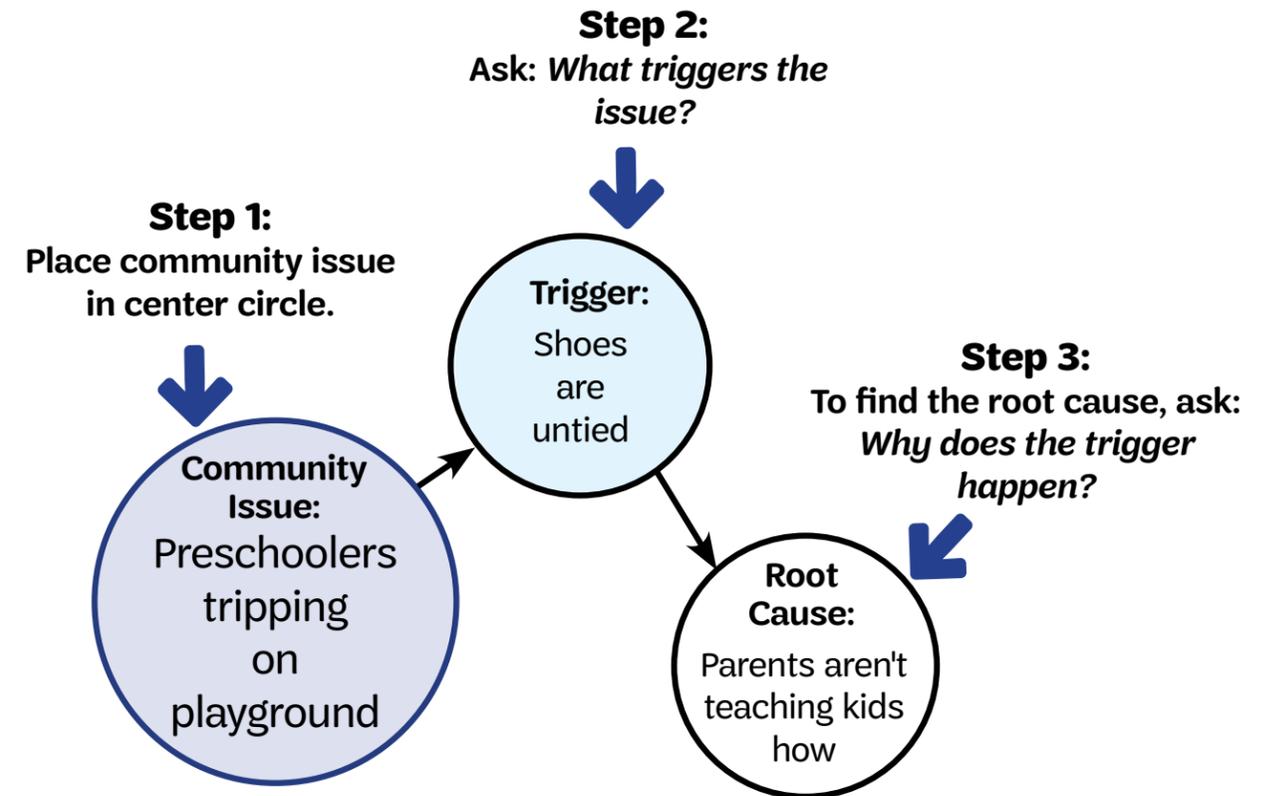
See how observation and research becomes a project that addresses a real root cause:

A Silver Award team noticed that:	They researched and asked "why" to uncover this root cause:	Their project addressed the root cause by:
Preschoolers aren't tying their shoes	Parents aren't teaching this skill.	Creating a program with hands-on tools to help kids practice tying their shoes in preschool.
Kids are afraid and confused when a family member develops Alzheimer's.	Info about Alzheimer's disease written by kids for kids isn't readily available	Creating an Alzheimer's disease brochure for kids and partnering with an Alzheimer's organization for distribution and continued support.
There are fewer ducks at a local park.	Mold growing on bread left out for the ducks has made some ducks sick. Others are unhealthy and overweight from too much bread.	Creating a campaign to educate the public about not feeding bread to ducks and providing samples of appropriate duck food at a special event.

Mapping root causes isn't hard. When girls are ready, they'll use a blank map to map what they've learned about the causes of a community issue. Review the three steps below with girls before they begin.



Example



STEP 5 Choose Your Silver Award Project

In this step, girls will choose their Silver Award Take Action project.

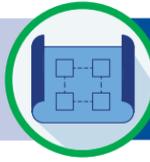


How You Can Help

Have girls write down what they'll do for their project, why their project matters, and who it helps in their designated notebook. Writing down the answer to these questions will help solidify their plans.

Help girls who still aren't sure about their project. They can review the info they've collected. They can create a pros and cons list if they can't decide between two or more project ideas. Or, they can narrow down a project that feels like it's too much. Contact awards@gshom.org if you and girls are feeling stuck.

STEP 6



Make a Plan

By now, girls have chosen a Silver Award Take Action project and are ready to make a plan to get it done.



How You Can Help

Help girls plan by directing them to answer questions. Ask them if their plan is realistic and suggest that they brainstorm new directions, if needed.

Ensure that girls have a plan for making their project sustainable.

A project is sustainable if it lasts, even after the girls are done. Then, ask the girls how they they'll make the project sustainable. Here are some examples:

- Educate other Girl Scouts about the project
- Partner with someone who can continue the work (i.e., a club at school)
- Hold a workshop that teaches others (what others learn makes a lasting impression)
- Post and an educational video or blog

Ask girls what supplies they think they will need. They can list these and make a project budget. When girls are done, have them decide how they'll fund their project. Here are some options:

Use troop funds. Troop funds may be used for Silver Award Take Action projects. Have the troop create and sign a letter agreeing to use the funds in this way. The whole troop must agree, even if only part of the troop is earning the award. Keep the letter with other troop financial records.

Plan a money-earning project to fund the Silver Award Take Action project. Refer to Volunteer Essentials for guidelines and money-earning application information.

Let girls know that they cannot raise funds to give to another organization as part of their Silver Award Take Action project. It's against Girl Scout policy. In any case, donating money to an organization rarely addresses the root cause of an issue—which is a Silver Award requirement. When the money is spent, the root cause often still remains unaddressed.



Silver Award Take Action project requirements are often met using education and advocacy—not by spending large amounts. If the girls have designed a project with a large budget, suggest that they re-evaluate. Ask: Is the project truly a Take Action project?

Girls may be able to get some needed items donated. See **Volunteer Essentials** for donation guidelines.

Introduce the concepts of measurable and global link. The Silver Award Take Action project has three required elements: leadership, root cause, and sustainable. But girls will benefit from knowing about Gold Award elements too. Introduce the concepts of measurable and global link to set them up for future Gold Award success.

How to Explain “Measurable”

Girls can make their projects measurable by collecting data as they take action. Ask them to think about what they can count in the project to show the impact their project has made. Think how much or how many? Examples: Girls can show the number of people the project helped, the number of people who got involved, or a number that shows the change in a community's need. Girls can also make their project measurable by asking those in the community who they've educated or worked with to complete an evaluation. Use the evaluation responses to document impact.

How to Explain “Global Link”

Girls can create a global link by taking their project outside of their immediate community and inspiring others to take action. For example, they can take their project to a local youth group, a community center, or a school district. Girls can also create a global link by investigating how people in other communities or other parts of the world address the issue they're working on. What kinds of programs do they have in place? What can girls learn from these? Can girls incorporate what they've learned into their project?

STEP 7



Put the Plan in Motion

Help girls work together to figure out the steps they can take to accomplish their project. Keep in mind that girls need to spend 50 hours each on the Silver Award Take Action project.



How You Can Help

Guide girls to find experts in the community who can help them understand the root cause of the project issue.

Help girls organize trips in the community that will help them learn or carry out their project.

Remind girls to wear their uniform when meeting with community members or engaging with others during their Silver Award Take Action project.

Encourage girls to record the time they spend on the project in their time log. Let girls know that time spent researching, planning, and taking action can be included.

Encourage girls to take photos or shoot video of their project along the way. They'll use these items to tell their Silver Award story in Step 7: Spread the Word. They may also submit these with their final report.

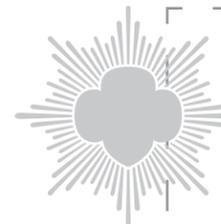
Important: When the Silver Award project winds down, the outcome may not be exactly as girls planned. That's OK! Girls earn the Silver Award as long as award requirements have been met. What girls learn in the process about themselves and the world around them is what's most valuable. Look at any unexpected twist as a learning opportunity. Ask girls to reflect. What would they have done differently? What did they learn along the way? What surprised them? Keep the focus on the girls and how they've benefited from their Silver Award experience.

STEP 8



Spread the Word

Each Silver Award project is a story of inspiration, teamwork, and change for the better. When the girls share it, encourage them to be creative and have fun. Telling their story is one of the best ways to celebrate all that they have accomplished!



How You Can Help

Have girls reflect on their Silver Award Take Action project experience by discussing and answering questions. This activity helps girls learn by reflecting on the experience in new ways. Encourage them to use what they learn to tell their Silver Award story. Ensure that each girl has a chance to talk about her answers.

Ask girls how they'd like to share their story. There are lots of possibilities! They can give a presentation to another Girl Scout troop, their service unit, or students at their school. They can even create a display for a local library or community center. Suggest the following sites if girls are interested in sharing online:

- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
- TakingITGlobal
- Global Youth Service Day

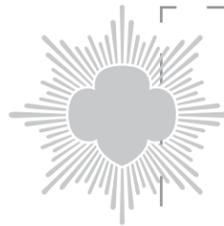
Remember to review the online Internet Safety Pledge with girls and have them sign it.

STEP 9



Turn in Your Final Report

Each girl submits a final report about her Silver Award Take Action project to Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan. Because the award experience is different for each girl, guide girls to answer the questions on their own—a shared “cut and paste” won’t do! Visit <https://www.gshom.org/en/about-girl-scouts/our-program/highest-awards/silver-award.html> to find the Silver Award Completion Summary.



How You Can Help

Encourage girls to make and keep a copy of their final reports.

Note: Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan does not approve Silver Award final reports. However, we do review them to learn about all the great work girls are doing in their community and to share their projects in order to inspire others!

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Suggest giving thanks. Encourage girls to thank everyone who has helped along the way. A hand-written note or an email with a project photo means a lot.

Encourage girls to set their sights on the Gold Awards! Ask them to imagine all they can do by continuing to make positive, sustainable changes in their community and the world.



Girl Scouts Gold Award:

- Earned by Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors (grades 9-12)
- Girls complete two Senior or Ambassador Journeys (or just one Journey if they’ve earned the Girl Scout Silver Award) before they begin.

Learn more at <https://www.gshom.org/en/about-girl-scouts/our-program/highest-awards/gold-award.html>.

Did You Know?

Gold Award Girl Scouts are widely recognized as leaders who make the world a better place! Let girls know that the Gold Award is the highest achievement for Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors. This top-tier credential enables girls to distinguish themselves in the college admissions process, earn college scholarships, and be eligible for a higher pay grade when enlisting in the military.



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