

## Troop/Group Financials- Quick Reference

*This document is intended to be a quick reference of financial policies and guidelines for troops and groups at GSGLA, it is not all inclusive. Please refer to Volunteer Essentials for more details and additional protocols. Please reach out to your assigned Membership Specialist if you have questions or need clarification.*

**Troop/Group funds:** Girl Scout troops should be financially self-sustaining through the participation in Girl Scout product programs, GSGLA approved group money earning activities, and any troop dues the troop may charge. Troop funds belong to the group/troop (not any one individual) and girls (as a whole) should be part of the decision-making process as it relates troop finances and activities. See [Volunteer Essentials: Troop Finances](#) for guidance by program age level.

**Responsibilities of volunteers:** Bank account signers and ultimately the troop leaders are responsible for troop/group funds. Volunteers responsible for troop finances should ensure that troop funds are spent in the interest of the troop, in pursuant of goals/priorities set by the troop, and are compliant with GSGLA policies, procedures, and guidelines.

- **Bank account signers:** Troop/group bank accounts must have three GSGLA approved volunteer signers. While accounts can be opened with two signers, the third signer must be added within 120 days of the troop/group account opening. All checks issued from the troop account must have the protection of two signers on each check.
- **Regular review of troop/group finances:** All signers should review bank statements regularly, ensure receipt/record retention, and alert GSGLA council staff if believed that funds are not being used in alignment with GSGLA policies and guidelines.
- **Use of debit cards:** Volunteers that have debit cards issued in their name for any troop/group account are responsible for all purchases/charges made in use of the card (in addition to service fees related to usage)
  - All purchases must be within the troop/group budget and documented with receipts.
  - Use of the debit card for any type of expense other than Girl Scout business is considered a misuse of Girl Scout funds and may violate California law.
- **Use of cash and reimbursements:** Cash withdrawals should be done on a limited basis. Cash withdrawals by check **require two authorized signers** and a detailed accounting of both check and ATM withdrawals of how cash was used **must** be reported on the troop's [Debit and Cash Receipt Form](#).
  - Any withdrawal of cash by check or debit card requires receipts for the amount spent and must be made available upon request.
  - Do not reimburse for expenses using cash; reimburse someone who used their own funds to purchase troop items using a check.
  - A person should never sign a check for their own reimbursement. The other two signers on the troop account may issue a check and validate the reimbursement.
- **Record keeping:** Because money is held for the troop/group in trust, accurate records must be maintained.
  - Do not mingle personal expenditures with troop/group expenditures on the same receipt.
  - Receipts and documentation must be retained for a minimum of three years, however it is recommended and advised to retain all troop financial documentation for the life of the troop.
  - GSGLA staff, girls, and parents have a right to view troop/group financials at any time.
  - GSGLA staff may request a financial report or audit of the troop/group finances at any time as deemed necessary. *GSGLA does conduct random troop/group audits throughout the year.*
- **Proper usage of funds:**
  - **Troop/group activity cannot financially benefit an individual:** To ensure council compliance with IRS regulations and to protect GSGLA's 501(c)3 tax exempt status with the IRS, GSGLA does not allow troops to create reserve funds or earmark funds or financial disbursement for individual girls. This includes issuing gift cards or other equivalents.
  - **Troop funds cannot result in financial gain for a member or his/her family, this is a conflict of interest.** In conducting the affairs of GSGLA, a conflict of interest shall be defined as a volunteer, or a member of his/her family who could expect financial gain of \$150.00 or greater from a particular troop, service unit, or GSGLA decision or transaction.

- **Funds must be used to support the Girl Scout program experience for the troop.**
  - **Expenditures should be reasonable.** Volunteers managing troop finances must make responsible choices as a good steward of troop funds. For substantial purchases (purchases over \$250), the troop should research options and communicate with members about decisions made.
- **Annual Year End Report:** The troop/group leader is responsible, in partnership with the troop/group treasurer and girls in the group (Juniors and older), to prepare a finance report and distribute it to each family in the troop/group a minimum of one time per year due by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.
  - [The troop year-end report](#) is due to GSGLA on June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. It has three sections, the third being troop finances, this documentation is sufficient to share with troop families.
- **Adding or changing signers on a troop/group bank account**, when a signer needs to be changed on a troop/group account, troop leadership **must** complete a Bank Letter Request/Change [eForm](#) within 21 days of any leadership change or change in signers.

#### **Collecting funds using third party platforms.**

- Girl Scout troops may use Cheddar Up, PayPal, and Venmo/Zelle to collect fees **from members/guardians** to the troop/group.
- Accounts must be linked to the troop/group account
- Troops/groups **may not send or make payments** through these third-party platforms.
- **Card Readers:** Troops may use credit card readers to process payments for accepting funds, however, per banking policies with Visa/MasterCard/Amex, the troop/group cannot pass any processing fees to the purchaser. The troop/group will need to absorb fees associated with processing payments.

**Special Event and Money Earning (SEME):** If a troop/group requires additional funds beyond the GSGLA product programs, for a specific purpose, these additional money earning activities **must be approved** by GSGLA.

- Additional money earning activities cannot take place at the same time as a GSGLA product program.
- Daisy troops cannot participate in additional money earning activities.
- Troops must meet the annual GSGLA sponsored product participation requirements to be considered for approval
- More details can be found in [Volunteer Essentials: Troop Finances](#)
- [Special Event and Money Earning Application](#)

**Donations:** If you plan to ask for a donation, grant opportunity or sponsorship, written approval must be obtained from GSGLA's Fund Development department. Please fill out the [Donation to Troop/ Group/ SU eForm](#)

- A troop, group, or service unit may ask for a donation if:
  - the donation is intended for the benefit of the entire troop, group, or service unit and not an individual member
  - the gift is intended for the completion of a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award project
- A **donation pass thru** is when a gift is received and processed by GSGLA headquarters and then distributed to a specific troop, group, Juliette, or service unit. A donation pass through is required when a donor is making a contribution of \$250 or more, or a donor is making a contribution of less than \$250 and would like an official tax acknowledgement letter.
  - If you plan to receive a donation at GSGLA HQ, ensure the donor indicates that the gift is intended for your troop or service unit, then fill out the [Donation Pass Through form](#). Please allow 4-6 weeks for gift processing and distribution.
- **Gift amount limits:**
  - All Troops/Groups (Daisy, Brownie, Junior, Cadette, Senior, Ambassador), Rainbow Troops, and Service Units may receive a gift from any one source during one Girl Scout year of up to \$1,000. For gifts in excess of \$1,000, the balance remains with GSGLA.
  - Gold Award Girls working towards their Gold Award may individually receive a maximum of \$1,000 from any one source.
- **Matching gifts** Company-issued matching gift checks, regardless of amount, must be payable to GSGLA and mailed to: Fund Development 1150 S Olive Street Suite 600 Los Angeles, CA 90015
  - If you are expecting matching gift funds for your troop, please alert [giving@girlscoutsla.org](mailto:giving@girlscoutsla.org)

## Usage of Troop/Group funds

This list is not all inclusive of permitted and prohibited activities with troop/group funds. If you have questions about items not outlined here, reach out to you Service Unit Manager or GSGLA staff Membership Specialist.

Permitted	Prohibited
<p><b>Donation to a cause or non-profit organization</b> that the troop deems important, e.g., as a charitable donation to a retirement home, as a thank you for use of facility, etc. However, girls may not donate money to the organizations they work with to complete higher awards.</p>	<p><b>Monetary donations to an organization as part of earning a of higher award:</b> Girls/Troops cannot donate money to an organization they work with to complete their gold, silver, or bronze award(s), as all monies collected to support the project must be spent on goods/services to benefit the project.</p>
<p><b>Membership Dues:</b> Not only is it permitted, but it is highly recommended that troops use group funds to pay the membership dues of troop members (girls and troop volunteers). Troops should use funds to ensure that troop is financially sustainable. If a troop has funds and chooses to not purchase membership dues for the troop, and a girl or family cannot afford GSUSA membership dues, the troop is expected to purchase the membership for the girl. No girl should be denied because of her family's ability to pay. <b>For graduating Girl Scouts</b>, troops may purchase Lifetime Membership(s) (LTM) for girls interested in LTM.</p>	<p><b>Purchases that are to the benefit of volunteer leadership and that have no explicit benefit to the troop.</b> Examples: Hotel rooms or trip expenses not associated with a troop/group approved experience, personal/household expenses, home improvements, care repair, personal business expenses, personal loans, gambling, etc.</p>
<p><b>Program/event fees:</b> Troops may use group funds to pay for troop, Service unit, GSGLA, and GSUSA events. All girls should be invited to participate in activities that the troop is funding.</p>	<p><b>Gift cards for troop members,</b> Gift cards cannot be used to benefit an individual girl in the troop (as with cash).</p>
<p><b>Training opportunities for troop leadership/volunteers:</b> Troop leaders and approved GSGLA volunteers can use troop funds to pay for training and skill development opportunities with troop funds.</p>	<p><b>Money or gifts given to benefit an individual girl or family:</b> Troop/group funds belong to the troop and cannot be given or used by an individual girl. Examples: Girls cannot be given troop funds or gift cards for college or for decorating her new dorm room, girls also cannot receive money, equipment, or gift cards used for a youth sport (not used as part of the troop/group program).</p>
<p><b>Fees associated with delivering program</b> (facility use fees, program supplies, curriculum, troop equipment). Troops should spend troop funds on any costs associated with facilitating the Girl Scout program.</p>	<p>Using troop funds to purchase <b>alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, marijuana, or illegal drugs.</b></p>
<p><b>Costs associated with troop/group trips:</b> Troops may budget and spend money associated with troop/group trips that the girls have planned/agreed to (including costs associated with travel, food, incidentals, and sleeping arrangements for both girls and GSGLA approved volunteers and chaperones).</p>	<p><b>Allocating money or earmarking troop/group funds:</b> Troop/group funds belong to the troop, per IRS guidelines troop/group funds cannot be earmarked. <b>Example:</b> When planning a troop trip/outing, a girl cannot be credited dollar amounts towards the trip based on the number of cookie boxes sold during the cookie program. However, each girl can/should work towards a product sales goal, which will help the troop achieve their overall goal. While all families should be encouraged to participate in Product Programs (to benefit from the financial literacy program), families are not required to participate. If a girl does not participate, she cannot be penalized, she is part of the troop and funds benefit her equally. <i>There are few exceptions to allocating funds: Raising funds for a Destinations opportunity and raising funds for a Gold Award project.</i></p>

Permitted	Prohibited
<p><b>Receiving payments from members/families into the troop account from third party platforms (Cheddar Up, Venmo/Zelle, PayPal)</b> Girl Scout troops may utilize a third-party platform to collect dues or activity fees (parent to troop <u>only</u>). Troops may collect product payments from parents via Venmo/Zelle. The Venmo/Zelle account must be linked to the troop checking account. Troops are not allowed to have outgoing expenses from this account.</p>	<p><b>Reimbursing members or making payments through a third-party platform (Cheddar Up, Venmo/Zelle, PayPal).</b> While Girl Scout troops may utilize a third-party platform to collect dues or activity fees (parent to troop <u>only</u>), troops <b>are not allowed</b> to have outgoing expenses from this account.</p>
<p><b>Allocating troop money event funds for Destinations (a GSUSA travel opportunity):</b> An individual girl wanting to raise money for Destinations (a GSUSA travel opportunity) travel may conduct individual money earning activities to help subsidize the cost of the trip. Money earning opportunities like selling a handmade item or product throughout the year must go through the SEME approval process and be conducted during the designated period as stated on the <a href="#">SEME eForm application</a></p>	<p><b>Raising additional funds for the group without GSGLA approval.</b> All money earning efforts, beyond the Fall Product and Cookie Program, must be approved by the Special Events and Money Earning team using the <a href="#">SEME eForm application</a>.</p>
<p><b>Opening additional accounts for higher awards, Destinations, and for extended travel plans.</b> Troops that are Cadette grade level or higher may elect to open a separate checking account to manage Silver and Gold Award project money earning, individual girl money earning efforts to be applied to Destinations, and for extended travel plans.</p>	<p><b>Making a troop purchase that will benefit a member or family member by more than \$150.</b> In conducting the affairs of GSGLA, a conflict of interest shall be defined as a volunteer, or a member of his/her family who could expect financial gain of \$150.00 or greater from a particular troop, service unit, or GSGLA decision or transaction.</p>
<p><b>Troop uniform and uniform pieces:</b> Troops can use funds to purchase uniform components, including patches and badges.</p>	