

Event Planning Guide

Event Planning Timeline & Checklist



Four-Six Months or More Before Event

Planning

Deciding on the purpose and goal(s) of your event is essential if you are to be successful. If you are unclear about your event, the flyers and information you send out about the event will also be unclear; this can cause confusion on the part of your volunteers and participants. Here are some questions to consider when determining the purpose and goals.

What type of event is this?

- ☐ Is the event for youth or adults? Or both?
- ☐ If it is for youth, how will youth participation and responsibility be incorporated in the planning and execution of the event?
- ☐ What age group are you targeting?
- ☐ Is the program suitable to the age group and experience?
- ☐ Is the event to serve current membership, recruit new members, or both?
- ☐ How many participants (youth and adults) can you accommodate? How many are you expecting?
- ☐ How will this event meet the needs of the participants and the community?
- ☐ Will the event provide opportunities for youth input and give them a chance to plan and/or lead activities?
- ☐ What kinds of opportunities for personal growth will there be for youth and adults?

Be Inclusive

Not all Girl Scout youth live with their biological parent(s). Be sure to name your event in a way that participants will feel welcome to bring another caring adult:

Examples: VIP and Me; Me and My Grown-Up

Also, be sure to consider how specific religious observances, foods, or activities might exclude some girls. Choose a theme that can offer variety and options

Will the event be inclusive of all members?

- ☐ Is it scheduled on a religious or cultural holiday?
- ☐ Is it inexpensive enough to be affordable?
- ☐ Are the activities adaptable for those with special needs?
- ☐ Are the activities/food choices culturally sensitive?
- ☐ Will your event support the Girl Scout Leadership Experience?
- ☐ Will the event be fun?
- ☐ Which values in the Girl Scout Promise and Law will participants learn more about?
- ☐ How will one or more of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience processes be integrated?
 - **Girl Scout Led:** Participants learn how to be leaders by leading themselves in age appropriate ways.
 - **Learning By Doing:** Participants learn new things through hands-on activities.
 - **Cooperative Learning:** Participants work together toward a common goal.
- ☐ Will participants **discover?** (values, skills and confidence to do what's right)
- ☐ Will participants **connect?** (with the community as they learn how to work with people)
- ☐ Will participants **take action?** (to change the world for the better)
- ☐ Which of the five Girl Scout outcomes will participants gain from this event?
 - **Strong Sense of Self:** confidence in themselves and their abilities
 - **Positive Values:** act ethically, honestly, responsible, and show concern for others
 - **Challenge Seeking:** take appropriate risks, try things even if they might fail and learn from mistakes
 - **Healthy Relationships:** develop and maintain a healthy relationship by communicating their feelings and resolving conflicts constructively
 - **Community Problem Solving:** learn how to identify problems and create action plans to solve them
- ☐ Are there specific awards, badges, or other program resources related to the event? If so, what programs do you want to emphasize? Is your program already emphasizing these connections?

Initial Planning

- ☐ Gather service unit input to develop concept for event.
- ☐ Gather participant input to develop theme, title, and activities.
- ☐ Determine which members you need for your committee.
- ☐ Enlist youth and adult volunteers for event committee and hold meeting.
- ☐ Select a date. Consider service unit, council, and school calendars.
- ☐ Be inclusive! Consider religious holidays (be careful—observances for some holidays begin the evening before).
- ☐ Include the event on the service unit calendar.

Event Financial Planning & Budgeting

- ☐ Use budget worksheets to start the budgeting process.
 - ☐ Determine estimated total event cost.
 - ☐ Determine fee per person (develop payment schedule, if necessary).
 - ☐ Submit the event proposal to service unit treasurer for feedback and approval before any money is collected or spent and before event is publicized in any way.
 - ☐ Determine necessary forms:
 - SU Event Planning Worksheet and Budget
 - [Application for SU Money-Earning Project](#)
 - [Girl Health/Permission Form](#)
 - [Adult Health Form](#)
 - ☐ If this is a money-earning event: submit required paperwork to the service unit volunteer support manager.
 - ☐ Determine who will be the event treasurer.
 - ☐ Work with service unit to determine how, when, and by whom expenses and deposits will be paid.
 - ☐ Review guidelines in [Volunteer Essentials](#) concerning money-earning.
- Consider affordability of event for the participants in the area being served.
- ☐ Determine amount to be set aside for financial assistance for participants who may not be able to afford the event.

Event Notification & Approval Form

- ☐ Obtain approval (if money-earning) for event as soon as possible and before sending out any publicity flyers for the event.

Select a Site

Review the council website for [council properties](#) that are available.

- ☐ Use the following criteria to identify an appropriate site:
 - ☐ The area is large enough, suitable, and safe for planned activities. Adequate outdoor and indoor space. Maximum occupancy established by fire department or owner are carried through.
 - ☐ The facility has adequate insurance.
 - ☐ The site is accessible to individuals with disabilities.
 - ☐ Adequate parking. Safe place for drop off/pick up.
 - ☐ If indoors, exits are accessible and well-marked. If multiple story building, there are at least two exits separate from each other. Exits are by stairs, not ladders, with well-secured handrails.
 - ☐ Sanitary toilets and handwashing facilities are available and sufficient for the maximum amount of participants.
 - ☐ If beds are provided, bunks are no more than two high.
 - ☐ Safe water supply (or bring in adequate water).
 - ☐ Electricity needs are met.
 - ☐ Equipment at the facility is up-to-date and in good working order.
 - ☐ Efficient garbage disposal, sewage, wastewater systems.
 - ☐ Telephone available for your use (cell service is not always reliable/available).
 - ☐ Fire extinguishers are located throughout facilities.
 - ☐ Emergency evacuation plans are posted.
 - ☐ Adequate smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and sprinklers are in place according to local fire codes.
 - ☐ Local law enforcement and fire protection agencies are known and notified for remote areas.
 - ☐ Areas for campfires are well cleared and have fire safety equipment nearby (a permit may be required—check with park ranger).
 - ☐ Kitchens, dining facilities, and food service areas comply with all applicable building and health codes. Site can provide for proper storage and preparations of food to prevent illness. If using a commercial kitchen, it is required that at least one adult have a current Food Safety Manager certification.
 - ☐ Site provides adequate protection from weather.
 - ☐ Site allows for adequate security precautions.
 - ☐ Send deposit for site and obtain usage permit or contract.
 - ☐ Obtain required council staff signatures on any contracts.
 - ☐ Determine whether the site or any vendors will require a [Certificate of Insurance](#).

Permission & Health History Forms

Event leaders must collect a signed [Girl Scout Permissions & Health History](#) form from *every* participant in *any* event.

- ☐ If the activity will include one or more nights, the group should also complete the [Overnight Trip Application](#).
- ☐ If your activity or event is overnight, [Adult Health History](#) forms are required
- ☐ Determine whether troop/group leaders will collect and bring [Girl Scout Permissions & Health History](#) forms or whether you will collect them from individual Girl Scouts. Keep these forms with the event first aider.

Contracts

- ☐ All contracts, agreements, memorandums of understanding, and facility use permits must be approved and signed by an authorized council staff member.

Contracts may take 5-8 business days to review and sign, so please submit all paperwork early. Contact our [customer care](#) team to begin.

Insurance

- ☐ Additional insurance must be obtained if unregistered people (adults or children) will be present at your event. This insurance is inexpensive and easy to obtain. For more information, consult [Volunteer Essentials](#). All requests must be received four to six weeks prior to the first day of your event.
- ☐ Vendors and facilities should have a Certificate of Insurance that shows required minimum liability insurance and lists Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama as an additional insured.
- ☐ Contact customer care@girlscoutssa.org with questions.

Transportation & Other Concerns

- ☐ When renting or chartering a bus is necessary, permission must be obtained from the council Risk Management Department at least four weeks before the event.
- ☐ Certain insurance minimums must be met and contracts signed by council staff. Please refer to [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and email contracts to customercare@girlscoutssa.org.
- ☐ Vans carrying up to 10 people are permissible. Vans carrying up to 12 people may be used with special approvals (if drivers have Class B licenses). 15 passenger vans are not approved to transport Girl Scouts in our council.
- ☐ Current laws regarding car safety seats for children must be followed.
- ☐ Any driver must be an approved adult volunteer, at least 21 years of age, have a good driving record, and have a valid driver's license.



Two-Four Months or More Before Event

Begin Establishing the Event Schedule

- ☐ Determine who will arrive before the participants to set-up, communicate with site liaison and fire/police, post signs, set-up registration table, escort event staff to their positions, and resolve last-minute situations.
- ☐ Determine when registration/check-in should begin.
- ☐ Include a time for brief announcements (location of first aider, lost & found, emergency procedures).
- ☐ Determine who is responsible to assist with certain duties, such as clean up during and after event.
- ☐ Schedule time for snacks/meals, as appropriate.
- ☐ For longer events, schedule breaks for adult volunteers.
- ☐ Consider establishing kapers for participants to help with certain duties.
- ☐ Develop inclement weather plans.

Publicity

- ☐ Design publicity plans.
- ☐ Establish registration procedures and a cancellation policy.
- ☐ Create promotion, registration, and confirmation materials.
- ☐ Obtain approval from service unit before distribution.
- ☐ Distribute promotional material.
- ☐ Begin accepting registrations and sending confirmations.

Safety Planning

- ☐ Event manager must consult [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Volunteer Policies](#).
- ☐ Determine adult/youth ratio for the event (See chart below)
- ☐ Recruit a Girl Scout first aider
- ☐ Complete an [Emergency Action Plan](#) for the event.

Volunteer-to-Girl Ratio Chart	Group Meetings		Events, Travel, Camping	
	2 unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this # of girls:	Plus 1 additional volunteer for each additional # of this many girls:	2 unrelated volunteers (at least one of whom is female) for this # of girls:	Plus 1 additional volunteer for each additional # of this many girls:
Daisies (Grades K-1)	12	1-6	6	1-4
Brownies (Grades 2-3)	20	1-8	12	1-6
Juniors (Grades 4-5)	25	1-10	16	1-8
Cadettes (Grades 6-8)	25	1-12	20	1-10
Seniors (Grades 9-10)	30	1-15	24	1-12
Ambassadors (Grades 11-12)	30	1-15	24	1-12

Emergency Action Plan

- ☐ Design a plan for managing emergency situations.
 - ✓ Natural hazards (lake, cliffs, etc.)
 - ✓ Natural disasters (storms, floods, fire, etc.)
 - ✓ Injuries or medical emergencies
 - ✓ Lost children
 - ✓ Intruders (establish procedures for asking non-participants to leave the area).
- ☐ Prior to the event, communicate with event staff and other adults on how to respond in an emergency.
- ☐ Establish an on-site emergency communication system.
- ☐ Establish an emergency evacuation plan and communicate it to all participants prior to the event.
 - Where should participants go in case of an emergency?
 - Who will be in charge in an emergency situation?
 - Should cars back in to parking spots?
- ☐ Establish a security plan and adult supervision placements.
- ☐ Review your Service Unit Emergency Plan, if there is one.
- ☐ How will caretakers or emergency contacts be communicated in the event of an emergency?



Communicate your emergency plans with all participants—plans do no good if nobody knows them!

Site Security

- ☐ Consult Girl Scout Safety Guidelines in [Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), [Volunteer Essentials](#), and [Volunteer Policies](#).
- ☐ Tour entire site and note hazards including traffic, accessible cleaning supplies or other chemicals, areas accessible by the public, exposed tree roots, marshy areas, cliffs, areas where participants would be out of sight, etc.
- ☐ Establish boundaries and off-limits areas for participants.
- ☐ Establish procedures for youth supervision.
- ☐ Establish the buddy system for youth participants (and adults, if necessary).
- ☐ Establish rules for youth participants to notify adults when they will use the bathroom or go into a different area.
- ☐ Establish safe areas to store valuables.
- ☐ Establish an evacuation plan.
- ☐ Designate a safety and security procedures meeting for troop/group leaders at the beginning of the event.
- ☐ Establish clear procedures for participants to check in and out of the event, for participants who leave early, etc. No youth participant should leave early without written permission from their guardian. Such requests must be submitted prior to arrival.

Certifications & Local Ordinances

- ☐ Determine the level of first aid required (first aid or wilderness first aid).
- ☐ Determine if any other adults with special certifications or trainings are required for the event. Require written evidence of competence or documented training and experience. For example:
 - Food Safety Manager
 - Small craft safety certification
 - Archery certification

Communication

- ☐ Determine location of the telephone.
- ☐ Know location and transportation route to nearest hospital.
- ☐ Compile a list of local emergency telephone numbers: ambulance, hospital, poison control center, police, fire, building maintenance, etc. Distribute and post information—especially near telephones.
- ☐ Establish an emergency contact person that is not at the event. List this person's contact information on the registration form. The person should have a list of all participants and their emergency contacts.
- ☐ If your site is large, how will event staff communicate with each other? Cell phones? Walkie-talkies?
- ☐ Contact fire and police prior to event if it will be in a remote area or there are special parking, traffic, or safety concerns.

Emergency Records

- ☐ A roster of all participants in attendance should be maintained. Troops/groups may turn in a roster of participating individuals prior to the event or at check-in.
- ☐ Troop/group leaders are generally responsible for [Girl Scout Permissions and Health History](#) and [Adult Health History](#) forms for all attendees within their troop/group. Depending on the site layout or types of activities planned, the registrar should collect these documents (first aider should hold health forms).
- ☐ Adult Health History forms for adults are required for overnight events or when they will participate in physically demanding activities.
- ☐ Keep site and vendor Certificate of Insurance on file.
- ☐ Site rental contract or permit (don't forget to arrange for a council staff member to sign all contracts and permits).
- ☐ [Mutual of Omaha Insurance Claim Form](#)—completed and turned in with the [Accident/Sickness Report](#).
- ☐ [Accident/Sickness Report](#) for any accident or illness that requires or potentially may require medical attention). Must be submitted within one business day to customercare@girlscoutssa.org



Four-Six Weeks Before the Event

Finalize Registration Procedures

- ☐ Create spreadsheet (electronic is ideal) to track registration, including names, pertinent demographic information (such as grade level of participants), and other useful information (how much money has been collected, t-shirt or patch orders and sizes, etc.).
- ☐ Collect registration payments for activity/admission fees.
- ☐ Periodically share the spreadsheet with committee members to allow them to plan and promote event.
- ☐ If the event fills, create a waiting list to fill spaces created by cancellations.
- ☐ Deposit money collected into the service unit checking account on a regular basis.
- ☐ Periodically reconcile amount deposited with registration records.
- ☐ Send information packets to event staff, consultants, and/or vendors with event schedule, directions, map, and emergency plans for the event. Confirm in writing what to expect at the event.
- ☐ Distribute confirmation packets to participants with schedule, directions, what to bring, and safety considerations.
- ☐ Remind troop/group leaders of their responsibility to bring forms, distribute emergency cards to all adults, etc.
- ☐ Finalize event schedule.
- ☐ Borrow or purchase needed equipment, supplies.
- ☐ Verify equipment/set-up needed and site rules with site liaison.
- ☐ File needed forms and/or applications.



On-site contact information for all event staff should be available (e.g. cell phone numbers).

Prepare Event Evaluation Form

- ☐ What was the goal of the event? What knowledge, skills and abilities will the participants have when they leave?
- ☐ Which of the five Girl Scout Leadership Experience outcomes will the event focus on?
- ☐ Which Girl Scout Processes will the event focus on—Girl Scout Led, Cooperative Learning, Learning by Doing?
- ☐ Participants should complete the evaluation. It is also helpful to have event staff and the event manager complete evaluations.
- ☐ There are many types of evaluations that you can do. The following are just some ideas to get you started:
 - Verbal
 - Written, including rating scales, happy faces, free response questions
 - Pictures/drawings
 - Journal writing
 - Observations (as girls are building fires, observe their skills)
 - Evaluation games (go to this side of the room if you liked it, go here if you didn't)



Two Weeks Before the Event

- ☐ Finalize emergency phone tree and provide to at home event emergency contact person.
- ☐ Follow up on the status of any special insurance.
- ☐ Follow up with event staff, consultants, and vendors.
- ☐ Prepare rosters/sign in sheets for all participants.
- ☐ Visit site to verify set-up and equipment operation.
- ☐ Finalize list of items to bring to event, begin packing them.
- ☐ Purchase remaining needed items.
- ☐ Determine and prepare necessary signage.
- ☐ Enlist volunteers for clean up and additional help.
- ☐ Check weather forecasts and take precautions accordingly, such as supplying adequate drinking water for hot days.
- ☐ Establish lost and found procedures.



Day Of Event

- ☐ Arrive on site early.
- ☐ Circulate among event staff, communicate, and inspire—be enthusiastic.
- ☐ Troubleshoot problems as they arise; expect the unexpected.
- ☐ Set up equipment and post signs at least one hour before start time.
- ☐ Event manager should be free of tasks that prevent giving direction; delegate tasks that suddenly occur.
- ☐ Welcome and direct the event staff and vendors.
- ☐ Set up activity stations at least one hour before start time.
- ☐ Treasurer brings checkbook to pay any bills.
- ☐ Acknowledge committee members, event staff, consultants, etc.
- ☐ Ensure that site is left clean.

Check In Pre-Registered Participants

- ☐ Have plenty of people processing check-in so the line moves quickly.
- ☐ Allow time for check-in before event starts.
- ☐ Create a check-off list of participants who have pre-registered. Have numerous copies available.
- ☐ Consider having stations that break up participants by alphabet or troop number to keep lines moving (e.g. A-F, G-M, etc. or Troop #1-296)
- ☐ If participants register as individuals, collect forms as appropriate.
- ☐ If participants check in with troop/group, collect individual participant roster for group.
- ☐ Provide participants or group leaders with needed items such as schedules, maps, “passports,” wrist bands, patches, evaluations, etc.
- ☐ If selling items such as patches or t-shirts, keep a secure cash box. At the end of the event, the cash should be counted by two people together and turned over to treasurer or event manager with the total count in writing signed by both individuals.
- ☐ Communicate procedures for check out, participants who leave early, etc. Ensure that youth are only released to approved individuals.
- ☐ Give instructions about where to go next, what to do next.
- ☐ Make sure there is adequate space in a safe area for participants to wait before the event begins. Consider having song leading or other activities to keep participants from becoming too restless.



After the Event

Event Binder or Scrapbook

- ☐ Flyer, other promotional materials
- ☐ Registrations form
- ☐ Confirmation packet
- ☐ Handouts/booklets
- ☐ Pictures of how things were set-up
- ☐ Site and vendor information
- ☐ Income and expense information
- ☐ Final attendance numbers
- ☐ Patch
- ☐ Evaluation Summary
- ☐ Anything else that would be helpful to someone running this or a similar event in the future.

Committee, Staff Wrap Up

- ☐ Hold wrap-up meeting/celebration with event committee/staff to debrief and recognize them for their accomplishments.
- ☐ Debrief the event with staff and committee.
- ☐ Recognize people for their accomplishments with public praise, a certificate, small gift, thank you note, as appropriate.
- ☐ Write thank you letters, perhaps send a certificate of appreciation or other small token to recognize contributions of time or money (event volunteers, vendors who attended, etc.).
- ☐ Write thank you letters and acknowledge service hours for youth who assisted with event planning or helped at the event.

Financial

- ☐ Pay remaining bills and reimburse volunteer expenses.
- ☐ Report any extra funds to the service unit/council and deposit.

Reporting

- ☐ Submit all original receipts to the service unit within two weeks of the event. Keep a copy for your records.
- ☐ Compile evaluations and report results to the service unit team.

Miscellaneous

- ☐ Follow up with patch distribution, if needed.
- ☐ Return borrowed equipment.
- ☐ Refurbish consumable resources (e.g. first aid kit).
- ☐ Write thank you letters.
- ☐ Celebrate a job well done!