



CRITERIA AND STANDARDS FOR AN EFFECTIVE GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL BENCHMARKS, EXPECTATIONS, MEASURES AND CHECKLISTS

Criterion I: Mission Delivery

A chartered Girl Scout council maximizes delivery of the Girl Scout mission by engaging and supporting volunteers to provide a nationally consistent quality leadership experience that achieves positive girl outcomes and reaches increasing numbers of girls.

Standard 1

Girl program throughout the council provides the benefits of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience and demonstrates the Girl Scout Promise and Law in action.

Measures:

Girl engagement in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience is reflected in council goals and award sales

Expectation: The council shows progress toward council goals related to the implementation of Girl Scout leadership experience as measured by the increasing council sale of journey awards.

Benchmark: Fifty percent (50%) of girl members at all age levels earn a journey award each year.

Progress in implementing and using outcomes is reflected in council goals and programs.

Expectation: The council has a plan and has shown progress in measuring the outcomes of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience as defined in *Transforming Leadership*.

Benchmark: Council services and funding requests are designed based on the comparative results of outcomes measures over time.

Council goals and adult development materials use the GSUSA program model to drive volunteer development and work with girls.

Expectation: The council plan and materials for training volunteers are based on the program model and the council shows progress toward implementing the plan.

Benchmark: Girls and adults demonstrate a thorough understanding of the program model as evidenced by training evaluations and outcomes measures

Standard 2

Based on a thorough understanding of the populations within its jurisdiction and consistent with its strategic priorities, the council attracts and retains an increasing number of girl members representing all segments of its population and geographic areas.

Measures:

The council girl market share goal is keyed to the national goal/benchmark.

Expectation: The council increases market share annually.

Benchmark: National benchmark to be developed at a later date.



The council girl membership goal is keyed to the national goal/benchmark.

Expectation: The council increases girl membership annually.

The national membership goal for 2011 was 1.6% increase (girl and adult)

The national membership goal for 2012 is 3% increase (girl and adult)

Benchmark: National benchmark to be developed at a later date.

The council racial/ethnic diversity goal is keyed to achieving parity based on local demographics.

Expectation: The council goals and results show annual progress toward parity.

Benchmark: The council is at parity in serving all racial/ethnic groups within its jurisdiction.

The council girl retention goal is keyed to the national goal/benchmark.

Expectation: The council shows annual overall increases in retention.

Benchmark: National benchmark to be developed at a later date.

Standard 3

Using the national program portfolio, with enrichments that meet the needs and interests of girls in the jurisdiction, the council provides pathway options through which girls participate in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

Measures:

Pathways are implemented in the council.

Expectation: The council has a plan which is being implemented for increasing pathway options for girls.

Benchmark: The council shows evidence of offering multiple pathways offered over multiple years designed to meet girl's needs.

Girls in the council participate in pathways.

Expectation: Council has a plan which is being implemented for increasing the number of girls served in a variety of pathways.

Benchmark: Each year there are increasing numbers of girls served in a variety of pathways

Standard 4

Through a comprehensive volunteer management system the council attracts, develops/trains, and retains diverse volunteers who support the Girl Scout mission and deliver program to girls.

Measures:

Volunteers are actively engaged in delivering program to girls throughout the council.

Expectation: The council is experiencing growth in the number of volunteers engaged in direct service to girls in multiple pathways.

Benchmark: The number of volunteers recruited and placed in direct service positions in all pathways is equal to the adult/girl ratio requirements as defined in *Safety Activity Checkpoints* for each age level.



The council adult volunteer racial/ethnic diversity goal is tied to local demographics.

Expectation: The council shows annual progress toward achieving parity with the local racial/ethnic population.

Benchmark: Council adult racial/ethnic diversity is reflective of the racial/ethnic population of the jurisdiction.

Adult volunteers are retained.

Expectation: The council annually shows progress in increasing the retention of volunteers providing direct/indirect service to girls.

Benchmark: Volunteers in direct/indirect service to girls meets or exceeds the national average.

Checklist:

The council volunteer management system utilizes documented processes to recruit and engage members of the community; to gather information, screen and interview potential volunteers; and to appoint, prepare, support and recognize volunteers and their contributions.

Expectation: All elements of the system are documented and communicated to volunteers so they can understand the processes that guide the council's volunteer management and selection process.

Standard 5

Requirements that ensure the protection of the health, safety, and security of participants are evident in all program delivery, including program delivery using electronic means.

Checklist:

The council implements policies and practices that protect health and safety of girls.

Expectation: Policies and practices are documented, communicated to, and understood by adult volunteers involved in the delivery of program.

The council consistently uses background screening for volunteers.

Expectation: Policies and systems are implemented that provide council-wide consistency of background screening for volunteers who have contact with girls.



Criterion II: Governance and Administration

A chartered Girl Scout council advances the movement through strategic governance and leadership that employ effective systems and structures to deliver the Girl Scout mission.

Standard 1

The council utilizes an integrated strategy development and management planning system to maximize its capacity to deliver on the Girl Scout mission.

Checklist:

The council implements an integrated planning process that results in a strategy with plans, and allocation of resources to achieve desired results.

Expectation: The council has a strategy and yearly planning and budgeting processes fully aligned with the strategy.

Standard 2

The council actively seeks to strengthen the stakeholder involvement and interaction to ensure that the membership is involved in influencing major policy decisions and helping to set strategic direction.

Checklist:

The decision influencing system as outlined in the council bylaws is utilized.

Expectation: There is a process that provides members/stakeholders with opportunities to influence major policy and operational decisions.

Council leadership actively engages with stakeholders at least once a year in addition to the annual meeting.

Expectation: Various methods of gathering input are utilized including but not limited to in person meetings, electronic surveys, webinars and teleconferences.

The council board of directors gives input to and reviews input from stakeholder meetings.

Expectation: The board discusses and considers input from members and stakeholders in making decisions and those decisions are communicated to the membership and stakeholders in a timely manner.

Standard 3

The council has a board of directors and board development committee that is elected or appointed in a manner consistent with the bylaws, has the experience and skills necessary to provide leadership and direction to the council, and reflects the diversity of the jurisdiction.



Checklist:

Board and officers represent the diversity of the jurisdiction.

Expectation: If the board and officers do not represent the diversity of the jurisdiction, the board development committee is actively working toward increasing the racial/ethnic diversity. Diversity includes socio/economic, age, needed skills, knowledge and sphere of influence.

Board development committee reflects the diversity of the jurisdiction.

Expectation: If the board development committee does not represent the diversity of the jurisdiction, the committee is actively working toward increasing its racial/ethnic diversity. Diversity includes socio/economic, age, needed skills, knowledge and sphere of influence.

There is a connection between board member skills and strategic priorities.

Expectation: The board development committee recruits candidates using a year-round cultivation process that focuses on skills, competencies, and spheres of influence needed to advance the council's strategy.

The board focuses on strategic governance and council priorities.

Expectation: The board uses the council's strategy to inform meeting agendas, committee/task group structure and assignments as well as board decisions.

Standard 4

The council board of directors ensures compliance with policies, standards, and procedures as related to its stewardship responsibilities.

Checklist:

An active independent audit committee with financial professionals as members meets with the auditor to review the audit, IRS Form 990, and management letter.

Expectation: In addition to the above, the audit committee is separate from the finance committee.

The Board reviews and approves the audited financial statements, management letter and IRS Form 990 within four months of the fiscal year-end.

Expectation: Board minutes reflect appropriate review and approval of required financial documents.

Appropriate committees regularly review progress on any management letter issues.

Expectation: The board provides oversight of the management letter ensuring that management responds to any comments and appropriate committees review progress on resolving identified issues.

The Board regularly reviews its own work.

Expectation: In addition to individual members completing an annual self-assessment of performance, every 3 years the board conducts an assessment of its performance as a whole.



The council successfully completes all federal, state and local filings.

Expectation: The board is aware of the necessary filings and board minutes document that they have been completed in a timely way.

The council risk management plan is reviewed on a regular basis.

Expectation: The council risk management plan follows GSUSA recommendations and is reviewed every three years.

Standard 5

The council fulfills its corporate obligations as required by local, state and federal law, and through the rights and obligations defined in the Girl Scout council charter agreement.

Checklist:

Bylaws are consistently followed and content is reviewed for possible changes at least every three years.

Expectation: Bylaws are reviewed every three years to ensure that they reflect current practices that are in compliance with state law or other requirements impacting bylaws.

A quorum is present at all board meetings and the annual meeting

Expectation: Board minutes indicate that a quorum was present for all board meetings and the annual meeting.

Orientation for new board members occurs prior to their assumption of voting responsibilities.

Expectation: In addition to orientation, new board members receive the bylaws, most recent audit and financial statements, current budget, strategic priorities, council policies, governance structure and recent board minutes.

All board members annually sign a conflict of interest statement.

Expectation: Board minutes reflect effective management of any potential or real conflicts and that conflict of interest statements have been signed.

Council performance is consistent with charter requirements and procedures.

Expectation: Board minutes document annual conversation about charter obligations and the council's review of its progress in meeting the criteria and standards.

Council reporting requirements are met.

Expectation: All membership dues, board packets and minutes from the year under review have been received at GSUSA on a regular basis.



Standard 6

The council's human resource policies and practices attract, develop, and retain employed staff reflecting all areas of its jurisdiction and all segments of its population.

Measures:

Employee turnover rate is compared to the national rate for similar nonprofits.

Expectation: Board minutes reflect that the board is aware of the staff turnover rate.

Benchmark: Total voluntary and involuntary staff turnover rate does not exceed 20%.

Employee racial/ethnic diversity matches the local labor market.

Expectation: If staff is not at parity, progress is being made toward reaching parity.

Benchmark: Council staff is at racial/ethnic parity with the councils' labor market

Checklist:

Annual performance reviews are conducted for all employees including the CEO.

Expectation: Board minutes reflect that the results of the CEO performance review have been reported to the board and that performance reviews for staff have been completed.

Staff development/training is provided for all employees.

Expectation: In addition to a timely orientation upon employment, training opportunities are provided for all staff throughout the year.

A competitive salary and benefits package is offered.

Expectation: A comparative review of the council's salary structure and policy guidelines with external data completed within the last two years demonstrates competitiveness within the council's labor market or results in a plan to reach competitiveness.

Human resource policies (regular and seasonal) meet GSUSA guidelines.

Expectation: Policies are reviewed regularly to insure consistency with current practice and with applicable federal and state laws.



Criterion III: Resource Development and Community Engagement

A chartered Girl Scout council advances organizational impact by growing resources, effectively promoting a unified national brand and standing up for girls on issues that affect their well-being.

Standard 1

The council builds a culture of philanthropy by accepting and carrying out their responsibility to increase funds raised to support the council's work and they do so using methods in keeping with Girl Scout policies and standards.

Measures:

Individual giving is a part of the council's income mix.

Expectation: Council income from annual giving increases each year.

Benchmark: The council is making progress in reaching its multi-year income growth and donor retention goals for individual giving.

Corporate and foundation giving is a part of the council's income mix.

Expectation: Council income from foundations and corporations increases annually.

Benchmark: The council is making progress in reaching its multi-year income growth and donor retention goals for corporate and foundation giving.

Planned giving is a part of the council's income mix.

Expectation: The number of planned gift commitments increases annually.

Benchmark: The council has a plan for increasing the number and diversity (beyond wills and bequests) of planned gifts.

The council board plays a leadership role in philanthropy.

Expectation: All board members make an annual gift and identify, cultivate, solicit or steward donors.

Benchmark: Board members' giving demonstrates Girl Scouts is a philanthropic priority and board members are actively involved in securing additional gifts.

Checklist:

The council has a multi-year fund development strategy, plans and goals.

Expectation: Income from philanthropic sources, including gifts from individuals, corporations, foundations and organizations, (excluding government grants) makes up 30 percent of the overall income stream.

The council adheres to the Donor Bill of Rights and a gift acceptance policy is in place.

Expectation: The council gift acceptance policy incorporates or includes by reference the Donor Bill of Rights.



Standard 2

The council board and management demonstrate financial leadership to provide for the perpetuation of Girl Scouting within its jurisdiction.

Checklist:

The annual budget is consistent with strategic priorities.

Expectation: The board annually approves separate operating and capital budgets prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.

The council income mix and growth targets are consistent with council needs and strategic priorities.

Expectation: The board has identified a desired diverse income mix which is in support of the council's strategic priorities and has approved a plan for reaching it.

A minimum of 6 months of operating reserve is maintained.

Expectation: If the council has less than six months of operating reserves at the end of the fiscal year, a multi-year plan to build reserves is being implemented.

A long range plan for property (3 – 5 years) is used to develop and maintain property in accordance with program needs.

Expectation: The long range property plan is financially feasible and includes program and administrative properties that support the Girl Scout Brand by providing service and support to the membership and staff.

Standard 3

The council leverages the Girl Scout brand to educate and engage diverse audiences in support of the Girl Scout mission.

Checklist:

The council communication plan incorporates national brand messages and current national initiatives.

Expectation: The council is implementing a multifaceted communication plan with a variety of methods targeting various stakeholder groups that incorporates national brand messages and initiatives.

The council communicates regularly (more than once a year) and directly to families, donors, and volunteers.

Expectation: The council is implementing a broad based communication plan that includes families, donors, and volunteers using print, newsletters and/or electronic means.

The council website is consistent with national brand messages and includes current national initiatives.

Expectation: The council has a website that follows GSUSA guidelines and is updated on a regular basis.



The council uses electronic and other means to regularly communicate with the general public with a focus on potential members, potential donors and potential community partners.

Expectation: The council shows evidence of using electronic and/or other means to communicate with the general public about Girl Scouting.

Standard 4

The council advocates individually, regionally and as part of a national movement on issues that affect girls' well-being.

Checklist:

State and local advocacy efforts support the Girl Scout annual legislative agenda.

Expectation: The council educates and advocates for the Girl Scout legislative agenda issues with community leaders and public officials.

Federal advocacy efforts support GSUSA initiatives and are consistent with national efforts

Expectation: Council chief executive officers and board members educate legislators and ask for their support on legislation that impacts girls and Girl Scouting.

The council takes a proactive role in the community to become the thought leader and voice for girls.

Expectation: The council raises awareness on issues that impact girls by highlighting the findings from the Girl Scout Research Institute reports at community forums and addresses solutions for all girls.