

## Membership Dues FAQs

### *Recommendation and Rationale*

#### **Is GSUSA recommending a membership dues increase?**

Yes. As we began sharing in January, GSUSA is examining various ways to invest in our Movement as part of our three-year future strategy work. One of the recommended options is an increase in membership dues.

With increased funding through philanthropy and membership dues, we would have the opportunity to accelerate important initiatives that improve the current Girl Scout experience, the Girl Scout brand, and our programming and engagement models. 24 million school-aged girls need us.

#### **Why is GSUSA considering a membership dues increase?**

Growing and sustaining our Movement requires consistent and prudent investment—and our Girl Scouts expect and deserve to be invested in.

Membership dues have not increased since 2018. During this period, we have seen unprecedented impact on our communities and membership, including COVID, a significant decline in membership, and national inflation. At our current rate, our membership dues have not kept pace with the rising inflation costs across the United States nor with those of our peer youth-serving organizations.

As all organizations do, we must regularly review our financial and membership models. To continue to maintain our core programming and make the necessary investments to provide an unparalleled experience for our current and future members and volunteers, we routinely need to reevaluate how we fund our mission.

#### **What will a membership dues increase support?**

Increased membership dues will support the current girls and volunteers we serve and provide us with the opportunity to reach the 24 million school-aged girls we do not yet serve—the girls in our communities who we know would benefit from being part of Girl Scouts.

With increased funding through philanthropy and membership dues, we would have the opportunity to accelerate important initiatives that will improve the current Girl Scout experience, the Girl Scout brand, and our programming and engagement models.

Since January 2024, we have been working on our Movement strategy, and the urgent need to invest in our girls and volunteers has been heard. Our current strategic objectives include:

- attracting new members;
- retaining existing members;
- growing revenue;
- strengthening technology; and
- advancing our core capabilities, which include our commitment to DEIRJ and ensuring that Girl Scouting reflects the communities that make up this country.

Increased membership dues would support the initiatives that align with each of these strategic objectives.

To offer our girls an unparalleled experience and to grow our membership, we must invest in crucial initiatives now. As part of our strategy process, council leadership, national delegates, and GSUSA have been identifying what is needed from GSUSA in order to evolve. This includes simplified tools for volunteers, enhanced older girl programming, national marketing, new engagement models for girls and families, improved technology to reduce costs while increasing the ease of accessing our programs and serving our families in the way they expect, and so much more.

### **Who will decide which initiatives will be prioritized? How?**

We are planning to evaluate ROI, time to market and the impact on our members, including councils, girls, and volunteers and/or membership growth as key determinants to prioritize which initiatives will be funded.

### ***Why does GSUSA need more funds for technology?***

*Technology supports everything we do, including registration, ecommerce for cookies, Girl Scout merchandise, council websites, and Girl Scout programming. This also includes less visible aspects of technology like security and data protection, analytics capabilities, and infrastructure such as networks and storage. Just like any technology you may utilize, there needs to be continuous investment to make sure we don't fall behind, including on those upgrades that are mandatory, like ~~on~~ cyber security and upgrades to stay in compliance with -legislation. We also want to continue to enhance the digital experience that our technology can provide to our families, volunteers and councils. We must always invest to keep our platforms stable, and we remain focused on creating a better and more personalized experience for our volunteers, councils, and girls.*

*We know you want better technology than we have today, and this requires investment.*

### **Who decides if membership dues increase?**

GSUSA's National Board has the authority to approve an increase of up to 25 percent in any single triennium. For the 2023–2026 triennium, this is limited to a membership dues increase of \$6.25. Prior to any decision, the National Board must seek input from local councils and National Council delegates. A decision to increase membership dues above that amount requires a vote of our National Council.

### **How does the National Council consider and vote on a dues increase?**

An increase can be considered at a regular session of the National Council or a special session. Special sessions can be held in person or virtually, and the National Board can call a special session with 30 days' notice to delegates.

First, the National Board must propose an increase to the National Council. Delegates then participate in delegate education activities to understand the proposed changes before debating and, finally, voting on the proposed increase.

### **What would happen without these increases?**

Our Movement has reached the moment where we have choices and thoughtful business decisions to make. While a membership dues increase will allow for us to continue to serve our current community of families, it will also help us reach families who we know would benefit from all we offer but either don't know us, don't see how they fit in Girl Scouts, or don't yet feel welcome.

It will also allow us to ensure that our programming continues to be strong, relevant, and impactful for all our Girl Scouts.

Without a dues increase, GSUSA would be forced to reduce the Girl Scout experience for many of our members and volunteers by either scaling back or eliminating services. Some examples of services that have been reduced in the past include research, alum engagement, marketing efforts, etc.

### **When would a membership dues increase take effect?**

If a dues increase is approved by the National Board or the National Council (see below), the new price would be implemented, at earliest, for membership year 2026 (membership that is active from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026). The exact implementation date and the final dues price will be determined once the transition plan is solidified, but could begin as early as April 1, 2025, as that is the start of Membership Year 2026 renewals.

### **Does this mean that we won't have another increase in membership dues for many years?**

As all organizations do, we must regularly review our financial and membership models. To continue to maintain our core programming and make the necessary investments to provide an unparalleled experience for our current and future members and volunteers, we routinely need to reevaluate how we fund our mission.

### **Will there be a change to lifetime membership fees?**

No. The proposal does not include a change to Lifetime membership pricing.

### ***What is the purpose of the three board resolutions?***

*The resolutions are intended to assist councils in locally executing Movement strategy, including meeting financial assistance needs of members. The resolutions respond to council and delegate input on the cost to families and volunteers of a membership dues increase and the request for a phased-in increase.*

### ***Will there be a phased in approach to dues increase?***

*The Board resolution creates a phased introduction of a girl membership dues level of \$85 or above, in direct response to council and delegate input on the need for a phased introduction of a more significant increase. At \$85, for example, the 20% discount in year 1 will make the effective MY26 rate \$68, MY27*

rate \$77 and the MY28 rate \$85. The corresponding revenue support for councils would be 25% in MY26, 30% in MY27 and 32% in MY28

**How will a phased approach to the dues increase work?**

With the approval of girl membership dues of \$85 or more, GSUSA will implement a 20% discount on girl membership dues in year one and a 10% discount in year two, rounded to the nearest dollar.

For example, if the National Council approves an increase in girl membership dues to \$85;

- in membership year 2026, girl membership dues will be \$68
- in membership year 2027, girl membership dues will be \$77
- and in membership year 2028, girl membership dues will be at the approved \$85.

**Why did the National Board act on resolutions to approve a phased dues increase and to provide council support before the Special National Council Session?**

The National Board, after hearing delegate and council input, chose to act on these resolutions before the Special National Council Session to make clear to delegates and local councils its commitment to how the dues revenue would be used to provide direct support for council and provide a phased in approach.

**Will the National Board increase dues even if we are in a three-year phase-in process with this proposal?**

The National Board has not discussed future increases to annual dues. Additionally, pursuant to the Blue Book, the National Board cannot increase annual membership dues more than 25% in a single triennium without National Council approval. This means that if the National Council approves an increase of more than 25%, the National Board cannot approve an additional increase in the 2023-2026 triennium.

**Can you explain in more detail how GSUSA plans to use the proposed increase, including operations, improvements for current products, as well as new innovations and transformation?**

Yes. Please refer to the infographic in the delegate workbook to see examples of what a dues increase can make possible. As we have committed to our council leadership, we will determine together the priorities to invest in that will have the greatest impact on our current and future members.

**Financials and Funding**

**With costs rising across the board, will girls and families be able to support this increase?**

Girl Scouts is an organization committed to serving all girls who wish to become members, regardless of their ability to pay. Options will be reviewed by the National Board and specifics will be shared as part of the education process if a Special Session is called. We are also exploring other membership dues options such as family plans, differentiated pricing for volunteers/adults, differentiated pricing by Girl Scout age, and multi-year memberships as part of our three-year strategy.

**Have you considered financial aid options?**

We remain committed to ensuring that every girl who wants to participate in Girl Scouting has the option to do so.

We are working with our councils to explore financial aid options that expand beyond membership dues. While we do not have exact options yet, we remain committed to providing every girl the opportunity to be a Girl Scout, regardless of financial ability.

***How many girls nationally receive financial aid?***

*This number may vary from year to year, but nationally approximately 25–27% of girl members receive financial aid.*

**Why can't philanthropy dollars just cover what a dues increase would?**

Philanthropy alone will not provide the resources needed to make the crucial investments in our girls and volunteers needed to propel us into the future. Although it is an important element, it simply will not get us there.

If we do not take on these initiatives that our Girl Scouts, volunteers, and delegates are asking for, we will be unable to deliver a best-in-class experience for our current girls and volunteers, nor will we grow our membership. Investment in these initiatives will deliver many times the value to our girls and volunteers in terms of experiences and our ability to serve more girls.

**Does our current pricing reflect our value in the marketplace? (e.g., are we undervaluing ourselves? Strategically, do we want to be the low-cost provider?)**

This is one of our considerations as we discuss the possibility of raising membership dues. We want to ensure that we are competitively priced to reflect our value in the marketplace.

**Is GSUSA and the Girl Scout Movement financially stable?**

Yes. GSUSA has a strong balance sheet and a healthy level of reserves. However, the reality is that—in concert with our board—GSUSA has and continues to utilize reserves in a responsible manner to ensure that our service portfolio is properly maintained and, where needed, improved. This approach lacks sustainability, and we must drive changes to enable longer-term Movement financial health.

To carry out the work that our volunteers, council leadership, and GSUSA know is critical not just for our current Girl Scouts but also for the future of our Movement, we need to invest in initiatives that advance our strategic objectives and core capabilities.

Reexamining our financial models and membership pricing is a responsible fiduciary decision. All organizations review their pricing structure on a regular basis as we are doing now.

We know the right thing for our Movement is to make these important decisions for and with our councils, including investing in these crucial initiatives together through national philanthropy and membership dues.

**How else will the Movement grow revenue in addition to membership dues?**

GSUSA will continue to strive for growth across all revenue streams, including investing in growing philanthropy, product program, merchandising, and licensing.

**Is there additional data on GSUSA's investment income?**

GSUSA draws from some investments to support the operating budget. Generally speaking, with the board's approval, GSUSA takes a 4% spend rate on our investment portfolio (approximately \$4-5M per year). The spend rate is below the long-term return rate of our investments, allowing them to continually grow. The 4% spend rate on investments typically represents 5% or less than GSUSA's total annual revenue.

***What is the process for deciding what will be funded and prioritized?***

*This is all happening through the Movement strategy process. GSUSA is committed to working together with our council leadership, who will be at the table participating in the decision-making process around prioritization and sequencing of initiatives. Together, GSUSA and councils will discuss the anticipated ROI of each opportunity, as well as the effort required to implement and the benefits to our Movement as decisions are made.*

***How do we make sure we're considering the financial and people resource costs to execute? How do the 2025 accelerators play into the future strategy?***

*These considerations will absolutely be a part of the prioritization process. We will look to partner with Council leadership to understand the capacity and resources necessary to execute various initiatives before making any decisions. The accelerators were specifically chosen due to the anticipated impact of improving membership in 2025. These investments are also strongly aligned with the future strategy objectives and, in many cases, are stepping stones to additional future Strategy initiatives, that many stakeholders indicated were of interest. Be on the lookout for additional surveys and opportunities where we will be asking for information to better understand the capacity of councils to execute these accelerators and initiatives.*

***Will members be able to pay membership dues in installments – for example, half at the beginning of the year and half later?***

*We are exploring these options, including technical feasibility, timeline and incremental costs that would be required to build this into the registration process. We do not expect this option to be available initially.*

***Can you share more details about how the financial support from GSUSA to councils would work?***

*GSUSA will provide financial support to councils based on a percentage of annual girl membership dues with:*

- *32% of total annual girl membership dues when girl membership dues are \$85 and above.*
- *30% of total annual girl membership dues when girl membership dues are \$75 to \$84, or*
- *25% of total annual girl membership dues when annual girl membership dues are \$65 to \$74.*