

Over the past two years Girl Scouts Nation’s Capital (GSCNC) has seen a decline in the number of new girls and families who have joined Girl Scouts. In an effort to address the challenge, the Board of Directors charged service unit delegates with collecting responses to the following questions:

- How can we attract and retain first year girls and adults?
- What specific actions can the Council take to engage communities unfamiliar with the benefits of the Girl Scout program?

Over the course of our Forums this year, there were hundreds of recommendations. Listed below are the most suggested recommendations we received.

Overall Recommendation	Specific Actions
Council should focus more on an expanded advertising effort to promote the Girl Scout program and its benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase social media presence through a marketing campaign on all popular platforms; #BusttheMyth #NotyourMamma’sGirlScouts • Utilize local magazines, radio and newspapers to display what our girls have accomplished • Advertise or update advertisements in public places such as coffee shops, grocery stores, farmers market, libraries, houses of worship and local papers • Promote the long-term benefits of Girl Scouts (leadership skills, values, opportunities, and scholarships) and the variety of fun activities available for each program level • Promote teen Girl Scouts in order to show young girls the possibilities ahead and to change view that Girl Scouts is only for younger girls • Provide an optional training for leaders and other adults regarding the best way to get the message out about Girl Scouts
Increase visibility and activity in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host more events that showcase Girl Scouts to the public: museum day and outdoor days • Participate and organize community service events so that girls are seen in action making a difference in their community • Host events that are open to the community to attend such as tea parties, service events, or activity days that partner with local businesses or organizations • Attend and be present at community events such as parades and fairs • Host a 5K empowerment run for both our members and the public

<p>Girl Scouts should increase outreach efforts and better engage schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyers should be send home from schools, particularly in folders from Kindergarten orientation • Alternate to paper flyers in schools is electronic advertisement which the county charges for. If there is capacity, lobby the county to waive/reduce advertisement fee • Council should both secure and staff booths at Back to School Nights; consider inviting a Girl Scout to talk about her experience • Make appearances at PTA/PTO nights by presenting, having a table, speaking to them regarding volunteer opportunities, or offering babysitting services • Connect with teachers, principals, admin staff who were Girl Scouts • Provide FAQs for local teachers who may not be aware of Girl Scout program
<p>Increase effort to resolve language barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources, flyers, and advertisements in other languages (Spanish, French, etc.) • Provide multiple language tabs on the Girl Scout website • Make efforts to recruit and place leaders who are bi-lingual in troops where there is a need to bridge a language barrier
<p>Further engage and appeal to the girls' interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to include "Bring a Friend" events in Girl Scout programming • Provide incentives for girls to re-register; examples include early bird t-shirt, ice cream/pizza party for early bird, early bird patches listing the number of years the girl has early bird registered • Encourage girls to wear their uniforms on occasions outside of troop meetings including sporting events and to school on meeting days • Have more events that are aimed toward Daisies • Continue to engage teen girls by providing real world skills, internship opportunities, college workshops, and information about scholarship opportunities
<p>Facilitate inter-troop relations and activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a formal sister troop program at the service unit level and allow an older troop to guide a younger troop
<p>Make troop leader commitments easier for adult volunteers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revamp the volunteer training process to take into account the different levels of volunteer experience • Better communicate • Add a formal mentor-mentee program for new troop leaders where mentors are assigned • Recognize new leaders through a new leader appreciation event
<p>Make more effort to engage parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communicate the exceptions that are involved when signing up for Girl Scouts including time requirements, financial requirements, and parent involvement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase parent involvement so that all parents have either an official role in troop or at minimum support activities and trips
Nation’s Capital staff should make additional efforts to facilitate Girl Scout programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid council staff should provide fun events and activities that focus not just on STEM or cookies where all ages are welcome to attend • GSCNC should also host more geographically diverse council sponsored events • Provide additional materials about badge mechanics for new troops and about how to best break down and assign tasks to engage parents
Girl Scouts as a whole organization should revisit and revise key points to their program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a simplified process for both starting and joining a troop; there are a lot of rules dictating what constitutes a troop • Revisit badge and journey programming to make them more engaging and less like schoolwork; include creative journeys
Better engage young adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit young graduates who have gone through the Girl Scout program; especially aim to recruit Gold Award recipients • Target college or community college aged young adults to help provide either troop support of programming
Increase effort to resolve language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources, flyers, and advertisements in other languages (Spanish, French, etc.) • Provide multiple language tabs on the Girl Scout website • Make efforts to recruit and place leaders who are bi-lingual in troops where there is a need to bridge a language barrier

As the Board and staff reviewed the recommendations, it was clear that many of the Council current and planned initiatives are aligned with our Service Unit recommendations. For instance, attracting girls and parents through hosting booths at Back to School nights and troop formation meetings as well as providing flyers in schools where possible are strategies that we use in partnership with service unit troop organizers. We have also recently moved to an online platform for our volunteer training in order to help accommodate our volunteer’s busy schedules, called GSLearn, for more information contact mstrauss@gscnc.org.

In addition, the Council has a new recruitment marketing campaign scheduled for the fall, continues to plan council-wide events where possible and is continuously expanding our online training and resources. Other new initiatives for this year and next year include increased alumnae engagement and encouraging college organizations to host hands-on activity events for our girls.