

	LiGHT Grant Application 2026	
	2026 LiGHT Grant Cover Form and Guidelines	

Name of individual, group or organization: Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana

Contact name(s): Jillian Brown

Address: 10008 Dupont Cir Dr E, Fort Wayne, IN 46825

Phone number: (260) 422-3417 Email Address: Jillian.Brown@gsnim.org

Name of the program as it would appear on the grant award: Girl Scout Leadership Experience in Wells County

Describe who the grant award will serve and approximate number affected: Girl Scouts serves all girls in grades K-12. We currently serve 48 girls in Wells County and anticipate serving 77 in the coming year.

Dollar amount requested: \$3,000

Would the program be offered if only a *partial* grant from LiGHT is made? Yes

Summary paragraph of the grant award requested: The Girl Scout Leadership Experience nurtures girls'

➤ May be utilized for part of the presentation.
ambitions by helping them build skills in: STEM, the outdoors, life skills and entrepreneurship. Girls can participate through troops, in-school and after-school programs and council-wide events. Our council provides financial aid on a sliding scale to help support area girls.

Complete all requested items below:

- 1) This Cover Form
- 2) Project Narrative, 1-5 pages typed, including:
 - What need in the Community will this program address? Give evidence to substantiate your request. (i.e., data, letters of recommendation, etc.)
 - What do you want to do?
 - What is your timeline?
 - What results do you expect?
 - If partnering with other organizations, please list.
 - Describe the program and tell how the funds from the grant will be used based on your budget
 - Signature page: To include endorsement of the project or program by the requesting agency's Board of Directors. This page must include a signature of the Board president.
- 3) Detailed budget

Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana LiGHT Application: Girl Scout Leadership Experience in Wells County

Girl Scouts was founded in 1912 to serve all girls in grades K-12, regardless of race/ethnicity, socio-economic status or religious affiliation. Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana was established as a 501(c)(3) in 2008 when four existing Girl Scout councils merged to better serve girls in 20 counties in northeast Indiana (Adams, Allen, Cass, DeKalb, Elkhart, Fulton, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, LaPorte, Marshall, Miami, Noble, Pulaski, St. Joseph, Starke, Steuben, Wabash, Whitley and Wells) and two in southern Michigan (Berrien and Cass). The mission of Girl Scouts is to build girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place. The purpose is to nurture and champion girls' ambitions through troop experiences, in-school and after-school programming, council-wide events, the Girl Scout Cookie Program and outdoor experiences that invite girls to lead, explore and grow.

We deliver this work through two service centers in Fort Wayne and Granger. Our outdoor program is anchored by four active properties: Camp McMillen in Huntertown, Camp Logan in Syracuse, Camp Wildwood in Logansport, and Camp Soni Springs in Three Oaks, Mich.

The need for programs that empower girls has been well established. Data compiled for the 2025 Indiana Girl Report (published by Girl Scouts Coalition of Indiana) shows that:

- 45.7% of girls in Indiana have been victims of bullying.
- 39.4% of girls in grades 7-12 experienced depression.
- 13.4% of girls actively began to think about how they would carry out suicide.
- 6,279 girls in grades K-12 were homeless in the 2023-2024 school year.
- More than 78% of girls in Indiana said either "no" or "NO!" when asked if neighbors noticed when they were doing a good job.

Girls in Wells County experience a ratio of one school counselor for every 454 students. 49.3% of girls in the county reported family conflict and 64.4% reported low commitment to school.

In addition, multiple studies show girls back down from assuming leadership roles, not because they don't want to lead but because they are discouraged from leading. In a survey conducted by the Girl Scout Research Institute, nearly 40% of girls reported they have been put down when they try to lead. Yet research points to a common set of conditions that help girls thrive as leaders: encouragement from trusted adults, explicit opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills and access to female mentors and role models.

As the largest girl-serving organization in the United States, Girl Scouts is uniquely positioned to provide the girl-centered, girl-led, girl-friendly safe spaces girls need to develop the skills and confidence to uplift themselves and make a difference in their communities.

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE), like all Girl Scout programs, is aimed at championing girl ambition through fun, challenging activities in an all-girl environment designed to encourage girls to pursue their interests. The program builds important skills in four key areas:

- *Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)* — As they explore science, technology, engineering and math through hands-on experiences, girls build confidence in tackling complex challenges, sharpen critical-thinking skills and begin to see themselves as leaders in spaces where they've historically been underrepresented.
- *The Outdoors* — Through outdoor experiences, girls practice teamwork, take healthy risks and develop a deeper connection to the natural world. Those moments translate into stronger relationships, greater resilience and a lasting sense of responsibility for the environment and their communities.
- *Life Skills* — Girls learn how to build healthy relationships, care for their well-being and make informed choices about fitness and nutrition. They also develop practical skills, like budgeting and smart purchasing, that support independence and long-term financial capability.
- *Entrepreneurship* — Entrepreneurship comes to life through the Girl Scout Cookie Program, where girls gain real-world experience setting goals, talking with customers and learning what it means to deliver on commitments. They practice communication, money management and customer service while building the confidence that comes from earning results through their own effort, skills that extend well beyond cookie season.

The GSUSA curriculums for STEM, entrepreneurship and financial literacy align with national educational standards. This allows our council to reinforce academic skills and provide opportunities for girls to gain greater success in the academic world. Through these programs, girls hone their logical, creative and complex problem-solving skills that employers are increasingly seeking, thus making them marketable employees in a wide range of careers.

Girls can participate through troops, in-school and after-school programs, and council-wide events. Programs are ongoing throughout the year, age-appropriate and geared to the six Girl Scout age levels, from Daisy (K-1) to Ambassador (11-12). Our council additionally provides financial aid on a sliding scale to help support area girls.

In providing the GSLE, Girl Scouts partners with local schools, churches and community centers in Wells County to provide facilities for troop activities and special events, as well as with other local nonprofits and businesses to provide opportunities and experiences for girls. Our Program

Coordinator reports that Wells County Girl Scouts have a high attendance rate for such council events. For example, Science Central, Allen County Department of Environmental Management, Junior Achievement of Northeast Indiana, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Sweetwater, Eagle Marsh, Sarett Nature Park, Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum, Executive Women's Golf Association, DeCamp Gardens, Little River Wetlands Project, Boys & Girls Clubs, Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation and YMCA after-school care sites provide venues and volunteers for Girl Scouting programs and events. These entities partner with Girl Scouts because, as their testimonials verify, the GSLE works!

- “Girl Scouts have been wonderful partners in our mission to protect and restore wetlands. They’ve helped remove invasive garlic mustard, transplant native plant seedlings and build birdhouses to support wetland wildlife. Along the way, they’ve earned badges while learning about the importance of wetlands for clean water and biodiversity. We love supporting their growth as young environmental stewards and are always inspired by their curiosity and dedication.” *Aly Munger, Wetland Educator, Little River Wetlands Project*
- “At the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum, we believe in fostering the innovators of tomorrow. Partnering with Girl Scouts not only strengthens our community but also empowers young girls through engaging STEM activities. Together, we inspire curiosity in automotive design and engineering, promoting hands-on learning that ignites passion for science and technology. By working with Girl Scouts, we’re nurturing the next generation of leaders and problem solvers, ensuring that the legacy of innovation continues to drive us forward.” *Madison Auten, Collections & Education Manager, Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum*
- “Girl Scouts is all about encouraging teamwork while instilling in young girls that they have the power to make real change in this world. Even years later, I still remember my troop’s excitement when we took a trip to the science museum as Brownies, working in teams to build and test model bridges for the first time. We made lifelong memories with each other while learning that we were capable of things we’d never thought of pursuing—and sparking future passions for many of us. Here at Notre Dame, in a community dedicated to fueling innovation and inclusion, we know it is of the utmost importance that young girls continue to have these opportunities in STEM. Young girls are the world’s future engineers, CEOs and inventors, and we can’t wait to join Girl Scouts in giving them an opportunity to empower their critical thinking, problem solving skills and creativity.” *Kylie Staebler, University of Notre Dame Mechanical Engineering Major, Class of 2027 (and former Girl Scout), University of Notre Dame Society of Women Engineers*

Our council also collaborates closely with Girl Scouts of the USA for research, resources and evaluation.

Short-term accomplishments council-wide in 2025 include: 73% of members attended a council program, 16% attended summer camp, 54% were repeat adventure program attendees. In addition, we provided 367 girls in Allen County with financial aid. The council also presented 56 achievement awards in 2025: 37 Bronze (Junior level), 16 Silver (Cadette level) and three Gold (senior level). Gold Award recipients completed ambitious community projects, ranging from a campaign to raise awareness and educate women and girls on misunderstood reproductive diseases to building an accessible gaga ball pit to create an inclusive space for children of all ages to stay active and connect.

As adults, Girl Scout alumni stand out as leaders. GSUSA research shows that 78% have attended at least some college (compared to 65% of non-alums), 86% are registered to vote, 73% vote regularly, 48% volunteer (compared to 33%), 68% report greater career satisfaction (compared to 60%) and 42% hold management positions (compared to 37%). Additionally, 53% of women in business are former Girl Scouts, a testament to the program's long-term impact.

Program activities are delivered by a staff of 35 and 1,800+ volunteers. These dedicated individuals shepherd, support and applaud the girls' interests and ambitions, encouraging them to stretch themselves and pursue their dreams.

Mom and troop leader Jamie Swaidner reports, "Over the past year our multi-level troop has thrived with enthusiasm, creativity and a strong sense of community. Throughout the year the girls have dived into hands-on learning with science experiments, like building their own vehicles using limited resources. They planted trees as part of the 2025 Tree Promise, visited our local emergency room, attended the downtown Huntington Chalk Walk and held their first overnight camping trip at Camp McMillen, where they learned about fire safety. Troop 53015 continues to grow stronger, one adventure at a time!"

Support from the LiGHT fund would be used to support costs related to program supplies and staff time spent working with Wells County girls and volunteers.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Jillian Brown, Fund Development Specialist, at 260-422-3417 ext. 63118 or Jillian.Brown@gsnim.org.

Sincerely,

Juliette Spears
Juliette Spears (Aug 31, 2026 13:29:50 EDT)

Juliette Spears

Board Chair

Girl Scouts of Northern Indiana-Michiana
Annual Budget for Wells County
Fiscal Year Ending 09/30/2026

	Wells
Total Membership	77
% of Total	1.30%

Public Support

Individual Contributions	\$3,153
Corporate Giving	6,306
Grants from Trusts or Foundations	16,251
United Way Grants	76
Government Grants	-
Total Public Support	\$25,786

Program Revenue

Product Sales	\$25,520
Retail Sales	830
Program Service Fees	2,171
Council Service Fees	-
Total Program Revenue	\$28,521

Other Revenue

Rental and Service Income	\$299
Investment Income (Loss)	1,761
Miscellaneous Income	38
Total Other Revenue	\$2,098

Total Public Support and Revenue	\$56,405
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Expenses

Salaries, Benefits & Payroll Taxes	\$26,653
Professional Fees	3,120
Supplies	2,605
Telecommunications	904
Postage & Shipping	367
Maintenance and Occupancy	4,816
Equipment Repair and Maintenance	2,598
Printing and Publications	910
Travel and Staff Development	1,246
Specific Assistance	366
Insurance	1,990
Bad Debt	65
Miscellaneous Expenses	1,001
Total Expenses	\$46,641

Net Revenue Before Other Expenses	\$9,764
Other Expenses	
Paid to National Girl Scout Retirement Plan	2,461
Depreciation	<u>5,169</u>
Total Net Revenue (Loss)	<u><u>\$2,134</u></u>
Operational Cost Per Member	\$606
Total Cost per Member	\$705