



THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD GUIDE FOR SCOUTING

What is the Congressional Award?

The Congressional Award is a public-private partnership created by Congress to promote and recognize the achievements of young Americans. The program is non-partisan, voluntary, and non-competitive. Open to youth ages 14 to 24, the Congressional Award challenges youth to set goals in four program areas: Voluntary Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness, and an Expedition or Exploration.

The Congressional Award gives participants the opportunity to build valuable skills such as goal setting, time management, and organization, all while bettering themselves and their communities along the way.

About the Program

Congressional Award participants work with their advisor to set goals in four areas:

Voluntary Public Service: Volunteer with your troop or in the community.

Personal Development: Learn a new skill or strengthen an existing talent.

Physical Fitness: Better your physical health in a way that is challenging to you.

Expedition or Exploration: Explore a new place or embark on a new challenge.

Who is an Advisor and Validator and How Do I Find One?

- An advisor meets with participants and helps guide them while they set personally challenging goals. The national office recommends asking a family friend, teacher, or coach to be your advisor.
- Validators assist the participant with individual activities and should be knowledgeable in the activities. For example, if a young person's goal and activities involved basketball, a coach would make a suitable validator.
- Participant's advisors and validators may change as they progress through their Congressional Award journey. Any adult may serve with the exception of parents, relatives, and peers.



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Program Benefits for Scouts

The Congressional Award has been partnered with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and the Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) for over 20 years. The Award and Scouts believe in the importance of giving youth the tools to become more productive members of their communities and the confidence to take control of their futures. Our programs build future leaders by teaching valuable skills such as goal setting and providing opportunities for youth to build mentor-based relationships. The Award provides participants with a structured, yet flexible, platform to achieve personal goals. Many activities Scouts complete can be applied toward the Congressional Award.

- The program is open to youth ages 14 to 24, regardless of physical and developmental ability, socioeconomic status, citizenship, and grade point average. Interested youths can register when they are 13 ½.
- Participants craft an individual achievement plan based on personal goals and interests.
- The program offers six levels, with varying requirements and time commitments, providing built-in flexibility.
- Earning the Congressional Award can help set participants apart on college and job applications because it shows commitment to service and personal development.
- It empowers participants to take responsibility, discover new talents, and advocate for themselves and for others.
- The Congressional Award hosts additional programming in various areas such as mental health, personal finance, career readiness, and much more.





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Frequently Asked Questions:

Can I count earning BSA/GSUSA badges toward the Award?

- Yes, earning BSA/GSUSA badges are an accepted goal and activity and can be applied to the Personal Development category.

Can I count BSA/GSUSA or Eagle projects toward the Award?

- Yes, service projects completed with BSA/GSUSA are allowed to be applied to the Award areas of Voluntary Public Service, Personal Development, or Physical Fitness.

Can I count a BSA/GSUSA camping or activity trip as an Expedition?

- Yes, trips associated with BSA/GSUSA can be applied to the Expedition area of the Award. In the Expedition write-up, explain how you individually planned and lead this trip. Scouts are allowed to submit camps such as Philmont and Sea Base for their Expedition trip.

Can I count my BSA/GSUSA leadership toward the Award?

- Yes, leadership is a value of the Congressional Award and actively being a leader in your community is encouraged. This can be applied to areas of Personal Development.

Who can be a validator for my BSA/GSUSA goals and activities?

- A validator should be an adult who is knowledgeable of the activities and can verify your participation. This could be a Scoutmaster or a community member who oversaw your service.

Contact the Award:

If you have any questions, please email information@congressionaward.org or your program manager.

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"The Congressional Award is an amazing opportunity to create and accomplish goals that reflect what you find most important and exciting. As the program puts emphasis on the same areas as Scouting - you can work on requirements in both organizations simultaneously. I was able to expand upon the Scouting endeavors I enjoy to reach 400 Gold Medal service hours, earn every merit badge, and backpack the John Muir Trail. I grew so much on this journey and, as an avid Scout, was honored to be recognized for accomplishments in areas I care about a great deal."



Ainsley M.

Gold Medalist, Eagle Scout



Ethan W.

Gold Medalist, Eagle Scout

"Growing up as a boy scout, I was given the opportunity with the Congressional Award to develop my individuality everywhere I go. As an Eagle Scout and a proud Gold Medal recipient, I have participated in community services and conservation projects. Engaging with the amazing community and connecting with Congressional Leaders, the Program has provided me with confidence to exercise my citizenship and constantly live by the Scout Slogan: "Do a good turn daily."

"For 111 years the Boy Scouts of America has been building leadership, character, and survival skills in our young people. Sixty years ago in 1961, I proudly earned my Eagle Scout Badge, the highest rank in Scouting. Scouts are taught to set goals and stay focused on achieving those goals. Being both a Scout and a Congressional Award Medalist shows superior commitment to self-betterment and public service."



Eagle Scout Class of 1961

U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop (GA-02)



Eagle Scout Class of 1977

U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson (PA-15)

"50 years ago I took my first step on the Scouting Trail, a path that led me to Eagle Scout, Scout Master and Council President, and today Co-Chair of the Congressional Scouting Caucus. The values instilled in me through scouting taught me principled leadership and have provided me a truth north."