

# Troop Banking Guidelines



A Guide for Co-Leaders and Account Signers

2021-2022



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# Financial Policies

Girl Scouts – North Carolina Coastal Pines abides by the policies and standards of Girl Scouts of the USA and complies with applicable IRS requirements.

Every troop is required to have a bank account. The account must be established under the council's federal tax ID through the council's centralized process. All bank accounts require a minimum of two unrelated adult signers who are currently registered members of Girl Scouts and have successfully completed the required background check.

All money collected, or earned, in the name of Girl Scouts must be deposited in the established bank account and thereafter used for the purpose of providing the Girl Scout Experience to girls in the troop.

All signers are responsible for safeguarding and maintaining sufficient funds to cover payments drawn on the account. As with any bank account, signers are legally responsible for all account transactions. Receipts for all purchases made from the account should be retained for the troop's records.

Volunteers who misuse or misappropriate funds may be released from all Girl Scout positions. The council may file criminal and/or civil charges if deemed appropriate.

The council allows up to two (2) debit cards for each account to be utilized for troop purchases. The council prohibits troops and service units from applying for credit cards or utilizing PayPal, Venmo, Zelle, Apple Pay, Google Pay and similar accounts. Aside from Smart Cookies (used specifically during the Cookie Program) Cheddar Up is the only other authorized online payment collection platform for troops at this time. Cheddar Up accounts must be set up via the council's centralized process and managed by an authorized troop bank account signer. Troops may use Cheddar Up to collect debit/credit card payments and electronic check payments from parents or volunteers. Troops that are interested in utilizing Cheddar Up should contact [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org).

Security of troop funds is necessary to safeguard troop assets. The bank account should be reconciled regularly, preferably monthly. Authorized signers must have access to the bank account records and should review transactions monthly or more frequently during periods of heavy banking activity. All bank statements and financial records should be kept for a minimum of two years.

Annual Troop Finance Reports must be submitted to the council on an annual basis. This report is a summary of the troop's financial activity throughout the year (May 1 – April 30) and should be shared with girls and parents/guardians upon completion.

When a troop disbands, leaders must complete the Troop Disbanding Form to provide information about the disposition of their funds. The council finance department will close all bank accounts of disbanded or inactive troops. The council will manage disbanded troop funds, including disbursement of funds for girls continuing in other troops within the council.

## Opening a Troop Bank Account

The unique structure of Girl Scout banking, coupled with a continually changing banking environment have made it necessary for Girl Scouts – North Carolina Coastal Pines to use one bank for troop banking. Accordingly, bank accounts are established through the council with BB&T, now Truist bank. This centralized system ensures that all troop accounts are set up consistently, which is important because of the volume of troop accounts in our jurisdiction and the risk of errors in the account set up. Troop accounts will be opened in the name of the troop as follows: **Girl Scouts-NC Coastal Pines Troop ####**.

After a troop account is set up, all transactions between the troop and the council will be processed electronically. If you do not have a BB&T/Truist branch in your area, please contact the Finance Department team at 800-284-4475 or 919-782-3021. Troops are not authorized to establish bank accounts without the council's approval. To open a bank account in the name of a nonprofit, the federal government requires a resolution from the organization's governing body. BB&T/Truist Bank has a standard form resolution that the council's Board of Directors must approve, including the list of "agents", those individuals authorized to access the account.

Please allow at least **10 business days** to open the new account.

### Start the Process

1. Each signer must be a registered adult volunteer, have a current membership with GSUSA, and have a current approved background check on file with the council.
2. Staff of the council are not authorized to be signers on a troop or service unit account.
3. The troop must first complete an [online application form](#) to request a bank account and provide contact information for the authorized signers. The online application can be found on the council's website in the Troop Banking section (from the home page, select volunteers → troop banking). Each troop is required to have at least two (2) unrelated signers listed on their account and can have a maximum of three (3) signers. Debit cards can be requested at this time, a maximum of two (2) per account.

4. The Finance Department reviews the application and notifies the signers by email that their request has been received. A signature card for the account is then provided to the signers.
5. When the signature card has been received, all signers must sign it and submit it back to the Finance department by mail or a high-resolution scan. Once the signed card has been received by the council, it usually takes 3-5 business days for bank account to be opened.
6. Once finalized by the bank, the Finance Department notifies the signers by email that the account has been opened. The troop leaders do not need to visit the branch.
7. The bank will mail the debit cards and PIN numbers to the designated debit card holders on the account. Please allow 7-10 business days for arrival in your mailbox.
8. The troop will also be notified of their online banking access via email from the council.

**NOTE: The council will fund each new troop account with \$50 which will be deposited into the account at the time the account is opened.**

## **Debit Cards/Online Access**

The troop may obtain debit cards to be used for deposits and payments. The council authorizes a maximum of two (2) debit cards per troop. The debit cards will be in the name of two of the signers on the account.

Online banking will be set up automatically. Login information and instructions will be emailed to the signers once the troop account is set up. Troops should use the online banking system to view their account balances, download transaction history, and print copies of checks and statements. There will only be one user ID/password established per troop account. Since all signers are responsible for maintaining the troop account, the user ID and password for access to the account should be shared with each authorized signer. This will facilitate monitoring the account activity and help to prevent cardholders/signers from inadvertently overdrawing the troop account. To reduce fees, copies of cancelled checks are not provided by BB&T/Truist. You can request that check images be printed on your statement for an additional monthly fee.

Passwords should be changed whenever there is a change in signers on the account or there is a possibility that your ID or password have been compromised. Passwords can be changed by an authorized signer once logged in to the online banking account, or by contacting the council at [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org).

If you are locked out of online banking or have forgotten your password and need a password reset, send an email to [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org) and the council will contact BB&T/Truist on your behalf. You WILL NOT be able to use the "Reset Your Password" function on the bank website. This process could take up to three business days to complete.

## Ordering Checks

While troops are not required to have checks, they may be convenient for conducting troop business, including reimbursing volunteers. Troop checks should not have a personal address or names printed on them because they are the property of the troop, not the individual signers. It also provides the troop with more flexibility as authorized signers change. For this reason, checks ordered for the troop should have the council's mailing address of 6901 Pinecrest Road, Raleigh, NC 27613 printed on them.

Checks can be ordered directly from the bank, from a check printing company, or by contacting the Finance Department at [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org). Be sure to request that the checks are shipped directly to a designated signer of the troop.

### Sample check:



## Fund Management

Troop funds are for the benefit of all girls in the troop and should be spent in the year the funds are earned, unless the troop has a long-range plan for spending the funds. It is important to note that the funds belong to the troop as a whole. Per IRS guidelines for charitable organizations, troops are prohibited from keeping separate individual girl accounts. All funds expended should benefit **all girls in the troop** and spending should be agreed upon by girls and volunteers before expenses are incurred. Accordingly, troop funds cannot be used to benefit individual girls or be 'allocated' to individual girls. **Payments cannot be made directly to girls or their families from cookie sale proceeds (or other such fundraising efforts). This includes benefits such as cash/check payments, gift cards, and individual college scholarships (unless it's an application-based Girl Scout council scholarship).** At the time a troop disbands, the money in a troop account needs to be disbursed according to our policy outlined in the Disbanding Your Troop section of these guidelines.

Some large, multi-level troops may find it necessary to keep track of funds for each Girl Scout level only if each level of girls is pursuing different, age-appropriate goals. In these circumstances, multi-level troops must still adhere to the above guidance regarding no individual girl accounts, no individual benefit, and no direct payments.

All money received from parents or cookie customers should be deposited as soon as possible and should never be held in a personal checking account. For security reasons, we do not recommend keeping cash in a house or vehicle. It is critical that all authorized signers are in communication with the other signers before spending funds to prevent overdrafts on the account. There may be timing issues with the online balance since there can be delays in posting transactions to the account in the banking system. Cash withdrawals should only be made if absolutely necessary – i.e. cookie booth change. If a cash withdrawal has been made, a clear record must be kept of the use of funds along with any applicable receipts or documentation.

Each account signer should make sure that there are funds in the account to cover the amount of the transaction before writing a check or making a purchase with the troop debit card. Signers are responsible for any fees or charges for overdrawing the account. All expenses should be paid for by troop check/debit card. Blank checks should never be pre-signed and debit cards should not be used by anyone other than the person they are issued to.

If there is an instance where a signer paid out of pocket for troop supplies and needs to be reimbursed using troop funds, those reimbursements should be approved and authorized by a signer other than the payee. Receipts are required for reimbursement. Under no circumstances should a troop check be written to and signed by the same person.

## **Paying for Product Sales**

The council will initiate an electronic transfer from the troop's bank account to pay the council for product sales transactions (i.e. Cookie and Fall sales programs). It is important that adequate funds are available. The specific dates that council will draft the troop accounts are included in product sales calendars and training materials and the troop will receive reminder communications during the sale.

## **Accepting Check Payments**

A troop can choose to accept checks as a form of payment from customers and parents. If a troop accepts checks as a form of payment, the troop may receive a check that is returned because of insufficient funds. Best practice would be to have a phone number and copy of the payer's driver license for checks \$20 or more.

Tips for Collecting NSF Checks:

**Step 1:** Immediately notify the payer to request re-payment as quickly as possible. It is sometimes best to request a cash payment or cashier's check.

**Step 2:** If you are redepositing an NSF check, first contact the payer's bank to ensure funds are available to cover the amount of the check.

**Step 3:** If funds are not available, send a letter to the payer requesting payment. A fee can be charged to the payee to cover bank service charges on the troop account. The fee should be the same amount charged on the troop bank statement.

**Step 4:** If the NSF check exceeds \$30 and the troop has followed the steps listed above without results, send the actual NSF check to the council finance department with the troop #, payer's name, payer's driver's license number (if available), and contact information. The council will submit the check to a collection agency and will reimburse the funds if the agency successfully collects the funds.

## **BB&T/Truist Account Fees**

Although BB&T/Truist does not charge a monthly service fee, bank fees will be charged for overdrafts, returned checks, deposit corrections, and additional requested services on the account (for example, if you request to have check images included on the account statements). These fees are appropriate fees for the bank to charge based on their standard agreement. It is important that you review your troop bank activity at least monthly, and more often during cookie sales or times of heavy financial activity.

**IMPORTANT** – Your account will be closed if it maintains a zero balance for more than 60 days. If an account is closed, it cannot be reopened. The troop must submit a request for a new bank account.



# Budgeting and Record Keeping

Each troop should collaborate in the preparation of an annual budget at the start of the program year. Girls should be included in this process, if age appropriate, to enhance their financial literacy skills. Questions to consider:

- What types of activities will be planned?
- What are the costs associated with these activities?
- How will the troop fund these activities?
- Will money earning activities be required?
- What are your goals for the cookie and fall sale?

Troops may need to create multi-year budget plans for costlier travel trips. Troops may agree to charge members of the troop a nominal dues amount to support Girl Scout troop activities. This amount should be carefully thought out by the leaders and communicated and agreed upon with the parents and guardians.

All disbursements and deposits should be recorded in a checkbook, electronic spreadsheet or personal banking software. For your convenience, the Troop Financial Tracking Worksheet (an Excel spreadsheet for tracking your troop transactions) is available for download on the troop banking website. The bank statement should be reconciled to these records monthly. Financial checks and balances should be in place to help prevent misuse of troop funds. A person other than the one preparing the bank reconciliation should review the reconciliation each month. Best practices provide that separate individuals manage the account and receive the bank statements.

There should be a clear separation of personal and troop funds. No personal expenses should be paid from the troop account and no troop money should be deposited in personal bank accounts.

All cash payments should be receipted. A written receipt must be provided to the parent, guardian or other volunteer who makes a cash payment to the troop and should show:

- Date
- Name of the individual from whom the funds were received
- Amount received
- Purpose for which the funds were received

A file should be maintained with bank statements, receipts, all cookie/fall sale records, and records supporting all financial transactions for at least two (2) years after the end of the program year. Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and guardians throughout the year to maintain transparency.

## Changing Signers

Troops must follow the council's centralized process for changing or adding troop account signers. The troop leader should complete the [online application](#) to update signers that can be found on the council's website in the Troop Banking section (from the home page, select volunteers → troop banking). The form will ask for contact information for all signers, clarify which signers need debit cards, and confirm which signer should receive monthly mailed statements. Finance will then process the application.

Each signer must have a current background check on file as well as a current Girl Scout membership.

The council finance department will provide a new signature card to the account signers. When the signature card has been received, all signers must sign it and submit it back to the Finance department by mail or a high-resolution scan. Once the signed card has been received by the council, it usually takes 3-5 business days for the requested changes to be made by BB&T/Truist. Until the signature card is updated by the bank, all existing bank signers will continue to have access to troop funds.

Whenever there is a change of signers on the account, the password to the BB&T/Truist online banking account must also be changed for security purposes. One of the remaining signers should change the password and share the new password (as well as security question answers) with all remaining signers and the new account signer(s). Alternatively, a password reset can be requested when completing the council's application to update signers or by emailing [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org).

**IMPORTANT** - The leader should collect and destroy debit cards from any person(s) who are no longer involved with the troop or acting as signers on the account. They should also request that the bank deactivate the debit card. For assistance with this, contact [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org).

If the troop is not banking at BB&T/Truist, please contact the Finance Department at 800-284-4475 or 919-782-3021 for assistance.

## Annual Reporting

Troops are required to submit the Annual Troop Finance Report by **June 1st** directly to council using the Volunteer Toolkit in "MyGS" (Girl Scout Member Community Online Portal). The report is on the "Finance" tab of the Volunteer Toolkit and is only accessible to troop leaders

and treasurers. The annual report covers financial transactions which took place from May 1st through April 30<sup>th</sup>. Troops established during the year should report their finances starting in the month organized through April 30<sup>th</sup>. These reports will be reviewed by the council finance department to ensure policies are being appropriately followed and funds are being utilized to benefit girls.

**Please note that funds due to troops (i.e. for troop travel, donation pass-thru or incentives) will not be processed until the Annual Troop Finance Report has been completed and received by council.**

Troop financial records should be shared with and made available to girls and guardians throughout the year to ensure there is transparency in the troop's financial activities. The revenue and expense categories included in the annual report are listed below. Please use these categories in managing the troop's finances.

<p><b>Revenues or Incoming cash receipts:</b></p> <p>GSUSA Membership Dues collected</p> <p>Troop dues collected</p> <p>Activity/Event Fees collected</p> <p>Fall Product Sale funds collected</p> <p>Cookie Sale funds collected</p> <p>Money Earning Projects</p> <p>Donations to the troop (not OCD)</p> <p>Other Income</p>
<p><b>Expenses or Outgoing payments:</b></p> <p>GSUSA Membership Dues paid to Council</p> <p>Activities/events/trips</p> <p>Fall Product Sale paid to council</p> <p>Cookie Sale paid to council</p> <p>Recognitions/Awards</p> <p>Troop Supplies</p> <p>Donations made by troop</p> <p>Other Expenses</p>

# Disbanding Your Troop

A troop may disband when all participants graduate or there is a leadership change and there are no longer any leaders registered in a troop. If a troop disbands, it is important to make final decisions about the use of the troop's remaining funds after bills have been paid and have cleared the account. Considerations might include:

- Holding a final gathering to celebrate the troop's friendships and accomplishments.
- Donating funds to a charity based on the troop's area of interest. Funds can also be donated to the local service unit or the council. Some common areas of need in Girl Scouting: financial assistance for girls for uniforms, registration fees for membership camp, travel, events, or for day camp, a favorite resident camp or Gold/Silver award projects.
- Renewing the Girl Scouts memberships of all girls in the troop so they can continue their Girl Scout experience with another troop or as independently registered Girl Scouts. Graduating senior troops may purchase Lifetime Memberships at the special "young alum" discount price for all eligible girls (troop funds cannot be used to purchase current adult members a lifetime membership, i.e. troop leaders, parents).
- Transferring funds to another troop for the benefit of the girls continuing their Girl Scout experience.

The council finance department must close all disbanded troop bank accounts. Please complete the [Disbanding Troop Funds Report](#) on the council website (from the home page, select volunteers → troop banking) to communicate when a troop account can be closed. The council will automatically close troop accounts if there are no currently registered members and/or the account has been inactive for a significant period of time.

Funds remaining from disbanded troop accounts will be distributed as follows:

- For girls continuing with Girl Scouts in another troop, the funds will be transferred by council to the new troop(s).
- If no girls are continuing, remaining funds up to \$250, less a \$50 fee used to fund new troop accounts, will be transferred to the local service unit.
- Funds over this limit will be used by council to fund financial assistance for all girls.

Funds transferred to the service units should be used to further the Girl Scout mission in their area.

## Fraud

Unfortunately, fraud happens even within Girl Scouting. Please follow the practices outlined in these guidelines to help prevent unauthorized use of troop funds. The troop funds belong to the girls as a group and should be treated as such.

If a Leader or parent within the troop suspects that troop funds are being mismanaged, first discuss the matter with the troop leader(s), focusing on the facts and documentation. If there is a possibility that the Leader has mismanaged funds, contact the council finance department at 800-284-4475 or 919-782-3021 or email at [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org). If the situation involves cookies, the Product Sales staff person should be notified as well.

Notify the bank immediately at BB&T/Truist Bank's 24-hour fraud hotline at 1-800-226-5228 if a debit card has been lost or stolen or if fraudulent or unknown charges have appeared on your account. Bank statements should be reviewed, at a minimum, once each month to ensure all activity is correct and to identify fraudulent charges immediately. BB&T/Truist Bank *may* refund fraudulent charges to your account, but only if the fraudulent charges are reported within 30 days of receiving the bank statement on which the fraudulent charges appear. For additional guidance in these situations or if you have any trouble reporting the fraud to the bank, please contact [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org).

The key to successful recovery of funds and resolution of financial problems is documentation and timeliness. If the records are poor and the bank statements have not been reviewed in a timely manner (at a minimum, monthly), the likelihood of recovery of the funds diminishes. Please make every effort to be proactive and establish good financial procedures and controls. Good financial management allows the troop to focus its energies on the Girl Scout Experience, which is our shared mission.

## Donations

The Internal Revenue Code (Sec. 170 (f)(8)) requires that Girl Scouts – North Carolina Coastal Pines acknowledge single donations of services, goods, materials, equipment, or money with a value of \$250 or more. Therefore, troops, groups, geographic units, community or Girl Scout volunteer representatives must report all donations with a \$250 value or greater to the council office within 30 days of receipt.

Please email a photocopy of the check or description of the items donated to [development@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:development@nccoastalpines.org) or mail to our Raleigh Service Center c/o Development Office. Please include (as applicable) your contact information, the troop number/service unit, location of troop/service unit, the name of the donor, organization name, address, and a sentence about the project for customizing the tax receipt for the donor.

The council can also process a donation directly and pass it through to a troop's bank account, if preferable. The same information as above is required to process these gifts. Receipts will not be issued for donations under \$250 unless processed directly through the council.

## Additional Resources

All troop treasurers and bank account signers are highly encouraged to complete the banking trainings offered in gsLearn (the Girl Scouts' online learning management system). Simply log in to MyGS, select "My Account" at the top of the screen, then select "gsLearn" from the left-hand side menu. You can access banking-specific trainings in the gsLearn Content Library, such as:

- 367 Troop Banking: Getting Started and Making Changes
- 367 Troop Banking: Fraud Detection and Reporting
- 367 Troop Banking: Annual Troop Finance Report

You can find additional resources on the [Troop Banking website](#) (from the council home page, select volunteers → troop banking).

## Refer Questions To

We hope this guide has clarified where to get help when specific troop banking questions and concerns arise. When in doubt, please contact the council finance department for assistance at [troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org](mailto:troopbanking@nccoastalpines.org) or 800-284-4475. We are here to help.

Due to the unique structure of our troop bank accounts (which are established under the council's tax ID number), many common questions and concerns are best directed to the council finance department for resolution. For example, we can easily assist you with:

- Getting the status of a new account request or change of signer request
- Unlocking your online banking account or requesting a password reset
- Ordering checks from the bank (we can ensure the most competitive pricing)
- If your debit card expired and you haven't received your replacement
- If you are not receiving mailed bank statements, or need to update the statement mailing address

Some common banking issues that can generally be resolved by visiting your local bank branch include:

- Help resetting your debit card PIN number
- Assistance activating a debit card
- Addressing an error on your bank statement
- Getting information on a fee the bank assessed your account

The Truist/BB&T 24-hour hotline, 1-800-226-5228, is most helpful for reporting a lost/stolen debit card or fraudulent charges. Please also let the council finance department know so we can ensure your issue is completely resolved.