



## Scouts BSA Membership Growth Plan for Unit Membership Chairs, Scoutmasters, Committee Chairs, and New Member Coordinators

### The Promise of Scouting

For more than a [hundred](#) years, leaders like you have been the key to delivering the timeless values and endless adventure of Scouting to the children and families of the greater Los Angeles area. Sure, there's band-camp, lacrosse, and *Fortnite*, but Scouting is the only program that provides the guidance that families need to raise children to be responsible, active citizens, and ethical leaders. This is not just idle talk, Scouting is a volunteer-led movement and without you, it wouldn't exist.

### Why Does Recruiting New Members Matter?

Before we dive into the technical details of running an effective recruiting effort, let's review why recruiting matters:

- **More members make it easier for units to fund their Scouting activities through fees or fundraising**
- **More members increase the talent pool of adult leaders** – association with adults is not a bug of the system; the Scouting program is designed for Scouts to participate alongside their parents to learn by their example and with their guidance
- **More members help fill District and Council programs and camps generating the revenue necessary to fund operations** – more than 75% of our revenues are raised in this way
- **More members make it more fun** – and really, isn't this the most important reason of all?

### This Is Our Mission

It's fair to say that without a growing cadre of Scouts and leaders, sustaining Scouting is impossible. For this reason, the Council has designated increasing our membership as one of our key strategic goals for this year.

And this goal is ambitious:

- Achieve 20% Cub Scout membership growth
- Grow to 60 new girl troops
- Continue to offer Family Scouting in 75% of our Packs

### So What Do The Experts Think About This?

As knowledgeable and experienced as the Council leadership might be, we readily acknowledge that we don't have all the answers. For this reason, this plan was created by consulting Scouting staff, the Council Key 6, District Membership leads, and all of the Council leaders who attended the Council Quarterly Strategic meetings in December and February. In addition, a survey on membership went out to every unit key 3 in the Council.

All this valuable feedback was collated and distilled into several key findings:

- **Our Council membership goals are achievable** – the clear consensus is that with a clear and well-executed plan we should be able to achieve our Council goals
- **The most effective type of recruiting is by word-of-mouth** – happy Scouts and parents are our best recruiters
- **In-person recruiting events works best** – kids and parents need to experience Scouting to understand it
- **We need to market Scouting** – a great program is meaningless if the community doesn't know about it

### But First Some Things Will Need to Change

Many of you have been recruiting for years and you're happy with your process – and that's great! But the consensus view was that our overall concept of recruiting could use some adjustments:

- **Recruiting happens at every level of Scouting** – from Scout, to leader, to unit, to district, to council, to board; we all have a part to play to ensure that we have a successful recruiting effort
- **Recruiting happens year-round** – our traditional spring and back-to-school recruiting drives will continue, however, units, districts, and the Council will focus on integrating recruiting opportunities into the program all year long
- **Recruiting works best in person** – Scouting isn't a videogame, we offer a real-world adventure that has withstood the test of time; when we recruit, we'll work on showcasing this as much as possible
- **Recruiting is part of the program** – besides word-of-mouth our best sales tool is the fun and adventure of Scouting; the units, the districts, and the Council will work on offering Scouting activities as part of the program to interested youth and families
- **We're not going to recruit boys and girls, we're going to recruit the whole family** – association with adults is one of the methods of Scouting and without it Scouting can't function

### Okay, So How Do I Start?

So how do we go about recruiting new families to Scouting? Let's recall that Scouting has been around for more than a hundred years – this means many of your questions already have answers! The purpose of this guide is not to create a brand new method of doing things, but rather to explain the general concept behind why we do things the way we do and to connect you with the tools and resources that you will need to carry out your plans.

We will cover the basic process for a successful recruiting effort:

1. Build your team
2. Know and understand your opportunities and obstacles
3. Create a plan
4. Determine what resources you will need
5. Do it!

### Step 1: Build Your Team

Many hands make light work and failure to plan is planning to fail. Without a team of leaders willing to design and carry out a plan, consistent membership growth cannot happen.

When you create a recruiting team that involves the whole Troop, you lessen the burden for participants, create a system for generating new ideas, and begin to train parents that adult association is an important part of Scouting.

A simple team structure would be:

- **Membership Lead** – will serve as the overall lead of the recruiting effort.
- **New Member Coordinator** – this individual will welcome new youth and families, help develop unit membership plans, and collaborate with districts.
- **Marketing** – responsible for promoting the effort through e-mail, social media, flyers, and word-of-mouth.
- **Registrar** – will oversee the logistical details required to enroll new members.
- **BeAScout Administrator** – will ensure that the unit's BeAScout recruiting details are up to date and will respond to queries from interested parents. [BeAScout](#) is an online referral tool that allows families to find units in their area – if interested, they can inquire about joining directly online and can even enroll! It's a proven and effective way to recruit families in a connected and socially-distanced world.
- **Event Chiefs** – individuals who can help during your in-person recruiting events.
- **Unit Commissioner** – your commissioner is there to help identify needed tools and resources, so don't hesitate to ask for guidance.
- **District Support** – know who to contact in your district for guidance, recruiting supplies, and training; click [here](#) for the details for each district

### Key Resources

- ★ Go here to download the [Adult Recruitment Approach](#) for ideas on how to recruit adult leaders

- ★ Review the details of the New Member Coordinator [here](#)
- ★ Get the thorough rundown on how to use BeAScout [here](#)
- ★ Read [this](#) to learn how to use Organization Security Manager to designate individuals to field membership inquiries received through BeAScout
- ★ Check out the [Marketing Webinar](#) page for videos on recruiting and other relevant topics
- ★ Find a comprehensive collection of videos, guides, and resources for Scouts BSA at the official [site](#)
- ★ Check out the BSA Brand center [here](#)

## Step 2: Know and Understand Your Opportunities and Obstacles

Once you understand the general process and have a team in place, you'll need to know and understand your current situation.

- **Is your Troop large enough to be fun and function efficiently?**
- **Is your Troop growing or shrinking?** If you're unfamiliar with these numbers, your District Membership team can help you gather them.
- **Do you need help identifying new sources for members?** Again, your District Membership team can help.
- **Are you using a BeAScout pin?** [BeAScout](#) is the easiest way for families to learn about your unit. Make sure your details are current and that you highlight the things that make your unit special.
- **Do you have a Troop that the whole family can join, for example one that accepts both boys and girls?** Scout families will gravitate toward programs that maximize the fun for the whole family while minimizing their time and travel commitments.
- **Do you have a patrol for every grade?** Kids join to have fun with their friends – make it easy for them to meet new friends by having enough Scouts of their age in the Troop.
- **Does every patrol have at least six to eight active Scouts?** Remember that patrols that are smaller or larger than this don't function as well.
- **Does your Troop hold a back-to-school recruiting event?** Recruiting at schools is a tried-and-true method for recruiting families. Back-to-school barbecues at a local park with Scouting activities also work well. Be creative and make the effort fun for the whole Troop, while encouraging your families to bring guests and siblings.
- **Does your Troop hold any other recruiting events?** Keep in mind that recruiting happens best in person where Scouts and families can enjoy Scouting directly. Encourage your Scouts to invite their friends to campouts, outings, or Normal Friend activities – the Scouts get to earn their Recruiting patch and prospects get to experience the fun of Scouting. This makes recruiting an organic part of the program and reduces the number of formal recruiting events that you will need to organize. Make this an ongoing effort throughout the year.
- **Do you have an effective means of communicating to prospective members, for example a Facebook page?** Interested families will often research units by visiting Facebook – an active page with posts that show fun Troop activities is a very effective way to find new recruits. And the site builds itself – just encourage families to post pictures of their Scouts having fun.
- **Do you have a process for peer-to-peer recruiting for your families and Scouts to use?** Research and experience show that the most effective type of marketing is by word-of-mouth from Scouts and parents. Encourage and welcome guests to your activities.
- **Have you tried to re-recruit the recruited?** During the past year, many Scouts left the program due to COVID-19. Now that it's safe to begin Scouting in person, many families will be ready to join back up. An e-mail or a postcard have been shown to be simple and effective ways to re-recruit them.
- **Are you taking advantage of Camperships or other financial resources from the Council?** Don't let finances keep a family Scout from Scouting, financial help is available for those who need it.

Once you have this information, set a goal! How many Scouts and families would you like to have in your Troop as of December 15?

### Key Resources

- ★ Review the official [BSA Social Media Guidelines](#)
- ★ Refer to the [Social Media Playbook](#) for effective ways to use various social media channels
- ★ View the short [video](#) on how to create a unit Facebook page
- ★ Refer to the video and slide deck on School Access and Peer-to-Peer Recruiting [here](#)
- ★ Visit the [Scouting Financial Assistance](#) page to learn about the financial support that is available to families
- ★ Review the District and Council [calendars](#) for fun activities that your Troop can participate in

### Step 3: Create Your Recruiting Plan

In-person recruiting events are the most important part of your recruitment plan! There are multiple ways to conduct one but generally speaking sign-up events are:

- Held at the school or institution where the Troop primarily recruits
- Separate from a “normal” Troop meeting; it’s an event focused exclusively on recruiting new families
- Short – most families should be able to attend and exit a sign-up event in under 25 minutes

The primary objective is to engage families in such a way that they join **at the event**. Sign-up events should accomplish the following:

- Inform families about Scouting and your Troop
- Have fun activities for the Scouts to try Scouting
- Demonstrate the program by showing how to use an axe or set up a tent – help families and Scouts see Scouting in person
- Give families an opportunity to join

Once your sign-up event is complete, remember to touch base with your District Membership team to let them know how many families attended and how many signed up. While online registration is highly encouraged, those who are not able to use this system should make an appointment with your Unit Resource Coordinator to turn in applications and membership fees.

Many Troops rely on Webelos bridging into their troop for membership growth. This is part of the Scouting program after all and is a very effective way of recruiting new members. But please keep in mind that somewhere around 50% of Webelos don’t join a Troop at all. Attracting these Scouts is a prime opportunity for growth. Consider some of the of the following ideas to take advantage of it.

- Cultivate good relationships with neighboring Packs – work with them to assign Den Chiefs from your unit; the Den Chiefs will help the Packs work better and will also serve as excellent ambassadors for your Troop
- Invite Webelos and prospective Scouts to Normal Friend Activities—events that are not Scouting specific but help families to become acquainted with the culture of the unit. Such events could be gaming nights, outings like bowling or skating, or backyard barbecues/pool parties.
- Host a campout or outing with your Scouts and Webelos – parents and Scouts will naturally seek out units that provide a fun and exciting program
- Encourage Webelos to invite their friends to visit your unit – Scouts join the program to do fun stuff with their friends, so urge them to bring a buddy along so they can share this experience
- Do something – although many units manage to attract new members with a minimum of effort, keep in mind that many Scouts don’t join Scouting simply because they’re not aware that it’s an option; being active and visible will help you deliver the adventure of Scouting to every child that seeks it

Finally, determine which events you will open to guests throughout the year and devise a fun way to communicate the news to your parents and Scouts. The Recruiting patch and treats or prizes are a fun way to motivate your Scouts to invite their friends.

And remember to keep an eye out for events hosted by the District and Council that allow Scouts to bring guests.

### Key Resources

- ★ Review the official [Sign-up Night Unit Playbook](#) for a detailed breakdown of everything required to host a successful in-person recruiting event
- ★ Check in with your district for yard signs, flyers, peer-to-peer cards, guidance, and training
- ★ Get all of the electronic photos, artwork, flyers, social media bling, and templates that you need [here](#)
- ★ Check out the [Marketing Webinar](#) page for videos on recruiting and other relevant topics
- ★ Explore the Council and District [calendar](#) for fun events for your Troop – the calendars are updated throughout the year so make sure to check them regularly
- ★ A best practice is to use the BeAScout online registration tools to collect the registration fees at the sign-up event. This way, families know that they're members of the BSA and are likely to return to future meetings. You can collect unit dues at the Troop's new parent orientation meeting. Visit [here](#) for the full details on how to use BeAScout for recruiting and enrolling new members. Or ask your Unit Commissioner for guidance on training and help available from your District.

#### **Step 4: Determine What Recruiting Resources You Will Need**

The less time you spend re-inventing the wheel, the more time you can devote to having fun with your Scouts. Scouting has a ton of resources to make your job easier:

**BeAScout** – BeAScout allows prospective families to search for Packs near them – and BeAScout works! Families can then send a note through the system to the Troop seeking further information. To help attract attention, make sure your BeAScout listing, or “pin”, is up-to-date and attractive. Your Scoutmaster, Committee Chair, and Chartered Organization Representative can delegate access to the pin. Designate a BeAScout Administrator to keep the pin fresh and have at least one person who can monitor requests for information from prospective families to ensure that they are answered promptly. If an inquiry goes unanswered, it will be reassigned to another unit. Especially now, this is an easy way for families to join your Troop.

**Flyers** – Your District Membership team will contact you in August to obtain information about your sign-up event to include date, time, location, and point of contact, as well as how many flyers you will need. It is important to provide this information at least one month prior to your unit's proposed join event. Flyers for each grade level will be printed and provided for distribution at the school which your unit serves and your Professional Unit Coordinator will deliver them to you (or the school) two weeks prior to your event. Please plan accordingly to take advantage of this generous offer! Flyers available throughout the year for any unit that requests them from the Council Service Center or their District membership chairperson.

**Recruiting Banners** – These will be provided by the Council with “Welcome Back” language to be displayed at schools. Please contact your District Membership team if you would like to order one for your unit.

**Peer-to-Peer Cards** – Personal referrals are the most effective method of building your Troop! Your District Membership team can provide you peer-to-peer cards for each youth member of your unit. These cards help families invite friends and acquaintances to join in the fun. If the school allows it, encourage each youth to write the name of a friend on 2-5 cards. Ask the parents to also write their contact information on the card and then give the cards to the youth to pass out at school the next day.

**Social Media “Geofencing”** – Geofencing is the process of serving targeted internet advertising to prospective families in your area. Your Professional Unit Coordinator will use the information provided on the flyer to create geofences around your Troop's meeting place to provide additional advertising for your sign-up event. In this way, families near the sign-up event will receive ads promoting your event. You can amplify the effect of geofencing by encouraging your Troop families to use their social media platforms (such as Facebook and Instagram) to invite people as well. A video overview and slide deck on geofencing can be found [here](#).

**Marketing** – This year, the Council is committed to increasing the marketing of the Scouting program. If you have positive stories about Scouting's impact, please share them with the District Membership team so Council can spread the good news through local newspaper and television coverage. And of course, if you have leaders in your unit who are interested in sharing their marketing and public relations expertise, please let your District Membership team know!

**Roundtables and More** – It may seem old school and quaint but gathering virtually and in person is a powerful way to learn new skills and meet other leaders who can help and guide you. Sharing best practices often helps our units to grow and thrive, so plan to have your team members attend roundtables, webcasts, specialized trainings, and other District activities. Develop a relationship with your Unit Commissioner, who can share information between units to ensure that we learn from each other's' successes and challenges.

**Recommended Membership Growth Timeline** – Scouting happens year-round, so mark your calendar to stay on schedule and stay stress-free.

**January** – Determine which patrols are no longer full or dens that could be split if more members join

**February** – Meet with community organization leaders, set date for spring recruitment, ensure that all leaders are signed up for the appropriate training they need, determine summertime plans

**March** – Hold spring recruitment event, help transition Webelos to Scouts BSA troops

**April** – Conduct adult leader/parent surveys to plan for next year

**May** – Attend Council Program launch to gather materials for next year's program

**Summertime** – Council Scout camps are held throughout the summer; Scouts who attend camp are more likely to stay in the program and achieve the Eagle rank, but most importantly Scouts join the program to have fun; getting your Scouts to summer camp should be one of your unit's main objectives

**July** – Hold Back-to-the Troop/fall PLC planning session (could be held at Summer Camp)

**July 15** – Agree on unit recruiting goal and share with your District Membership Chair

**July 15** – Send your District Membership Chair event information to set up geofence for unit activities and virtual sign-up event

**July 31** – Begin recharter/recommitment process

**August - September** – Hold sign-up event (virtually, if needed) and register new families

**September** – Continued recruitment

**By September 30th** – Finalize and submit recharter paperwork

**October** – New member engagement event, follow up sign-up events, hold new parent orientation

**November**—Continue providing exciting program and recruiting new scouts and families

**December** – Continue turning in applications as they come in throughout the year

### **Step 5: Do It!**

There is a story about Robert Baden-Powell, one of the founders of Scouting, spending hours a day playing in the woods, learning birdsongs, and practicing woodcraft skills. A great time for sure – except that he was supposed to be in school! Baden-Powell grew up to be one of England's greatest heroes, but he never forgot the lessons he learned while exploring those woods. And when he adapted some of his ideas so they could be taught to children, he was determined that his program would be nothing like school. The magic of Scouting is that it isn't school – of course Scouts learn by listening, observing, and even reading, but most importantly they learn by doing. So let's follow their lead – the best laid plan is useless if it's not executed. Let's do it!